



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Honors student’s quest for knowledge leads to hippo sweat

BY JENNIFER DIMAS

Honors student Alex Harvey never misses an opportunity to learn about something new. Harvey is graduating from the College of Agricultural Sciences with a bachelor’s degree in Animal Science and minors in microbiology and Spanish. As part of the Honors Program, Harvey presented her thesis this spring on the antimicrobial properties of hippopotamus sweat. She was aiming to prove that hippo sweat may inhibit the growth of bacteria that can cause disease in humans. She actually gathered a hippo’s sweat herself with the help of zookeepers from the Denver Zoo.

“Alex is very inquisitive and wants to gain knowledge,” said Karen Sellins, a senior research associate in CSU’s Nutritional Biochemistry Laboratory and one of Harvey’s mentors. “She began the tradition of sending me ‘fun facts’ along with her data and one of those about hippo sweat turned into her honors thesis.”

Since she was a freshman, Harvey has worked on a variety of undergraduate research. She’s worked in the Animal Nutrition Lab with Animal Sciences Professor Terry Engle, conducted HIV research with Ramesh Akkina, professor of virology, and camelid research with Tawfik Aboellial, associate professor of anatomic pathology in CSU’s Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

“Alex Harvey is by far one of the most impressive students that I have known,” said Engle. “She has a contagious enthusiasm for learning and never misses an opportunity to get involved.”

As a first-generation scholar Harvey often worked two or three jobs along with 20 to 30 hours a week in the three different labs on campus. Growing up on a hobby farm in rural Wisconsin, Harvey gravitated toward working with animals. On her first visit to Colorado State University she immediately felt at home and that she was part of CSU’s “Ag Family.”

Outside of class and work, Harvey is a truly engaged CSU student participating in the President’s Leadership Program, Collegiate 4-H, Ag Ambassadors, Microbiology Club, the Animal Welfare Judging Team and even intramural sports. The summer after her freshman year, she volunteered in Bali to help provide veterinary care and immunizations for dogs and cats on the island at her own expense.

She has received numerous awards and honors including the President’s Leadership Program Student Leader of the Year, Overall High Point Undergraduate at the Intercollegiate Animal Welfare Judging and Assessment Contest and Department of Animal Sciences Outstanding Animal Sciences Senior Award.

Harvey plans to attend veterinary school at University of Wisconsin-Madison after graduation.



WARNER COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources grad awarded NSF fellowship

BY JENNIFER DIMAS

Dusty Gannon grew up surrounded by the picturesque beauty of the Rocky Mountains in Fairplay, Colo. As a child, his parents didn’t give him gifts of video games and technology, instead they gave the gift of the outdoors — hiking, backpacking, rafting and camping.

As his love for the outdoors grew, it drew him to CSU’s Warner College of Natural Resources. This May, Gannon will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in Ecosystem Science and Sustainability with a GPA of 3.95. To add to his high achieving academic work in Ecosystem Science and Sustainability, Gannon also studied forest fire science in the Department of Forestry and Rangeland and Stewardship. In 2014, he was awarded the Forestry and Rangeland Stewardship Student of the Year.

When he arrived at Colorado State, Gannon said one of the obstacles he had to overcome was figuring out exactly what he wanted to study. It was his undergraduate work in the Funk Lab that would provide that direction. The Funk Lab focuses on evolution, ecology, genomics and conservation of biodiversity. Gannon said that his work in the lab was not something he planned, but once he started he knew he had found his niche.

He has now been an undergraduate research technician in the Funk Lab for four years, helping doctoral student Brian Gill with his research on latitudinal variation in elevation range sizes in stream insects. The EvoTrac project, which stands for Evolutionary and Ecological Variability in Organismal Trait Response with Altitude and Climate, focuses on predicting the consequences of rapid climate change on biodiversity loss and ecosystem function.

With help from members of the Funk and Hoke labs, Gannon wrote a proposal to study the evolutionary mechanisms behind species range limitation and its climate change implications, which has led to a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

“Dusty is a talented young scientist with a bright future in ecology,” said Chris Funk, associate professor of biology and director of the Funk Lab. “He is incredibly hard-working, detail-oriented and flexible. I would say that Dusty’s hard work in the lab has been critical in the success of our large, highly integrative project on the vulnerability of stream insects to climate change.”

