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Across the Spectrum

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



Going the extra mile

Undergrads take their studies beyond
the classroom with real-world research



Letter from the dean

Happy holidays to all, and thank you for taking time to reconnect with the College of Arts and Sciences through this issue of *Across the Spectrum*.

By the time you read this, we will be into the final stretch of the fall semester, which marks the end of my first semester as interim dean of the college, but definitely not my first on campus. I joined the FSU Department of Mathematics in 1987 and became an associate dean of the college in 2004.

I want to take a moment in this space to recognize the enormous contributions to the college of former Dean Joe Travis, who stepped down in July of 2011 to return to his research lab and to resume teaching. Joe is a gifted individual who served the College of Arts and Sciences as dean for six years, and I am honored to have had an opportunity to work closely with him. I hope you will join me in wishing Joe the best as he races along to his next set of accomplishments.

This issue showcases the efforts and accomplishments of some of the college's hardest-working undergraduates, students who have opted to pursue research projects in addition to their regular work in the classroom. The projects range from discovering and deciphering Etruscan graffiti to helping build computer models that predict rising sea levels. This issue also highlights two graduate students whose research and scholarship have earned them national attention. But the students within

these pages are not the only students working hard and doing great things; I am proud of the curiosity, industriousness, and talent displayed by students in all of our degree programs.

I am also proud of the faculty members who work with them, and was touched to read within this issue a tribute written by a recent alumna whose faculty mentor helped her survive—and eventually thrive—in the wake of personal tragedy.

Another tribute from a former student to a hardworking faculty member comes in a different form—that of a scholarship created by an FSU alumni couple, Courtney and Shari White. Announcing this gift is a special treat for me, as Courtney was in a linear algebra class I taught in 1991, and the gift honors a mathematics colleague, Professor Bettye Anne Case. One of the most rewarding things about being at a university so long is seeing students take what they have learned at Florida State and use it as the basis for a successful career, as Courtney has done in actuarial science. Then to see Courtney and Shari turn their success into a gift that will help current and future students in actuarial science is more than rewarding. It is inspirational.

Moreover, it is also rewarding to see that the university is appreciated by the local community. For example, take the story in this issue about Brooks and Almena Pettit, who are not alumni of FSU, but who—as members of the Tallahassee community—have made a generous gift to the Institute on World War II and the Human Experience. Not only are the Pettits a family with a rich military history, but they are a family with a long commitment to higher education.

As part of the Arts and Sciences family, thank you for your commitment to higher education—and to this college.



Mathematics Professor Bettye Anne Case receives word from Interim Dean Sam Huckaba (right) and her department chair, Professor Philip Bowers, that a 1992 alumnus has created a scholarship fund in her honor. The gift is intended to help actuarial science students. Read more on page 30.



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Photo courtesy of Kim Reuter



On the cover
FSU grad Kim Reuter (left) walks on a beach in Madagascar. Read about her life's journey and her budding career as a field biologist on page 2.

Across the Spectrum

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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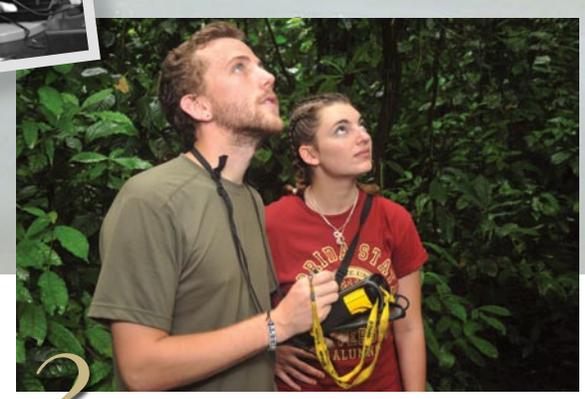
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Gift from Courtney and Shari White honors Professor Bettye Anne Case, who started the actuarial program.



One student's odyssey

2010 grad recounts how FSU mentor prepared her for life

By Kim Reuter

I flopped into the plush garnet chair and glanced around at the uneven stacks of paper piled in the sort of organized mess that one so often associates with nutty professors. I guess the assumption was half true; I *was* in the office of a professor, but he was not nutty.

The year was 2008, and the professor was Don Levitan. As he swiveled slowly back and forth in his chair in front of me, Bob Marley music playing in the background, he signed my grade waiver. For the third semester in a row, he had to approve my low grade point average, which had plummeted two years earlier after my mother took her own life

just five days before finals week in the fall of my sophomore year.

The months after she was gone in early 2007 had passed in a blur. I withdrew from school for a semester and hid in my father's house, just watching the days slide by. I have only a handful of memories from the three or four months that I was gone from Florida State. Even after I returned to Tallahassee, I probably would have made my way quietly toward graduation without much acclaim had it not been for the biology department's insistence that each student take three laboratory courses. And, of course, had it not been for Don Levitan.



Photos courtesy of Kim Reuter

Reuter wears her beloved FSU T-shirt while doing fieldwork in Africa.

“Don’t worry, Don,” I told him that day in the office. “I got all A’s and B’s last semester.”

“Good,” he said. “You’re going to be a biologist so keep it together.”

That was Don at his finest: short, direct, but unendingly steady. For reasons beyond my comprehension, he’d seen a spark in me that even I had yet to discover and had decided, without consultation or much fuss, that I was a student he was going to mentor. There were no inspirational speeches or soaring metaphors. There were no heartfelt talks or personal confessions.

It was a simple and unsentimental mentorship. Don asked questions that came across more like blunt suggestions, and I found myself agreeing with him almost always, as though I’d known he was right all along.

“This research will make a great paper, don’t you think? Let’s give it another year.”

“You know, I really like the work you are doing. I wonder if you are interested in working in Canada as my field assistant? It would be good for you—surrounded by other people like yourself.”



Kim Reuter (center) with mentor Don Levitan and grad student/collaborator Katie Lotterhos.

“Why should you take the MCAT [Medical College Admission Test]? You’re a biologist.”

And so, the months passed. With Don’s guidance, I published two research projects in esteemed journals, attended a national conference on marine ecology, and even won grant money. With a wide ranging set of research opportunities and a newfound reason to engage in my courses, I found myself enjoying life in Tallahassee, connecting with students and professors, and relishing every moment.

Before I knew it, it was April 2010. I graduated, and two weeks later I found myself on a plane to West Africa to begin a job as a field biologist helping search for endangered primate species in an unexplored section of rainforest.

And it was because of Don, and Florida State University, and everything the institution stands for, that any of this was possible. From there, I would go on to explore other parts of Africa, including the island nation of Madagascar.

I spent 10 weeks bushwhacking through the West African rainforest by day and sitting in remote field camps at night, only three other scientists to speak with, and more or less three days of hiking required to reach the nearest village. Allowed just 18 minutes of satellite phone time during our entire trip, our group would spend hours fantasizing about life back home. Our Spam dinners became steak feasts and our conversations crude re-enactments of past experiences. We acted out caricatures of the selves we’d been back in civilization. Wild imaginations were all we could afford—our packs left little room for anything else.

Yet despite being thousands of miles from the Florida State campus, FSU was on my mind. I thought of my Seminole ties whenever I would pull on my worn FSU T-shirt, purchased at the campus bookstore on my last day in Tallahassee.

