

Richard Dustin Parker, Wins 2014-2015 Outstanding EXL Student Award

The Outstanding EXL Student Award is given annually to a student who holds a distinguished record of service in the EXL Scholars Program. When Richard Dustin Parker learned about Organizational Communication and its high involvement in the Experiential Learning Program, he knew that he was in the right school and in the right major. Through these interactive courses, Parker received hands-on learning that impacted him personally. In his Intercultural Communication course, Parker was paired with an ESL (English as a Second Language) student so that the partners could learn more about each other's cultures. The two quickly became friends and continue their friendship, though they now live thousands of miles apart. On a professional level, many of Parker's EXL classes have opened doorways for volunteer work and networking. Reflecting on this, Parker stated, "Each of these courses have impacted me in such a way that a standard class cannot come close to. It has allowed me to network with local business members and owners, make new friends through shared experiences, and even improve my day-to-day life by showing me how to use the information that we learn in class to its fullest potential in the world outside of academia." Parker has volunteered and interned with a variety of organizations in the Middle Tennessee area, including the Alvin C. York VA Hospital in Murfreesboro. Parker also notes that MTSU's campus benefits just as much from experiential learning as the program's students and outside community. In a Health Campaigns course, Parker and his classmates created an interactive display on body image with the slogan "#Good2BMe" that promoted greater self-esteem in the campaign's participants. This message of positive body image was talked about for the next few weeks following the class project. Recalling experiences such as these, Parker says, "These EXL courses have been invaluable to my collegiate career thus far, I couldn't imagine taking the same courses as standard classes."