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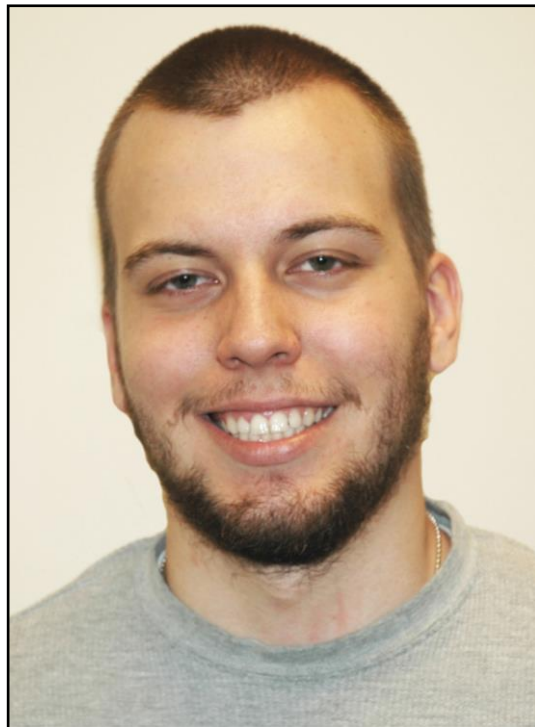
MSCC Student Accepted into Donaghey Scholars Program at UALR

Mid-South Community College honor student Roko Miocic has earned acceptance into the prestigious Donaghey Scholars Program at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He will receive a full tuition and fees scholarship, an \$8,000 yearly stipend, and a housing allowance for up to three years of study.

According to the UALR website, Donaghey Scholars are well-recognized by university, state, and national awards for excellence. They have earned Truman, Goldwater, National Science Foundation, Rotary, and Fulbright scholarships. The first female Rhodes Scholar in the Arkansas competition's history was a Donaghey Scholar, and the state's first Mitchell Scholar was also a program participant.

"The pool of applicants this year was our largest ever, and most of the applicants were unusually well qualified," wrote C. Earl Ramsey, Director, Donaghey Scholars Program, in an award letter to Miocic. "Your selection is a distinct honor. I look forward to your joining what I hope will prove to be one of the strongest classes in the history of the Donaghey Scholars Program."

Miocic, a citizen of Croatia who came to the U.S. as a high school exchange student in 2010, said the scholarship opportunity is a dream come true.



“I was always dreaming about coming to the U.S. and going to college to get a four-year degree,” he said. “In the Croatian middle class, you generally do the same thing day after day after day. I wanted something more, and now I have that opportunity.”



Roko Miocic participates in MSCC's Spring Fling 2012

He expressed deep appreciation for the help he received from MSCC employees.

“I cannot say ‘thank you’ enough,” Miocic said. “It’s hard to express how grateful I am for all of these people who assisted me. Everybody at one point just jumped in and said, ‘We’re going to help you out.’ They made it all possible.”

“My situation was a little more complex than most people here, but they really helped me out with finances and found ways to help me with scholarships.”

Miocic said MSCC President Dr. Glen Fenter; then-Athletic Director Jason Carmichael; instructors Erin Gordon, Jeff Gray, Carol Lane, and Pam Capps; TRiO Student Support Services counselor John Easley (who knew about the Donaghey Scholars Program and mentioned it); Learning Success Center Director Dr. Elaine Wilkins; Allied Health Program Coordinator Dr. Craig Lafferty, and Administrative Assistant Lindsey Stevens were among the many people on the MSCC campus who went the extra mile to help him continue to pursue his dream.

“I can’t say anything without mentioning Miss Gordon,” he said. “She spent a lot of extra time helping me.”

“It wouldn’t have been possible without everybody’s help, including Roko’s,” Gordon said. “I don’t even have the words to describe him as a student. I may never see another one like him. When I’ve had him in class, I’ve looked at him and thought, ‘This could be the next Nikola Tesla’ (an inventor, visionary, and pioneer in scientific development). You know there’s something special when you meet him.”

“It’s mind boggling how quickly he catches on. He’s really sharp, but he’s also very humble and extremely polite. Not only that, he’s a champion of other students. He fits well into every community on our campus.”