Rubbed raw in patches (thanks to the many stone washes it received in unmapped rivers) and faded after weeks of use as a towel, a pillow, and a psychological comfort, it was one of only four shirts I brought with me to Africa. Even when forced to compromise my wardrobe and belongings, I could not split with the memory of the institution that had saved me in every way. No matter where I went or what I saw, FSU was with me, and I never forgot that my university had made each experience possible.

I sat on a Malagasy beach watching the sunset and a small boy nervously plopped himself onto the ground and asked, in perfect English, “What is the color of the sun in your country?”

Photo courtesy of Kim Reuter



Kim Reuter with students at a Malagasy school.

I taught in a school—unrenovated since Malagasy independence decades before—decorated with children’s graffiti, and was deeply moved to find one misspelled phrase that read, “Poverty is overcome by education.”

I listened to the 2010 World Cup quarter-finals huddling around an old battery-powered radio with Malagasy villagers. The Malagasy broadcast was first translated to French, and then from French to English for my benefit. Our radio cut out shortly before the end of the match, which Ghana ended up losing to Uruguay, and the entire village incorrectly celebrated Ghana’s win late into the night.

My mother’s death left me a hollow shell of whatever former self I had been. Even now, I’m not sure what motivated me to return to Florida State for my studies, though I know it is the best move I’ve ever made. I found a perfect mentor when Don decided to give me a chance. Following his steady advice, I slowly became a person who could live again, someone with dreams and goals and someone who was more than just a semi-orphan.

Because of Don Levitan, and the other caring people at Florida State University, I became a Seminole for life.

Kim Reuter is a 2010 graduate of Florida State University with a bachelor’s degree in biology. She is a recent recipient of a highly competitive National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship and is the founder of The Ladybug Project, a nonprofit organization that advances healthcare and education in Africa. At FSU, Reuter won an Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Award and traveled to British Columbia to do fieldwork under FSU biology Professor Don Levitan. Currently, she is a Ph.D. student at Temple University in Philadelphia focusing on community ecology and conservation biology in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the lab. At the site. On the page.

By Wil Oakes

Undergraduates in the College of Arts and Sciences are taking on research projects that only 10 years ago would have been exclusively the domain of graduate students. In the sciences as well as the humanities, new opportunities for hands-on work alongside faculty members are opening doors and putting FSU students ahead of the curve for employment and admission to grad school.

Joni Wildman

Creative Writing (English)



Photos courtesy of Joni Wildman

Creative writing major Joni Wildman focused her undergraduate career on finding ways to combine her artistic passions—poetry and painting.

After taking on a directed independent study with poet Barbara Hamby of the Department of English in which she wrote a series of poems from the perspective of fairytale characters, Wildman decided to expand the project. She won an Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Award, which allowed her to write, to research, and to travel to the prestigious Sewanee Writers' Conference in Tennessee while she took her small collection and turned it into a book.

"I had poems in the collection in the voices of Ursula the sea witch, Little Red Riding Hood, Scheherazade, and other female leads in fairytales, cartoons, and 1960s television and children's books," she says. "The narrative aspect of the poetry allowed me to change their stories, giving them an agency in the work that was distinctly mine, and merging stories together."

But winning an award and writing a complete book of poetry wasn't enough. To take the project even further, Wildman

created a series of oversized paintings to accompany her poems, drawing on mentors in the Department of Art.

"They are not illustrative," she says, "but rather, derived from the feel and tone of the poem and pop-culture images that come to mind from the experience of the poem."

Those paintings have been part of exhibitions at art galleries in Baton Rouge, La.; Monticello, Fla.; FSU's Museum of Fine Arts; and at the LeMoyné Gallery in downtown Tallahassee.

While Wildman is exceptionally self-motivated, she gives a great deal of credit for her success to the FSU faculty members who have guided her work. Hamby and her husband, FSU Professor David Kirby, have been especially helpful, and fiction Professor Robert Olen Butler, who collects Wildman's paintings, has also written recommendations on her behalf—including one that helped her land her spot at the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

Since graduating in Spring 2011, Wildman has been holding down three jobs as well as finishing up her book and painting series while she waits to apply for M.F.A. programs in either creative writing or painting—she still hasn't decided which. Either way, though, she knows her life will always be about creativity.

"I basically live in the studio," says Wildman. "I paint on my lunch breaks from work, but it isn't a burden. When you look at something that you made, when it's finished and you can say, 'I did that,' the following breath is more satisfying than anything in the world. You feel new again. I would not have been able to do it without FSU."



Creative writer and artist Joni Wildman works on one of a series of paintings that accompany her poetry.



Photo courtesy of Robin Watson

Robin Watson

Classics

Robin Watson (center) digs for ancient artifacts in Cetamura, an archaeological site in Italy.

Classics major Robin Watson had visited Italy before as a tourist, but when she made her way to Tuscany in the summer of 2010, she wasn't there to visit. She was there to uncover ancient history.

She made the trip with Professor Nancy de Grummond of the Department of Classics and a group of other students. Their goal was to study sacred *sigla*, markings on artifacts such as pottery, at the site of a religious sanctuary called Cetamura.

"Studying Etruscan *sigla* with Dr. de Grummond allowed me to be mentored personally by an expert in the field," says Watson. "I was able to see how she approached problems, and I was also able to start to form and voice my own opinions about what our research indicated."

As Watson describes them, these *sigla* are basically graffiti, markings that people would have carved or imprinted on jars, cookware, cloth, or fine plates. She and the other students hunted for their artifacts

themselves, and then set about the task of making sense of them by comparing them to markings found at other sacred sites.

After graduating in Spring 2011, Watson headed off to pursue a master's degree at Auburn University, buoyed just as much by her experiences in the field as she was by her time on campus.

"Undergraduate research was really the highlight of my career at FSU."

Undergraduate research was really the highlight of my career at FSU. –Robin Watson

Nicholas Heath

Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Science



Photos courtesy of Nicholas Heath

What turned into a full-blown research passion for surfer and student scientist Nick Heath started with a simple offhand comment.

In the summer of 2010, all eyes were on the Gulf of Mexico, where the Deepwater Horizon disaster had left a gusher of oil spewing freely into the ocean. Scientists were trying to find the best way to predict where the oil would go, and most were using models based primarily on wind.

One day, however, Associate Professor Mark Bourassa of the Department of Earth Ocean and Atmospheric Science mentioned another force of ocean movement, Stokes drift, which got Heath wondering whether he couldn't contribute something to the science of oil spill tracking himself.

"The idea was that the wind drift was very similar in magnitude and direction to Stokes drift," says Heath. "So the concept was to see how much impact Stokes drift had on the movement of oil at the surface."

Heath had an academic interest in the oil spill as a scientist, but the issue was also personal to him as an avid surfer.

"I do a lot of my surfing in the Gulf," he says, "so the oil spill was something that I was watching very closely."

His work on Stokes drift and oil slick movements landed Heath a spot at the Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium and then on to a second-place finish at the Northern Gulf Institute annual conference in Mobile, Ala.

After graduating in Spring 2011 with a major in meteorology and minors in math and physics, Heath moved on to graduate school but has stayed at FSU, where his love of scientific research first blossomed.

He has been studying air pollution over the Los Angeles basin, and even got the chance to fly aboard a NASA DC-8 to collect samples. His undergraduate experiences prepared him for the kind of integrated thinking such high-level research requires.

