Materials science and engineering senior Kendell Pawelec, of Howell, Mich., has been named a 2010 United States Gates Scholar and will pursue her doctorate at the University of Cambridge.

“During my search for the perfect graduate school, I became intrigued by the history and academic excellence offered by Cambridge,” said Pawelec, MSU’s third Gates Scholar and the only 2010 such scholar in the Big 10. There were about 800 U.S. applicants, according to Cambridge University.

“Without a doubt, the questions that interest me the most in my field are related to the way living systems interact with materials,” she said. “I am excited at the prospect of studying materials science at Cambridge, with its excellence in biomaterials research, as I obtain my Ph.D.”

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation established the scholarship in 2000 with a $210 million donation to allow postgraduates to continue studies at Cambridge University. The awards cover the full cost of graduate study – doctorate or master’s level. Since 2001, there have been 827 Gates Scholars from 85 different countries. The 2010 cohort of U.S. scholars includes 29 students from 20 states.

A member of the Honor’s College, Pawelec has a 4.0 grade point average. She will pursue a doctorate in materials science and metallurgy at Cambridge after receiving her bachelor’s degree in materials science and engineering from MSU in May.

Pawelec began materials science research in 2007 while serving as a research assistant for MSU’s Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics. Most recently, she worked as a research assistant for the Department of Chemical Engineering. Pawelec’s strong research focus landed her a position on MSU’s Undergraduate Research Advisory Board in 2008.

In addition, she spent summer 2008 interning at the Institute of Material Science and Technology in Jena, Germany.

“Kendell is a superb scholar with a true passion for biomaterials research,” said Satish Udpa, dean of the College of Engineering. “I am confident that her commitment to her work in biomaterials today will have a great impact in the field of medical technology tomorrow. We are honored that one of our own has been recognized with this prestigious scholarship.”

And while Pawelec is passionate about science, she also has a fondness for arts and language. She plays first violin for the Livingston Symphony Orchestra in Howell. Pawelec is also an ambassador for the MSU branch of the German Academic Exchange Service, helping to promote the New York-based organization’s scholarships and serving as a liaison for parents and students.

“Kendell Pawelec knew with uncanny certainty that Cambridge University is where she needs to be to continue her academic studies. With single-mindedness purpose she has worked hard and engaged others in her goal,” said Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore, dean of MSU’s Honors College. “Kendell’s success is yet another example of the truly amazing things MSU undergraduates are capable of achieving.”

Ultimately, Pawelec hopes to use her international education and research experiences to foster advances in medicine.

“With a firm understanding of biomaterials, I plan on working in an industry where I can have the greatest impact on current medical technology,” Pawelec said.
For more about the Gates Cambridge Scholarships, go to http://www.gatesscholar.org/

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