John Amodeo is the graduate student recipient of the 2021 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award. As a doctoral student in the Cell and Molecular Biology Program in Duke’s School of Medicine, John has distinguished himself in the dimensions of selflessness, generosity of service, character, integrity and depth of spirituality.

John was nominated by his faculty mentor, scientific advisor and pastor. One nominator wrote, “John’s kindness, gentle strength, and practice of selflessness he brings to his professional, personal and extracurricular endeavors make him a valuable member of the community and mark him as someone who is making a difference in the world around him.”

John is an alumnus of Lenoir-Rhyne University where he graduated with a degree in Biology and minor in Chemistry. He then served as a Post-Baccalaureate Research Fellow at the Department of Neuroscience in the School of Medicine at the University of South Carolina. John arrived at Duke in fall 2020 to begin his graduate studies and has already accomplished so much.

Within his first year as a doctoral student, John was selected to serve in a leadership role on BioCoRE, a prestigious graduate student diversity program at Duke’s School of Medicine. He serves on BioCoRE’s Community Development Team where he is responsible for cultivating and celebrating diversity at Duke and in surrounding Durham communities. He hosts outreach events at local schools, organizes fundraisers for community development and creates networking opportunities for under-represented or marginalized communities in the biosciences.

Community engagement has been a part of John’s life prior to Duke, with one nominator sharing his “attitude of service was cultivated early, as he has been involved in outreach and community service as a teenager.” While the pandemic has created a unique dynamic for John’s first year of graduate school, he has volunteered in Duke Health COVID vaccination clinics in various capacities. In the initial months of the pandemic, prior to arriving at Duke, John volunteered with the University of South Carolina’s School of Medicine efforts, providing hygiene kits to those living in shelters and meals to those food insecure or vulnerable.

One nominator shared, “John’s spirituality underlies his other outstanding qualities and strengths...his worldview hinges on loving and serving his neighbor spiritually, physically and emotionally.” John is an active member in his local church, where he teaches in the children’s ministry program and leads a Bible study. Beyond his church, John provides free childcare for families in the Durham community and works with the School of Medicine’s efforts to partner with the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service. One nominator remarked, “the depth of John’s spirituality has never been to a shallow stream, but a deep well.”

John’s impact on those around him is clear in his nomination. Through his involvement in opportunities within his department, School of Medicine, Duke and the local community, John has sought ways to make a positive difference in the world around him. His pastor shared John is “noble, generous, loves to serve, he is selfless and has a spirit that just won’t quit.”
Duke University is proud to name John Amodeo as the graduate student recipient of the 2021 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for his deep commitment to serving others and for his contributions to Duke, Durham, and his church community.