"I feel like completing an undergraduate honors thesis was the best thing that has ever happened to me," says Heath. "It taught me a lot of self-discipline. Also, I got to apply things I was learning in the classroom to a real-life situation. I remember learning things in class that I couldn't wait to apply to my research."

Avid surfer Nicholas Heath has a personal as well as academic interest in the health of the oceans. Heath (in headphones) collects air samples aboard a NASA DC-8.





Wright Dobbs

Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Science

Meteorology major Wright Dobbs knew early on what more and more undergraduates are coming to learn—research opens doors.

“I have been told numerous times by my professors and close friends that getting involved in undergraduate research/internships is a vital key to gaining experience for graduate school,” he says.

But when he first started looking for an opportunity, Dobbs wasn’t sure he had the necessary prerequisites. With no past research experience and no clear understanding of the internship/award landscape, he wasn’t sure where to begin.

He sought help from Craig Filar of the Office of National Fellowships, and things took off from there. Dobbs managed to win one of about 650 internships given out each year by the *Deutscher Akademischer*

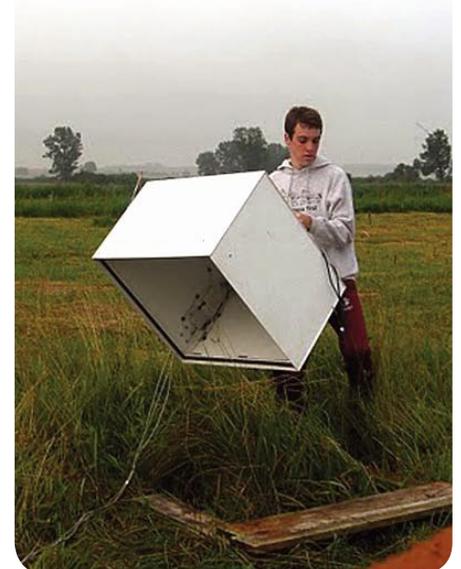
Austausch Dienst (DAAD, or the German Academic Exchange Service) to bring students to Germany for a summer of scientific research.

The award took him to the city of Münchenberg, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of Berlin, to work with three other students from the United States and Canada. They studied the impact of drained and undrained peatlands on gas emission from the soil—a topic with big implications on global warming.

The experience also had big implications for Dobbs, who, with two more years until graduation, is already looking toward future accomplishments rather than worrying about the past.

“This internship has been a tremendous opportunity to practice the research skills I will need when pursuing my master’s degree in graduate school,” he says.

Wright Dobbs (top) makes his way through a cornfield in Germany. While there on an internship, Dobbs (below) worked with other North American students to measure gas emissions from peatlands.



Photos courtesy of Wright Dobbs

Camelia Sherrod

Modern Languages and Linguistics

Before she embarked on her study of jazz in Russia, Camelia Sherrod didn't know whether she had what it takes to do serious research.

But with a little prodding from professors in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, particularly professors Robert Romanchuk and Lisa Wakamiya, she found herself immersed in Russian cultural history, examining the introduction of jazz in Soviet society in the 1920s and '30s.

Along the way, she got encouragement as well as collaboration, especially from Wakamiya.

"She was just as excited about the project as I was," says Sherrod. "We both knew it would be quite an undertaking, but she was an amazing encouragement every step of the way."

By the time Sherrod finished the final draft of her paper, titled "The Red Charleston," she no longer had questions about whether she could accomplish big things. Her project was selected for the 2011 Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium and earned praise from faculty members.

Since graduating in Spring 2011 with majors in Russian and German, Sherrod has been working to pay off her student loans and get certifications to travel and teach overseas. She hopes to work in Russia but is open to traveling just about anywhere. That confidence to tackle new experiences, she says, came at least in part due to her experience with undergraduate research at FSU.

"By the time the dust settled," says Sherrod, "I felt a level of accomplishment and pride that I had not felt in any of my three years prior."

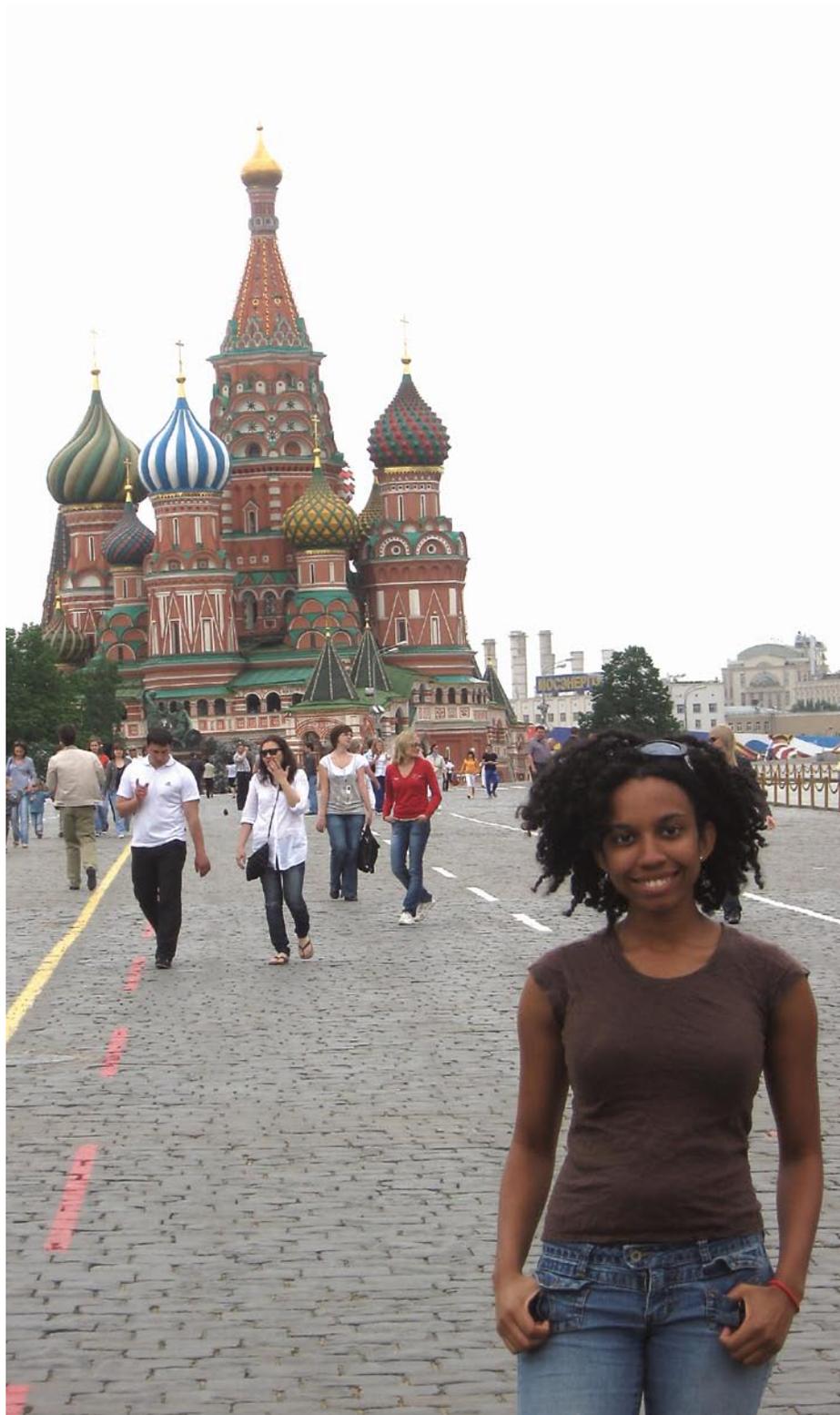


Photo courtesy of Camelia Sherrod

Camelia Sherrod visits St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow.

