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Illinois Wesleyan Student Researcher a McKnight Prize Finalist

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan senior Matthew Bockman has been named a finalist for the **Frank and Sara McKnight Prize** in Undergraduate Chemistry, one of the nation's top undergraduate research awards. Winners will be named in mid-November following presentation of their research to the sponsoring UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. Bockman becomes the third McKnight finalist named from Illinois Wesleyan in the past six years.



Matthew Bockman

"We are extremely proud of Matt and the fact that a biology major could compete for such an important chemistry prize," said Beling Professor of Natural Sciences and Professor of Chemistry Ram Mohan, who nominated Bockman. "What else could better illustrate how opportunities exist at IWU across majors for students."

Bockman, a senior biology major, spent two semesters and two summers in Mohan's laboratory developing **green chemistry** applications for use in the pharmaceutical industry.

"The research that I did in Prof. Mohan's lab over the summer, which is what I will be presenting at the McKnight conference, involves environmentally friendly organic synthesis focusing on green chemistry. This includes working with compounds that are nontoxic, noncorrosive, easy to handle and relatively inexpensive. I used a bismuth-based catalyst to carry out a chemical reaction that normally involves more harsh reaction conditions that are not 'green'," said Bockman.

The McKnight Prize was established by UT Southwestern Medical Center, which is part of the University of Texas system. Prizes are awarded to undergraduates during their senior year in three categories: Chemistry, Biophysics or Quantitative Biology, and Biological Chemistry. Each year about 15 McKnight finalists are chosen from hundreds nominated across the country. Finalists are invited to UT Southwestern where they give poster presentations on their work. Winners are then selected based on the significance of their research and the quality of their presentation.

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