

# Leader, academic, athlete: Topham receives Scholar recognition

By **Hanna House**  
Staff reporter

It has become a family affair. Seth Topham, biochemistry senior, followed his brother Andrew, class of 2011, and sister Kate, class of 2009. All three have been involved with the Leadership team and all three majored in science.

Andrew was Scholar of the College in 2011 and this year, Seth Topham has earned the distinction.

“When I came here freshman year, I wasn’t really looking to be Scholar of the College or valedictorian, but going through the first couple years I realized that that was a good goal to set for myself so I started pursuing it,” said Topham.

Michael Tessmer, professor of chemistry, said students really need to have some natural ability to excel in the classroom. Natural ability is not something Topham

is short on. Tessmer said Topham is also a hard worker, who is curious, and determined to find the answer in any problem.

“To be Scholar of the College you have to have some natural ability. But then you also have to get the most out of that ability,” said Tessmer.

The Scholar of the College is the senior with the highest GPA. The awarding of the title is the college’s way of celebrating their academic achievements and hard work.

“It is who we are to continue to celebrate students who have high academic achievements,” said Tracy Frederick, interim provost.

To stay focused on his studies, Topham’s key is to stay on top of his work by knowing his deadlines to get a jump start on things early.

Topham is not only known in the halls of Beech Science Center, but also the ultimate frisbee field, the Leadership student

office, and in the math department. Topham’s degree will be in biochemistry but he will also be receiving minors in leadership and in mathematics.

Topham has also found success as part of the track team. He has been a part of the team since his freshman year. In fact, Topham said the only thing he would change of his four years at SC would be to join the track team earlier.

Joining track was not on a whim. Topham participated on the track team throughout high school and is quite good at it as he was named to the COSIDA Academic All-American 2nd Team. He won the 110 meter hurdles at the KCAC meet in May 2016, giving him the chance to compete in the 110 meter hurdles at the national meet.

Topham taught himself how to play guitar and enjoys playing Ultimate Frisbee when he can to

help unwind from long days in class and the lab.

“That’s probably one of my favorite things to do, Ultimate Frisbee; when I have the time and when I am not in season for track,” said Topham.

But wait, that’s not all. Along with track, biochemistry, and his two minors, he also submerges himself in a couple of academic activities.

He is on the Leadership team, Pre-Health Professionals, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Tri-Beta.

With all the things going on during the school year, Topham made sure not to forget about the summer opportunities that awaited him.

During his summers, Topham participated in a variety of things. He served as a camp counselor at Sky Ranch Cave Springs in Quapaw, Okla., and worked at an agriculture product company in Peabody, Kan., putting together farm equipment.

Before his last summer in college, Michael Tessmer, professor of chemistry, brought to

Topham’s attention the push for nuclear science students and the opportunities available to learn more about this form of science.

Topham applied for a nuclear chemistry summer program at San Jose State University in California.

“For chemistry majors, if you want to get a job in the industry, they want you to be a pretty good student but they are really looking for people that have experience doing other things,” said Tessmer.

Topham learned through this program that nuclear science is not what he wants to do after graduation, this will still look good on a resume and might be what sets him apart from other job applicants.

Instead, Topham is in the same boat as most of the other seniors answering the never ending questions of what are you going to do after graduation with the simple answer of ‘I don’t know’.

Topham is exploring a couple different options including teaching and going into the medical field.

Topham has undeniably left his own mark on Southwestern and would advise college students to be responsible but to have fun and enjoy these years.

“If you come in with a responsible mindset knowing that you have work to get done, [...] and as long as you accept that, and you take that to heart, you can enjoy college like everyone says you will,” said Topham.

Hanna House is a senior majoring in communication. You can email her at [hanna.house@sckans.edu](mailto:hanna.house@sckans.edu).



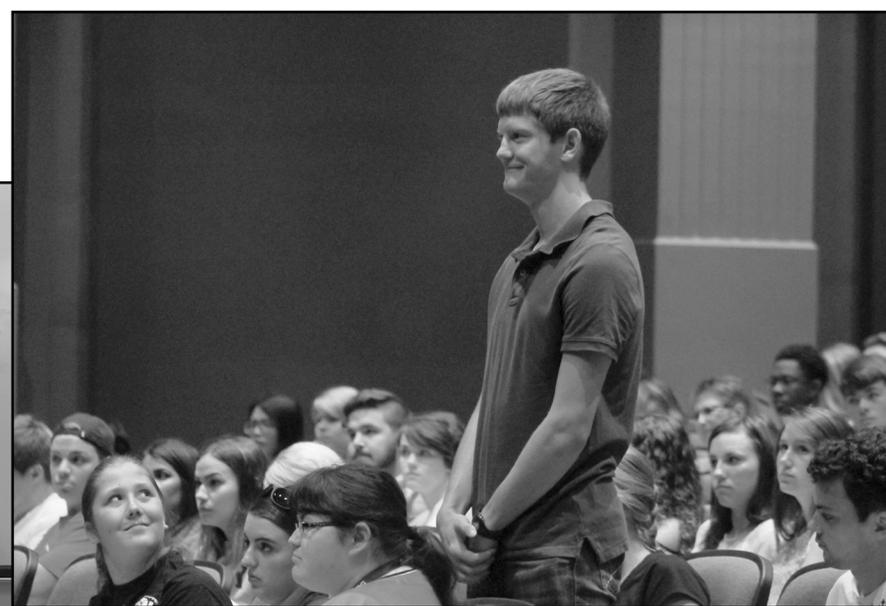
Above: Topham, middle, laughs with his track teammates while stretching before practice in the spring. Seth won the 110 meter hurdles at the Tabor Invitational, sending him to the national championships in May. (Kylie Stamper/Staff Photographer)

Right: Topham sits proudly in front of a Calculus problem he wrote out on the board. (Hanna House/Staff Photographer)



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Above: Topham stands to be recognized as Scholar of the College at Opening Convocation on Aug. 26 in Richardson Auditorium. The recognition goes to the senior with the highest GPA. (Kylie Stamper/Staff Photographer)