Ryan Jenkins

Philosophy

When Ryan Jenkins embarked on his Honors in the Major project in philosophy—a 50-page paper on the concept of how workers deserve their wages—he didn't yet fully appreciate just how much the experience would end up molding his future. Now that he's moved on, he can see the impact with much more clarity.

"Since matriculating to graduate school, I've gained a higher appreciation for the experience I had in undergrad, and I've learned that my honors thesis was excellent preparation for graduate-level research," he says. "I was heartened by the attention that was paid to me by the professors in and outside of my department."

The work he did under those professors—

David McNaughton and Victoria Costa of the Department of Philosophy, and Patrick Mason of the Department of Economics—has taken Jenkins to conferences; helped him get into grad school at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he is currently pursuing his Ph.D.; and played a formative role in his interests as a philosopher.

"I have maintained a strong interest in ethics and in social philosophy, two interests that were nurtured by my experience with my thesis," Jenkins says.

On top of helping him gain some early experience, the paper managed to bring Jenkins some early notoriety. An excerpt from his paper was published in the 2011 issue of the North American Society for Social Philosophy's journal *Social Philosophy Today*.

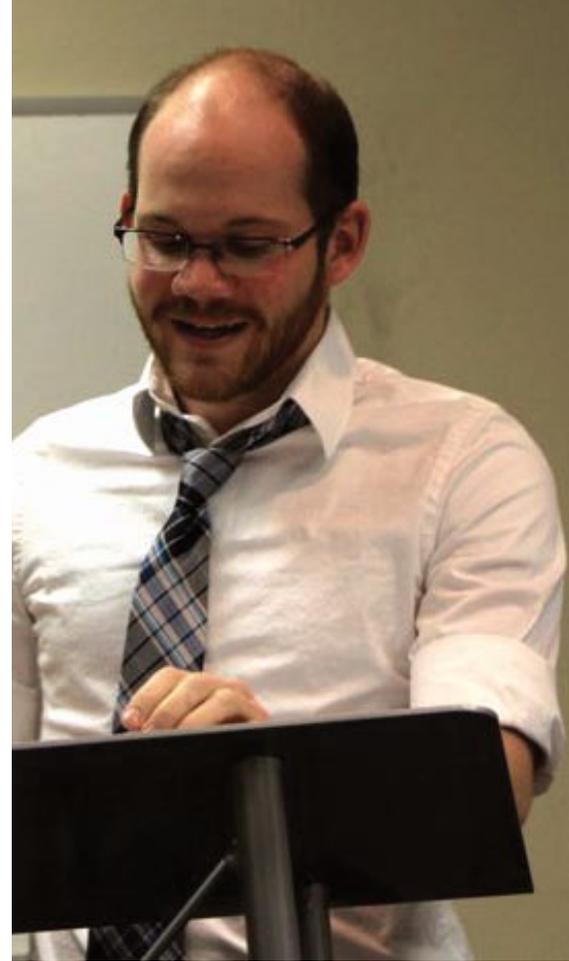


Photo courtesy of Ryan Jenkins

Ryan Jenkins presents a paper at a philosophy conference.

Christopher Hansford

History

Christopher Hansford arrived at FSU ready to plunge into academic life and wasted no time finding a way to acquaint himself with the tools of his trade.

"As someone interested in following a career in academia and in a research-intensive field," he says, "I really wanted to jump feet first, as it were, into the nuts and bolts of what my career would be."

He did just that, by taking his interest in the military history of Central and Eastern Europe and finding a way to dig in.

Hansford took on a project examining Germany's ill-fated decision to invade the Soviet Union in 1941. Working closely with Professor Jonathan Grant, he scoured through all the publicly available scholarly resources and then took his research a step further. In Spring 2011, he accom-



Photo courtesy of Christopher Hansford

From left, Christopher Hansford, Professor Emerita Marie Cowart, and Professor Jonathan Grant attend the FSU World Affairs Program banquet.

panied Grant to Washington, D.C., where Hansford was able to access the National Archives and view, firsthand, Nazi documents seized by the United States after World War II.

"I read official staff officer briefings, German military intelligence reports, personal memos between command generals, as well as foreign embassy reports on the capabilities of the Soviet military and state in comparison to that of Germany," he says.

Hansford will be defending that research this fall and graduating in December before embarking on a grad school career, he hopes at FSU. His immersion in historical research, he thinks, should put him in a good position to compete in academia.

"Most students rarely work with primary source materials, or the volume of original source documentation I have had the opportunity to," he says. "I could not ask for a better leg up going forward."

Grace Norberg

Psychology

While undergraduate research is becoming more and more common, few take it on with as much gusto as Grace Norberg. During her FSU career, she worked in three different psychology labs in addition to writing an honors thesis on suicide with one of the most renowned researchers in that field—Professor Thomas Joiner.

Norberg started her research career during the first semester of her sophomore year at FSU, when she worked for CREATE, the Center for Research and Education on Aging and Technology Enhancement, studying how students and older people approach technology.

She followed that up the next semester by working with psychology professors Roy Baumeister and Diane Tice on projects involving attention span and the influence of dreams. That same semester, a class she took with postdoctoral associate Mike Anestis got her interested in a topic for her thesis, which she began work on with Joiner during her junior year.

“Dr. Joiner wrote a book called *Why People Die by Suicide*, which I read and used as the basis for my thesis,” Norberg says. “I did a literature review of 10 relevant studies on eating disorders and suicide, and examined them in light of Joiner’s theory to explain in accessible terms what makes anorexics so prone to suicide.”

She parlayed her success on that thesis into a senior year spent working in Joiner’s clinical psychology lab, where she assisted graduate student Erin Fink in studies on eating disorders, including testing the link between taste sensitivity and anorexia. Norberg’s work impressed Joiner nearly as much as his work had impressed her.

“Grace’s unique combination of drive, intellectual capabilities, and experience lead me to believe in a very bright future for her,” says Joiner. “She can think both clearly and creatively—relatively rare at any level.”



Photo courtesy of Grace Norberg

And Norberg’s experience in the lab has contributed just as much to her education in psychology as anything else in her undergraduate curriculum.

“I wouldn’t say I’m an expert, but I sure know a lot about eating disorders,” she says. “I have also learned how to think critically about a problem and develop an experiment to gain knowledge about it. Doing research has helped me take every piece of information with a grain of salt and ask the questions that only a researcher knows to ask, like ‘What was the sample size?’ ‘Which population?’ and of course, ‘Correlation does not imply causation.’”

Since her graduation in Spring 2011, Norberg has worked at Canopy Cove, an eating-disorders treatment facility in Tallahassee, and more recently at 2-1-1 Big Bend while she waits to apply for graduate school next year. The important thing for her is making sure her ambitions, lofty as they are, are always focused on others.