Gannon says that among his experiences at CSU, receiving the NSF Fellowship is among his greatest achievements. Gannon plans to begin his graduate work in evolutionary ecology and genomics in the fall of 2016.

CSUMatters

CONVENTION BRINGS MORE THAN 1,200 DOUBLE BASSISTS TO CSU

The School of Music, Theatre and Dance at Colorado State University welcomes the International Society of Bassists biennial convention to the University Center for the Arts June 1-6. The convention draws more than 1,200 bassists from around the world, and is a tremendous opportunity to attend concerts and clinics with world-renowned players and teachers.

“The ISB convention will help solidify CSU as a destination school of music throughout the country and world,” said Forest Greenough, assistant professor of double bass. “This will be the largest single gathering of professional classical and jazz musicians ever in the history of Fort Collins.” Contact Forest Greenough at Forest.Greenough@colostate.edu

Colorado State University

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NEW BELGIUM’S GIFT ELEVATES CSU’S FERMENTATION SCIENCE PROGRAM

Thanks to gifts from New Belgium Brewing and its co-founder, along with previous support from two of Fort Collins’ other major brewers, CSU’s Fermentation Science and Technology program is ready to take flight.

New Belgium Brewing is the latest to provide support for the Fermentation Science and Technology program, which debuted in August 2013. New Belgium is joining with co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Kim Jordan to give \$1 million to update and renovate facilities. The gift includes \$500,000 from Jordan and an additional \$500,000 to be allocated over five years through New Belgium’s philanthropy program.

COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES

Sedillo fulfills her dream with degree

BY KORTNY ROLSTON

When Kassandra Sedillo graduates this month from the College of Natural Sciences with a degree in chemistry, the Denver native will have fulfilled a goal she set at age 12 during a science camp at Colorado State University.

It was that week Sedillo decided she wanted to go to college – something no one else in her family had done – and that she would graduate from CSU.

“I really loved the campus and the experience I had here,” said Sedillo, who is minoring in microbiology. “Everyone was very friendly and welcomed us on campus. I remember walking around and telling myself I would go here.”

Her decision never wavered and over the next six years, getting into college kept her going as she and her siblings were shuffled between schools and families in foster care, “couch surfed” with her mother’s friends and, at times, were homeless.

Her home life was in constant upheaval as her mother struggled with her meth addiction and to provide for Sedillo and her siblings.

“I always liked school, especially math and science, and my teachers really encouraged me,” Sedillo said. “Everyone around me was doing drugs and having kids at 15 and 16. I didn’t want that. I

learned from their mistakes.”

Even after Sedillo arrived at CSU, she faced additional challenges. Without family or parental support, she connected with CSU’s Fostering Success program, which assists students who have come out of the foster system.

“(Fostering Success) made sure I had what I needed,” Sedillo said. “My very first care package had sheets, bath towels and a shower caddy. I didn’t have any of those things. They become your family and help you succeed.”

And succeed Sedillo has. She has maintained a strong academic record while helping to care for her younger siblings (two have lived with her) and to show them a life beyond drugs.

She’s also conducted research for Tomislav Rovis, a professor in the Department of Chemistry. That experience helped her land a job at Gilead Sciences Inc. in Seattle where she will be helping to develop cancer drugs.

“Kassandra is an amazing young woman. I had her in a class some three years ago and she’s been a member of my research group since then,” Rovis said. “She’s a pleasure to have in the lab and has taken to research well. Classroom success does not always translate to research success. Kassandra’s attitude and perseverance are her strengths.”



COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Whitesell found her inspiration in health care outreach, service

BY JEFF DODGE

Mackenzie Whitesell says her inspiration to become a physician and help marginalized groups gain access to health care grew out of an extracurricular experience her freshman year.

A few months after participating in a social justice retreat called Campus Step Up hosted by CSU’s Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement office, she was paired with a Fort Collins man for a day as part of SLiCE’s Project Homeless Connect. After hearing about the terrible things he’d been through, she became motivated to help those with limited access to health resources.