In addition to employee support and encouragement, Miocic received nearly \$11,000 in scholarship money from the Thomas B. Goldsby Jr. fund to meet his college and living expenses during his two years at MSCC.

“Without the generosity of the Goldsby family, none of this would have happened,” Miocic said. “They have given me a great opportunity, and I can’t thank them enough.”

While his parents have helped with his finances, Miocic said his family could never have paid for his U.S. education.

“By Croatian standards, we have somewhat a middle class family, but if you were to convert that money to U.S. dollars, not so much,” he said. Miocic’s mother, who has two college degrees, works in a science and information library, and his father is retired from the military. He has two brothers in high school in Croatia.

When he decided he wanted to come to the U.S., he began doing research to find the best way. He was told applying to an exchange student program would likely present the best scenario.

“One day I talked with my parents and told them what I wanted to do,” he said. “It took a couple of days to talk it through. I thought of that as my option, my way to succeed in life, and they decided to support me.”

Miocic said leaving his family was far from easy.

“I grew up sharing a bedroom with my brothers and rarely had an occasion to be home alone,” he explained. “We were really close – fighting, agreeing, playing basketball, watching TV. We did everything together. Not being able to see each other



Roko poses for his official Greyhound photo in 2011

face-to-face was an adjustment that I had to make. But I knew this was my goal, and it was a sacrifice that I needed to make to be able to do what I want to do.”

Miocic plans to pursue a computer science degree at UALR but hasn’t ruled out other possibilities.

“My high school back in Croatia was a math high school, so we had a lot of extra math, physics, and computer classes,” he explained. “I kind of grew up in computer science. Even though I’m still open to other possibilities, that kind of seems like something that is sticking out to me.”

A computer science professor at UALR told him almost every student does an internship at a local company. In most of those cases, the companies offer the interns a job after graduation. “That’s the best possible option for me,” he said.

Miocic, who speaks seven languages, originally came to MSCC because of his interest in the Greyhound basketball program. Kevin Kyzer, his coach at Heber Springs High School, encouraged him to go to West Memphis for a tryout.

“Even though MSCC was not giving away basketball scholarships at the time, he said it would be a good situation for me,” Miocic said. He impressed the coaches during his tryout and became a Greyhound for the 2011-12 season.

Miocic had never visited a two-year institution, so his only knowledge of community college came from what he had seen in movies.

“When I first heard it was a community college, I expected a couple of buildings and that’s it,” he said. “When I came here for a visit and saw how nice it was, I was really surprised, in a good way.

“What I like about here is it’s a small community, especially on the campus. Everybody knows everybody, and if you need extra help in some of your classes, your instructors are willing to help you out. I can walk over to the Reynolds Center, and everyone’s going to speak because they know me or know of me.”

In his first year at MSCC, Miocic discovered a talent that eventually changed his focus. It all started during mandatory study halls for athletes.

“A lot of guys were struggling with math, so they were coming to me,” he said. “I was explaining it to them, and they were always giving me these compliments that I made it easier for them.”

Dr. Wilkins noticed Miocic's ability to help his fellow basketball players and offered him a tutoring job in the Learning Success Center.

"It was a win-win situation," he said. "I was still helping people, and I was getting paid for it. That was really a blessing to me and to my family because at that point they were sending me money. Now they're sending a little bit less because I can pay for some of my own expenses."

"Roko played an integral part in the development of the current tutorial services offered to MSCC students because his academic confidence was used as a tutorial standard," Dr. Wilkins said. "His ability to project his academic confidence onto others through the process of sharing knowledge is one of his greatest strengths."

Miocic had intended to play basketball for two years, but when the 2012-13 season approached, he realized he needed to make a tough decision. He couldn't keep playing, take classes, and continue working 20 hours per week. Something had to go, and it turned out to be basketball.

"I did a little bit of math – surprise, surprise – and saw that I would be losing quite a bit of money," he explained. "I'm realistic about my abilities, and I knew that this would probably be my last year of playing college basketball."

"I had to decide if basketball or tutoring and focusing on my grades was going to influence my life more. That was a tough moment because I started practicing basketball when I was in the first grade."

Miocic will graduate summa cum laude (highest academic honors) from MSCC on May 9 with an Associate of Arts degree.