“I know that being called Dr. Norberg is in my future,” she says, “and helping people will always be my life goal.”

William Boyce

Religion/English/History

Photo by Wil Oakes



William Boyce's undergrad research has led him to Scotland on a Fulbright.

Spring 2011 graduate William Boyce doesn't see creativity and research as two separate pursuits. For him, they are meant to be blended, just like his studies in theology and literature. That attitude has gotten him far, and has even landed him one of the most prestigious awards in America—a Fulbright award for research.

With three majors—history, creative writing, and religion—Boyce certainly had plenty to handle during his career at FSU, but he wanted to go above and beyond, so he took on artistic and research projects to round out his education even further.

During his junior year, he took on the task of writing “Ah! Bright Wings,” a 50-page Honors in the Major thesis, under the direction of Professor David Kirby of the Department of English. The experience of working with such a distinguished poet and accomplished teacher helped his creative work tremendously.

“The process of writing poetry hinges on perseverance,” Boyce says. “Dr. Kirby taught me to open my eyes and ears, look for compelling combinations, write a little every day, and have fun doing so.”

Kirby, who is no stranger to cross-pollination in his own work, sees great potential in Boyce's poetry.

“William is way beyond where I was as a poet when I was his age,” Kirby says.

“He has immense ‘powers of combination,’ to use Emerson's phrase. He can skate between topics as different as the Russian Revolution and some goofy relative of his and make it all seem effortless.”

During his senior year, Boyce won an Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Award, which funded travel and books for him to complete another project, this time researching the intersection of literary art and religion. He interviewed poet Mark Jarman, a Presbyterian, and Dana Gioia, former National Endowment for the Arts director and a Catholic, and tried to discern how their respective faiths affected the themes, styles, and ethos of their works.

Boyce conducted his research under Kirby as well as Associate Professor Amy Koehlinger of the Department of Religion, and presented his work in a poster presentation at the Spring 2011 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

All that work paid off. His senior year, Boyce won a coveted Fulbright award and has now left for Scotland to earn his master's degree from the University of Glasgow's Centre for the Study of Literature, Theology and the Arts.

If the past is any indicator, he'll be sure to spend plenty of time on all three.

“I am very humbled to represent my family, friends, and Florida State University,” Boyce says.

*I am very
humbled to
represent
my family,
friends, and
Florida State
University*

—William Boyce



Vivek Pal

Mathematics

Mark Van Hoeij. His ability to handle the difficult material presented in the competition caught Van Hoeij's eye.

"The Putnam questions are so difficult that few people can solve them," Van Hoeij says. "Nevertheless, Vivek [did] well ... so well, in fact, that I decided to give [him] an actual research problem that a colleague had asked me to solve."

Pal found an answer to the problem, and his work with Van Hoeij propelled him into working on another problem during his junior year. This time, he worked with Associate Professor Amod Agashe in the field of number theory, the branch of pure mathematics that deals generally with the properties of numbers.

Access to faculty members made research exciting for Pal and fed his desire to learn as much as he could as quickly as possible.

"In both cases, my advisers always kept their door open for questions and stimulating conversations," Pal says.

The path from FSU to Columbia University, where Pal started in Fall 2011 and is continuing his work in number theory and algebraic geometry, required individual drive and intellectual curiosity. Those qualities are natural ones for Pal, but his opportunities to do research on his own helped sharpen them. Now he is looking forward to a professorship of his own someday.

During his sophomore and junior years as a math major at FSU, Vivek Pal found chances to distinguish himself among his peers with his drive to take on his own research work. His curiosity led him to an Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Award, a Goldwater Scholarship, and eventually to graduate school at Columbia University.

Every fall semester of his undergraduate career, Pal prepared for the W.L. Putnam Mathematical Competition with Professor

Steven Burgart

Computer Science

Before starting his college career, Steven Burgart had no idea where he was headed.

"When I came to FSU, I didn't really expect to do very well or participate in anything intense like research, as I didn't stand out in high school and wasn't very involved," he says. "But when I got to FSU, everything just clicked."

His passion for computers made Burgart's choice of major—computer science—an easy one. But figuring out what he wanted to do with his education was a more difficult problem. He found guidance when he met faculty members in the Department of Computer Science, including Assistant Professor Feifei Li.

"I seriously had to consider what I wanted," Burgart says, "graduate school to pursue a master's or Ph.D. or [a job] or maybe something else. Dr. Li offered me lots of advice and guidance that helped me reach my decision."

Burgart worked with Li on two projects. One aimed to improve the security of computer databases. The second gave Burgart a chance to help build a website for FSU faculty members to easily maintain their curricula vitae and showcase their academic work.

All that was a lot for a young undergraduate to take on in his first two years. But Burgart was only getting started. He went on to work under Associate Professor Piyush Kumar, developing algorithms with practical applications. One is a music video player that predicts what kinds of videos a user will enjoy. More recently, he helped develop a web application called Rendezvous, which helps people in different locations calculate the most convenient meeting place between them.

All his work led Burgart to big rewards. During his sophomore year, he won a scholarship from the Department of Defense to pay for the rest of his undergraduate education in exchange for service to the government after graduation. When he finishes his FSU degree in December,



Photo courtesy of Steven Burgart

Burgart's next stop will be to work for the federal government in Maryland.

After the lessons learned from Li, however, Burgart knows his education is nowhere near complete. He plans to continue to graduate school eventually and earn a master's degree in computer science. His drive to learn, after all, is what got him this far.

"It's what led me to pursue the various research opportunities made available to me," Burgart says. "The classes I took with each professor stimulated my interest in their areas, and the research associated with them ... really helped me get a deep and intricate understanding of the areas that you don't see in undergraduate classes."

Dan Smith

Scientific Computing



Photo courtesy of Dan Smith

Dan Smith takes part in a game simulator class.

As a student majoring in computational science, Dan Smith has had the chance to not only improve his own skills through research but to apply his skills to other disciplines and make a real-world impact.

Under the supervision of Department of Scientific Computing Associate Professor Ming Ye and grad student Heng Dai, Smith worked on a project for the Department of Defense building a computer model to predict the impact of rising sea levels over the next 100 years on the barrier islands off of Eglin Air Force Base in the Florida Panhandle. The information provided by the model was valuable, but for it to be truly useful, it needed to be organized so that scientists could easily navigate it.

“Since the model included 1,000 realizations,” he says, “I created a graphical user interface to make the information more easily interpreted.”

That work led Smith and Dai to present their findings at a student symposium held by FSU’s Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science, an experience Smith found broadened his horizons.

“It gave me some insight on what other students are doing and how in-depth some of the graduate research projects are,” he says.

Smith has another year left to finish his degree but hopes to stay on at FSU for his graduate study, in part due to how helpful the faculty in his department have been with his work.

“The whole department is great and accessible for anything I need. Everyone is extremely knowledgeable and friendly,” he says. “While I’m walking in the hallways around the department, each of my professors will stop, say hello, and see what I am working on or if I need any help.”

Katie Leitner

Statistics

In Spring 2011, Katie Leitner was sitting in a class taught by Steven Ramsier, a research associate and undergraduate advisor in the Department of Statistics, when he mentioned the Summer Institute for Training in Biostatistics. The program, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, immerses students in the study of biostatistics for six weeks during the summer.

Leitner thought the program sounded interesting, applied, and that summer found herself learning about the field from professionals who made a serious impact on her.