“That changed the way I looked at identities and privilege,” she said of those experiences. “I’ve been very lucky, I’ve had lots of opportunities.”

In return, the Evergreen native has devoted much of her college career to service and outreach. In addition to graduating this month from the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences with a degree in environmental health, Whitesell has been director of health for the Associated Students of Colorado State University, co-president of Colleges Against Cancer for two years, a member of the Hygiene for Humanity club, and a student representative on the Department of Environmental and Radiological Health Sciences advisory board. She volunteered for ChildSafe and the Poudre School District’s McKinney Backpack Program, and helped start CSU’s Chronic Health Mentoring Program through her role with ASCSU.

“I feel like health is the cornerstone of everything,” she says.

She’s also made her mark as a scholar. Aside from her 4.0 GPA and membership in the Honors Program, she has been published twice. As a freshman, she wrote one paper about risk factors for adolescent substance abuse — after being inspired by mentoring at-risk youth with Campus Corps. That paper, and another on the risk of breast cancer among African American women, received High Honors at CSU’s Celebrate Undergraduate Research and



Creativity Showcase.

Whitesell participated in the Colorado Collegiate Health Professions Development Program and studied in Costa Rica last summer to learn medical Spanish. Before going to medical school, she’s taking a year off in hopes of participating in an AmeriCorps program called Community HealthCorps.

Whitesell said she chose CSU over the University of Colorado, where her two sisters attended, because of a first impression.

“I really recall that on my tour of CSU everyone was always smiling, and that sense of community really resonated with me,” she said. “I decided I wanted to branch out a little bit.”



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Passion propels Peters

BY KATE HAWTHORNE JERACKI

The word “passion” is sometimes overused. But in Corinna Peters’ case, it made the difference in finding her career.

The first-generation college student from Castle Rock started as an undeclared major in liberal arts, with no idea what she wanted to study. The youngest of three sisters, Corinna had traveled a rocky road to Fort Collins, even bouncing around from family to family during her sophomore year in high school when her mother hit a rough patch in her life.

In fact, Corinna hadn’t even planned to go to college. She was going to keep working at Chik-fil-A to help support her mother.

“Officer Hedges (a high school safety officer) was like my mentor, and he really got on me for that,” Corinna recalls. “He said that job wasn’t going to pay enough to help out anyway. I said we were really poor and I couldn’t afford to go to college, but he told me there was financial aid available, so just apply. So I applied.”

She applied only to CSU, after she took an Admissions tour and “saw the Oval. I knew this was the only place I wanted to be.”

Part of her financial aid package was work-study as an administrative intern in Plant Sciences, a job she still holds. In her sophomore year, Corinna became a management major in the College of Business, and while finance and accounting classes were useful, they didn’t really catch her attention.

“Then I discovered human resources,” she said. “I took a class with Tim Galpin — he’s an awesome teacher. I loved the material and found it fascinating. There are so many facets to HR where you can really help people. We always struggled really hard, and I want to make it easier for working families, like my dad, who runs his own mechanic’s shop in Alamosa.”

Corinna, who is also this year’s president of the CSU student chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management, will combine her passion for HR with her computer skills at a company that creates customized online tools for payroll and other HR operations. She will walk with her class at this year’s commencement, but finish up her final credits online while she works full time.

“I have a job and get benefits and health care — all things I never had before,” she said.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Football created a future for SteveO

BY TONY PHIFER

It’s difficult to imagine a more unlikely college graduate than Steve Michel.

He’s one of eight kids raised in a single-parent home — and that parent could not read or write English. Michel could barely read himself going into high school, and his freshman grade point average was 1.8. And he’s not just the first in his family to attend college — he’s likely the first person in his Orlando, Fla., neighborhood to do so.

“If someone had told me eight years ago that I would be graduating from college I would have thought they were crazy,” said Michel. “That thought never even crossed my mind growing up.”

For much of his youth, it appeared Michel was going to be just another statistic from a poor neighborhood. He was selling drugs, smoking pot and getting away with whatever he could.