“They’re all extremely smart and dedicated,” she says, “and very into the nature and ethics of their research.”

The program culminated in a group project that challenged Leitner and other stu-

dents to learn the techniques and processes of real-world research by setting up a hypothetical experiment. They ended up settling on a trial to test the best way to take patients off a Parkinson’s disease drug called Mirapex that has been shown to have a number of unwanted side effects.

“Designing the experiment was really eye-opening,” she says. “It’s amazing how much work and arguing goes into hammering out the details. There are so many factors to think of—it took us an entire week to even decide the topic of our research.”

Leitner has since settled on a major in actuarial science, but her experience at the biostatistics institute has served her both as a learning experience and as a confidence booster. Having learned the value of undergraduate research, she’s currently hard at work looking for an internship to fill out her knowledge in that field as well.



Photo courtesy of Katie Leitner

Katie Leitner (second from right) took part in a biostatistics internship at the University of South Florida in Summer 2011. Here, she and fellow interns wait for a bus that will take them to a welcome dinner.

Photo courtesy of Kellie Bowers



Kellie Bowers

Anthropology

Kellie Bowers plots archaeological sites on a map.

While working on her anthropology degree, Kellie Bowers used research to broaden her horizons by focusing on what was right in front of her. She took on two research projects over her four years, both of which examined curiosities of history in Tallahassee, and managed to make an impact on her local community.

The first of her projects examined Tallahassee's local chapter of the fraternity/insurance company Woodmen of the World. Bowers catalogued examples of the organization's distinctive tree stump-shaped tombstone markers in Tallahassee's Old City Cemetery and wrote a cultural and historical report on the local chapter. She also collaborated with members of the chapter, who were inspired by her work.

"They reset two fallen markers and held a rededication ceremony that was featured in

the paper and on the local news," Bowers says. "I was happy to see archaeology remind a group of their own history and get them excited about it."

Bowers was herself interviewed by the *Tallahassee Democrat* and was to present her findings to the Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee in November.

Her second project centered on the archaeological remains of major plantations in Leon County. She mapped the locations of all the biggest planters active in 1860, as well as all sites where antebellum plantation remains have been found. Bowers's report made predictions for where more materials are likely to be found and, upon revision, will be submitted to the Florida Master Site File, the state's official inventory of historical cultural resources.

On both of her projects, Bowers worked closely with faculty from the Department

of Anthropology, including Professor Glen Doran and Associate Professor Rochelle Marrinan, whom she cited as an integral part of her experience.

"She helped me formulate topics and narrow them down into realistic projects, guided me through the process, and reviewed the finished project," Bowers says. "I would not have been able to complete either of my projects without her guidance, resources, and support."

Now a senior, Bowers hopes to attend graduate school and pursue academic work in anthropology and archaeology. She credits her research experience as a major influence.

"When I look back on my four years here," she says, "my research projects are the things I remember most. My projects were lots of hard work, and huge time investments, but they made archaeology come alive for me."

Ali Arico

Chemistry

Chemistry major Ali Arico spends her days in Assistant Professor Michael Shatruck's lab observing chemical reactions. Her mission is basically to try and make something new—she takes well-known substances such as phosphorus and cobalt, as well as obscure elements with names like lanthanum, and combines them to see, in a nutshell, what will happen.

"My job," she says, "is to substitute varied, small amounts of other rare earth elements for the lanthanum in a compound, and then observe the resulting compound's magnetic and structural properties, and analyze how it correlates (or does not correlate) with the parent compound."

It was having the simple courage to ask and keep asking—she landed her job in Shatruck's lab after being turned down for another—that got her to this point. Now, as Arico prepares to graduate in 2012 and begins the process of applying for graduate school, she knows her research experiences will give her application a healthy boost.

"Not only am I learning valuable techniques that I would never have learned in my core courses," she explains, "but I am learning how to work in a lab setting with colleagues, collaborating with them and being required to report my findings and interpret the data to them."

Ali Arico seals quartz tubes as part of her work in the lab of Assistant Professor Michael Shatruck, whose work involves designing new materials for magnets. In 2009, Shatruck won a prestigious Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Award from the National Science Foundation.

Photo courtesy of Ali Arico



Randall Evan McClellan

Physics



Tallahassee native Randall Evan McClellan spends his days as a graduate student in nuclear physics at the University of Illinois working on the E906/SeaQuest project, which measures quark and antiquark structures, among other things with names that will leave most people scratching their heads. But before he moved to the Big Ten school, he was honing his skills as an undergrad in the Department of Physics at FSU, graduating with a degree in physics in 2009.

“Research was a very important part of my undergraduate career,” McClellan says. “It introduced me to techniques, facilities, and people integral to the field of nuclear physics.”

During his time at FSU, McClellan got introduced to his field by analyzing data from the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility in Virginia under the supervision of FSU Associate Professor Volker Crede.

“It was great to have easy access to an expert in the field who could answer my questions and guide the direction of my research when I was unsure of what to try next,” McClellan says.

Now he’s winning awards, including the U of I’s Goldhaber research scholarship, and has even led a team of undergraduates himself. At Illinois, he also directed the building of two scintillator detector planes for SeaQuest at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab).



Photos courtesy of FSU Department of Physics

Randall Evan McClellan (top of page) works on a scintillator detector plane at Fermilab near Chicago. McClellan visits Fermilab’s famous onsite bison herd. The animals are meant to evoke the area’s prairie heritage.

Building the future

How FSU is promoting excellence in its undergrads

By Wil Oakes

While many enterprising undergrads at Florida State manage to find research opportunities on their own, the university is taking steps to facilitate what is for many young students an unfamiliar territory.

Within the past six years, FSU has created two new offices with missions related to helping students identify and take advantage of research opportunities. The Office of National Fellowships (ONF), founded in 2005, and the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), founded in 2007, have joined the long-established Honors Program in a suite of three offices designed to provide resources to the university's most talented undergrads.

OUR was founded with a broad mission in mind—to encourage and promote undergraduate research activity on campus.

“For us,” says Professor Alec Kercheval, who directs OUR, “research just means undergraduate students at FSU working under the supervision of a faculty member on a creative project of some kind in their field, across a whole range of areas. It could be music, arts, science—whatever.”

During Kercheval's tenure, OUR has tried to raise the visibility of undergraduate research by providing information on its website, setting up a campuswide Blackboard online group that all students are added to during their sophomore year, and sponsoring two undergraduate research symposia each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. The office



Christopher Hansford explains his history project.

has also managed to interest students in opportunities such as FSU's undergraduate assistantship in the humanities, a program funded by the College of Arts and Sciences that pairs 10 undergraduates with faculty members for the chance to serve as research assistants.

“This has been really cool and very popular among the professors because a student could, say, help a professor put together an index for a book he's writing,” says Kercheval. “This is very educational for the student—to see what goes into putting together a book—and it's really useful for the professor.”

OUR's mission is complemented by ONF, which targets qualified students and matches them up with big fellowship opportunities.

“The office was founded to provide one location for our undergraduate students who are interested in applying for or even learning about nationally competitive awards,” says Craig Filar, director of ONF. “These are awards that are well known like the Rhodes and the Fulbright, but also some that might not be so well known.”

The office works with about 60 awards and helps students interested in applying for them decide which ones are right for them. It then coaches those students through the application process, which is often rigorous and takes upward of a year to complete. ONF also teams up with OUR each year to cosponsor the fall research symposium and to give out the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Awards, which give FSU students \$4,000 to do a project under a faculty mentor. The award promotes research internally across an impressively wide spectrum of disciplines.

“It usually ends up being a nice balance between science and non-science projects,” Filar says. “We've had students from the arts, from literature, from dance, from



Photo by Wil Oakes

Alec Kercheval (left) and Craig Filar join forces to host the 2011 Fall Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Awards Symposium at FSU's Turnbull center.

business, from education, from social work, from sociology, from political science. It's a broad range of projects.”

So far, ONF has met with a great deal of success. In six years, its students have won more than 80 nationally competitive awards, including three Rhodes scholarships and a staggering 38 Fulbright scholarships. But Filar is quick to point out that big wins aren't the only mark of success for his office.

“We work with a lot of students who don't receive the awards, and every single one of them is important, too,” he says. “It takes anywhere from two to four months to construct a really strong application for one of these awards. It's the process of going through this that's really invaluable to the students because it allows them to think very holistically about who they are, what they've done here at the university, and how all of their work comes together to make them the young man or woman they are today.”

Kercheval agrees, and sees the rise in undergraduate research at FSU as a sign of a bright future for the university and as evidence that even more support is needed.

“It's part of the evolution of Florida State over the years,” Kercheval says. “The quality of the incoming students has been rising a lot. It's about recognizing what you have and trying to develop it. We've got, on average, better students than we've ever had now. That changes our obligation for what we should be doing.”



Where the wild things are

Karalyn Aronow hangs out with a snake in the woods near her home in Tallahassee.

How undergrad research shaped the career path of FSU graduate Karalyn Aronow

By Wil Oakes

Even as a child growing up in Miami, Karalyn Aronow was constantly finding ways to surround herself with animals.

“I have this distinct memory of my cousins taking two little anoles and putting them on my ears and me wearing them around as earrings,” she says.

Now that she has just finished her degree in biology and is planning to move on to graduate school, it’s easy to imagine Aronow as a little girl running through the woods with lizards dangling from the sides of her face. Animals are still her passion—at home,

in the lab, and even on the football field, where she spent four years as a trainer for Osceola’s trusted horse, Renegade.

But Aronow’s path from curious child to serious scientist wasn’t as direct as one might expect. When she first arrived on the FSU campus in the summer of 2007, she had almost no idea what she hoped to be when she crossed the stage at her graduation.

“I went through five majors,” she says about that first summer. “I was music, creative writing, media studies, psychology, and then I ended up in biology, kicking and screaming. I did not want to be a biology major.”

Once the kicking and screaming subsided, however, Aronow found inspiration in something she’d never even considered trying up to that point—undergraduate research. By the time she graduated, she had undergone a transformation as a result of her experiences in the laboratory and the field and had managed to turn her passion into a career path.

Learning to love science

Aronow started learning to care for animals at a very young age. She had a pet snake named Bandit at the age of 8, and was learning to train horses soon after. She continued that work in high school,

working as an assistant barn manager and training horses with serious psychological problems. She loved having the chance to transform an animal, to change it simply by taking care of it in the right way.

Still, while she knew she wanted a life caring for animals, Aronow had no interest in science. It was a half-hearted desire to be a veterinarian that made her reluctantly sign up for an introductory biology class her first semester at FSU. She was expecting to suffer, but had her expectations flipped upside down.

“Throughout that first semester,” she says, “I fell in love.”

Her first instructor was Associate Professor Paul Trombley, who became a mentor. She made an extra effort to ask questions and seek him out during office hours so she could keep up in what was for Aronow, who had taken few science courses in high school, a very difficult class.

“I got my ass kicked the first year,” she says. “Everyone with me had taken all the AP [Advanced Placement] bio classes. They knew they were going to be scientists forever, and here I was walking into it with nothing. It was a struggle.”

Her extra efforts had an unexpected payoff when Trombley asked her to assist him in his lab. Aronow had never considered lab work before, but decided to give it a try. She soon found herself working with rats, helping Trombley grow their neurons in plates so they could be used in experiments. Rats didn't bother her, of course—she had a set at home that she kept as pets, in fact. Still, that first encounter, while interesting, didn't fully convince her she'd found her calling.

“I think I actually recall saying, ‘I won't do *this* for a living ...’ Oops!”

One new experience leads to another

Aronow's first research project had opened her up to the idea of lab work, so when another opportunity came along, as it did when she started taking behavioral biology classes, she was ready to jump in. As she moved forward in her studies, she found more faculty mentors, including Assistant Professor Emily DuVal and Assistant Pro-

fessor Darin Rokyta. It was Rokyta who ended up giving her an opportunity to do lab work for the second time.

Aronow took Rokyta's evolution course in the spring of her junior year and actually approached him after class to ask if she could work in his lab. He accepted, and she got started right away, finding herself in a situation she'd never been in before.

“I was the first person to actually get in the lab and start working on the project,” she says. “I didn't have a grad student ... It was very independent.”

The study focused on natural selection in snakes. Rokyta was looking to discover how the venom genes in snakes were selected for—or in other words, how new kinds of venom spread through snake populations. Aronow's job in the lab was to use solutions to extract DNA from collected snake tissues. She then had to analyze certain genes in snakes and plot the presence of those genes geographically on a map using GPS coordinates for where each snake was found in the wild.

While most of her work was in the lab, Aronow also got to experience the wilder side of science by going out in the field to find snakes. She and her labmates would go driving through the woods, keeping an eye out for snakes on the roads. Different species are active during different times of day, but for many, the best time to hunt is at night. Whenever possible, the group would use snakes found already dead, but there were times when they had to chase down a live one to gather tissue and venom samples.

“It's fun,” she says. “You see one on the road, you slam on the brakes, you jump out of the car, you run at full speed, it's pitch black, you don't know where the snake is, you're running towards it, and then you stop. You've got hooks and you try to get it in the bucket. It's a really big adrenaline rush.”

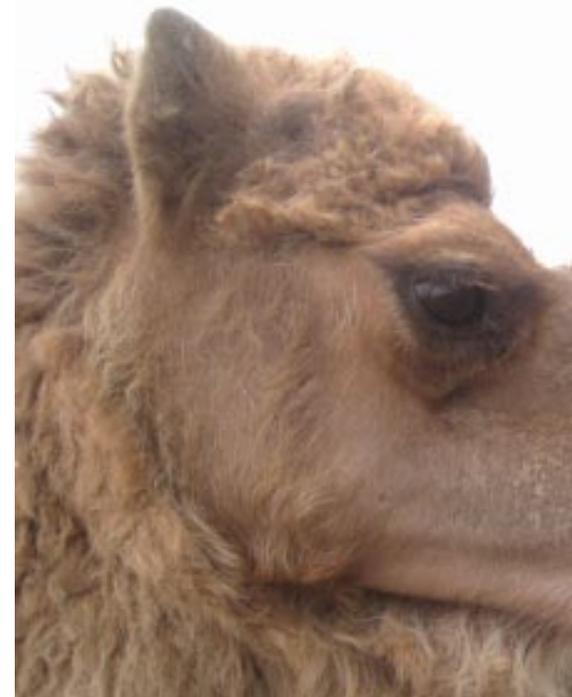
Survival of the fittest

After nearly a year of work documenting between 80 and 90 snakes, Rokyta's team had found something unexpected and very interesting. While other genes differed depending on geographical region,

forming little “pockets” where certain traits showed up, the venom gene was found to be the same over the entire area in which they worked—covering, more or less, the entire southeastern United States.