“I probably should be in prison — or dead,” he said. “I just thank God I was able to get out of that before it was too late.”

A talent for football and some caring mentors at Jones High School helped Michel — call him SteveO, by the way — create an opportunity to change his life by attending Colorado State University on a football scholarship. As a result, he will graduate from the College of Health and Human Sciences with a degree in social work — and he will have earned that diploma in four years.

Malcolm Scott, assistant professor in CSU’s School of Social Work and faculty adviser to student-athletes in the program, said college has been anything but easy for Michel. The early papers he wrote for classes needed a great deal of work, and he lacked study skills.

“The great thing about Steve is he was willing to be mentored, and he’s just as tenacious with his academics as he is on the football field,” Scott said. “To see the growth he’s made, I’m absolutely thrilled. I’m very, very proud of him.”



Michel’s CSU football career has been solid. A linebacker and defensive tackle, he has recorded 53 tackles to date, and he’s a likely starter this fall. He would love to

play professionally but realizes education is a better bet. Fittingly, he has already been accepted into the master’s program in social work at CSU.

“I want to be a role model – someone kids can look up to,” he said. “I want to be able to tell my story so I can help other kids do what I’ve done.”

ONLINEPLUS

OnlinePlus keeps firefighter moving up the career ladder

BY ZACHARY MCFARLANE

In 2010, his 11th year as a firefighter in Eagle County, Colo., Tyson Houston was suddenly overcome by a series of seizures. Diagnosed with adult onset epilepsy, he could no longer work on the fire truck.

Until then, his path had always been clear. Just two years earlier, Houston had started working on his bachelor’s degree in fire and emergency services through CSU’s OnlinePlus. Education had always been important to him, and he wanted to further his base of field-specific knowledge.

But the sudden diagnosis brought with it uncertainty. He postponed his two courses and took time to reflect on whether or not the fire service was still a good fit. In that reflection, Houston found clarity. While the sudden and unpredictable nature of his seizures served as a barrier to riding a fire truck, he knew he wanted to pursue the many other roles available within his field.


He returned to service, re-engaged with his coursework, and continued his journey toward his bachelor’s degree, which he is receiving this month. The fire service had always been good to him and continued that trend when supervisors reassigned him to the role of training officer with the Summit Fire Authority, High Country Training Center. This new role gave him the opportunity to continue moving up the ladder, just in a different capacity. As a training officer, he now influences the next generation of firefighters who are responding to new, modern challenges that continue to redefine the profession.

“That’s where fire service needs people the most,” Houston said, “people leading fire services into the next century. We aren’t fighting fires the way we used to, and fire service, as a whole, needs to adapt. So, through my coursework and experience, I’m picking up how to teach the younger generations that aren’t running fires every day.”

His degree also affords him the opportunity to show other firefighters the importance of education.

“Graduating means a lot,” Houston said. “One of the biggest things is that they can’t

take education away from you. Certificates and such have a ‘come due’ date. You’ll eventually have to get recertified and such. But this degree will hang on my wall for the rest of my life. And I’m always trying to convince my guys that what you learn, and what you come out of getting your degree with, it’s yours forever.”



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Spring 2015 Commencement Schedule

Friday, May 15, 2015		
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine	8:00 a.m.	Moby Arena
Air Force ROTC Commissioning	8:00 a.m.	Lory Student Center, Grand Ballroom
Army ROTC Commissioning	9:30 a.m.	Lory Student Center, Theatre
College of Engineering	11:30 a.m.	Moby Arena
Graduate School	3:00 p.m.	Moby Arena
Warner College of Natural Resources	7:00 p.m.	Lory Student Center, Grand Ballroom
College of Health and Human Sciences	7:30 p.m.	Moby Arena
Saturday, May 16, 2015		
College of Natural Sciences	8:00 a.m.	Moby Arena
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences	8:00 a.m.	Lory Student Center, Grand Ballroom
College of Agricultural Sciences	11:30 a.m.	Moby Arena
College of Business	3:00 p.m.	Moby Arena
College of Liberal Arts I: Art and Music, Theatre, and Dance	4:30 p.m.	Lory Student Center, Grand Ballroom
College of Liberal Arts II	7:15 p.m.	Moby Arena

 **Colorado State University**

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Engineering grad to use her skills to make the world a better place

BY KORTNY ROLSTON

When Jamie Urban tells people she is getting her degree mechanical engineering, many ask how that fits in her with plans to work in the developing world.

But Urban, who graduates this month from CSU’s College of Engineering, has a ready reply. She explains that her goal is to bring reliable access to power and electricity to the millions of people in the world who don’t have it and how, at its core, engineering is about helping people. “Most people don’t think of engineering that way, but that’s what it is about,” Urban said. “Engineering is about developing technologies, processes or products that help people.”

The Durango, Colo., native has seen it firsthand. Growing up, she and her family often traveled to India to work at an orphanage that took children in from the streets. For several weeks during the summer, they would help at the home, bringing medical and dental supplies and other projects.

But it was the summer between her sophomore and junior year at Colorado State University that Urban’s interest in mechanical engineering – specifically electricity and power systems – was piqued. Her father, a mechanical engineer, designed and built a solar-powered system for the orphanage so the occupants would have a steady supply of electricity.

The solar panels generated electricity for the building and any excess power was stored on site in batteries so it could be used later.

“There are a lot of outages and brownouts in India,” Urban said. “The solar panels and batteries provide electricity so the students can study at night. It made a big difference



Jamie Urban helped her father build a solar-power system for an orphanage in India two years ago.

for them.” That experience prompted her to pursue a major in mechanical engineering. She will get to put her training and education into practice in August when she moves to New Delhi, to intern for Engineering Ministries International, a Colorado Springs-based nonprofit organization that helps support

infrastructure projects in the developing world.

While Urban won’t be working specifically on an energy project, she believes the internship will give her valuable engineering experience.

“I really want to bring sustainable energy systems to remote areas in the (developing) world,” she said.

Living in India also will enable her to pursue another passion. Urban wants to connect with international organizations working to end sex trafficking or that help women and children who’ve escaped that life.

“I feel like God is calling me to work on these issues in the developing world and has led me on a path to do that,” she said.

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Owen survived trial by fire to become a teacher

BY JEFF DODGE

When the fire started in her townhome, Jennifer Owen’s two young girls were fast asleep. Luckily, Owen wasn’t.

“I went to my kids’ room, and there were flames outside their window,” she recalls. “I was able to get them out, but we watched it — we watched our roof collapse.”

The house was destroyed. It was a traumatic experience.

“It’s something that we’re still working through every day,” she says. “We lost everything.”

Luckily, the Larimer County community stepped up after the July 2013 fire in the Bull Run Townhomes and donated virtually everything that sits in the Owens’ Loveland home today.

“Someone even gave us two beds for the girls,” Owen says.

The fire forced the 29-year-old Owen to drop the CSU summer class she was taking, but she persevered and is graduating this month from the College of Liberal Arts with a degree in English and her teaching license.

The first-generation college student decided to attend CSU in hopes of becoming a teacher after being inspired by her oldest daughter, Lily, who is a curious, motivated learner, a “sponge” for knowledge.

Owen had loved tutoring in high school and serving as a teaching assistant while earning an associate’s degree in film and video production from the Community College of Aurora.

This spring, she was a student teacher at Walt Clark Middle School in Loveland, where she made a visible improvement to the learning process: Students were required to put their smart phones in a basket on her desk as they walked into class, only retrieving them on their way



out at the end of the period. “Now all of the eighth-grade teachers do it,” she says. “They call it ‘Mrs. Owen’s Cell Phone Policy.’ It’s made a positive difference; they’re less distracted and more well-behaved.”

Now the member of the English honor society Sigma Tau Delta and the National Council for Teachers of English is looking for a teaching job in the area. She says she loves teaching middle school because it’s such a formative time in kids’ lives — and unfortunately it’s also often the time when their priorities shift and they lose their curiosity.

“The intervention to keep that from happening needs to take place earlier,” Owen says. “I want to reach kids and help them not lose their desire to learn. You need to show them the relevance of everything they’re doing in class, why it’s useful and important to know.”

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