“Every snake across the range had the exact same venom,” she says. “That's called a selective sweep. Everything in the population got this one copy of this gene. Because it's so strongly selected for, it was able to jump barriers.”

Venomous snakes, as it turns out, are so dependent on effective venom for survival that those who don't have the most up-to-date gene very rarely procreate, which



Karalyn Aronow's love of animals has brought her face to face with all kinds of creatures.

allows that particular gene to dominate the next generation of offspring in ways that less important genes can't.

The findings could have implications for conservationists, who use gene expression to define populations of animals. Still, before the results of the experiment can be verified, more testing will have to be done. Aronow had to leave the snake project at the end of the year when she graduated—a frustrating reality of life as an undergraduate scientist—but she started right away

thinking about how she could apply what she learned to lengthier projects in graduate school.

The rewards of research

Getting into research propelled Aronow to all kinds of experiences that will help her as she gets ready for that path. For example, during her undergraduate career she learned about experiment design, the process of writing a scientific article, and how to present research. She did two poster presentations and had to defend her thesis. And she managed to keep up with all the work despite maintaining a full slate of extracurricular activities, including one that tied her love for animals to her love



Photo courtesy of Karalyn Aronow

Aronow helps train a cougar during a recent internship in California.

“It’s really scary for a horse—they’re herd animals—and so you put them out there alone, and then they’re carrying fire in front of 80,000 screaming people, so it’s not a natural situation for them and it takes a really long time to train them up for that.”

Looking back on those accomplishments, she can see that research has shaped her career as an undergraduate and has likely shaped her life in ways she couldn’t have predicted.

“I came into it completely terrified of science my first day on campus, and now it’s what I’m going to do for a living,” she says. “It’s so important to get involved in a lab. It’s not the big scary beakers and everything. It’s fun.”

Not only is it fun—it’s also an important tool students can use to prepare themselves for the future. Aronow found that her undergraduate research helped her synthesize what she learned in her classes in a way that made the information more useful. While academic subjects are taught in bundles as though they are disparate and distinct sets of knowledge, the lab forces students to draw on and find the connections between the various fields within the larger discipline.

Making the most of a college education

For students like Aronow, who come in unsure of what they want to do with their undergraduate educations, the key, in her view, is to jump in and try things rather than sitting back and letting opportunities pass by. It’s the ones who do, she suggests, who really get everything out of what Florida State has to offer.

“You can come in as a freshman and accomplish whatever you want to here,” she says. “I love FSU for that, for how much you can just go and do it.”

Having made the most of her undergraduate experience, Aronow is now looking forward at the rest of her education and the career that lies ahead. She hopes to work in a zoo one day, studying how to help animals adapt to captivity so they can continue to lead fulfilling lives. The stress often leads to mental atrophy and difficulty reproducing, which hurts the size of the animal population. Aronow wants to focus on how a strong bond between keeper and animal can reduce or reverse those effects, especially among big cats such as snow leopards and tigers, whose populations are dying out in the wild.

But she also favors big cats for another reason, perhaps the same one that drew her to venomous snakes.

“I’m really interested in large carnivores,” she says. “Pretty much, stuff that can’t kill me I don’t really care about.”



Photo courtesy of Karalyn Aronow

Karalyn Aronow with Osceola, Renegade, and a Renegade-to-be. Aronow worked as a horse trainer throughout her years at FSU.



Photo courtesy of Karalyn Aronow

for her university—serving as a trainer for Osceola’s horse Renegade for all four years of her undergraduate career.

Several times a week, Aronow went to the barn to ride Renegade and keep him in shape. She even got the chance to help train the horse that will “take the reins” on game days when the current Renegade retires, a task that put her specialty—adapting animals to new environments—to the test.

Brooks and Almena Pettit make gift to World War II Institute

Both sides of family have tradition of military service

Brooks Pettit didn't attend FSU as a student, but during 20 years of retirement spent in Tallahassee, his life has been touched in many ways by the university.

Pettit and his wife, Almena, a Tallahassee native, have given back to FSU over the years with many gifts of both time and money. And they've recently decided to do so again, this time by supporting the Institute on World War II and the Human Experience with a deferred gift of \$122,000.

"My hope is that the World War II Institute becomes a little bit more visible, and I mean that in terms of not just print and advertising," he says. "I'd like to see the start of an effort to get it situated in a place where it can be appreciated. I think an awful lot of people don't know what it is or where it is."

Pettit served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the late '50s and comes from a family with a history of service. His older brother and father-in-law both served in World War II, and his father and uncle served in World War I. More recently, his sons have also served in the military. For Pettit, supporting the institute means keeping the memory and significance of World War II alive in younger generations.

"I'd like people to appreciate what was done then by those kids—and they *were* kids," he says. "A lot of them died and they didn't want to die, and that can get lost in history."

Pettit spent most of his military service at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, and is grateful that he never saw serious combat during his service. Still, he remembers being sent overseas in 1958 with the possibility of fighting hanging over his head and the effect that possibility had on him.

"We went to Lebanon," he recalls. "There was a big mess over there. I was 18 years old. I didn't even know where Lebanon was ... It was a very sobering event because all of a sudden you went from being a tough young kid who didn't know much about

anything to somebody who thought he was going to be in a lot of trouble. And we got very quiet very quickly when we thought we were going to go into a combat situation."

Once Pettit's military service ended, he returned to school at Harvard and studied German language, literature, and history. He loved his studies and, after finishing grad school, went on to become a teacher. Eventually, he wound up at the same independent school that he graduated from himself in Belmont, Mass., where he worked in admissions and financial aid while also teaching English.

It was while he was working in Belmont that he met Almena.

"She was working at Dartmouth, and a classmate of mine lived in the town she lived in and knew her," he says. "He invited me to join him for a weekend. I didn't know I was going up to meet anybody else, but he invited me trout fishing, and I'd go anywhere to trout fish. All of a sudden he announced that we had dates that night, and the rest is history."

They remained in Belmont until Pettit retired about 20 years ago. Then, they moved to Tallahassee, and fell in love with all FSU offered the community. The Pettits still regularly attend theatrical and musical productions, athletic events, and the Flying High Circus.

The Pettits were keenly aware of just how much FSU contributed to the quality of life for Tallahassee residents, and started supporting their favorite cultural institutions such as the School of Theatre. That appreciation for what FSU offers the community has led them to adopt the university as their own in many ways and has driven their desire to support it.

"When somebody simply presents you with something and you go and enjoy it, it deserves your support," Pettit says. "We tend to be much more involved with FSU than we are with either one of the colleges we went to, for the very reason that we are in the community and we appreciate what the university does."

Additionally, Pettit notes that at his 50th reunion at Harvard this past spring, the president of the college announced that the Class of '61 had set a record: The class gift totaled \$61 million.

"All that went through my mind was how needed and appreciated that gift from one class would have been at Florida State, and how hard the university works to raise funds," Pettit says. "For Harvard it was, relatively, the proverbial drop in the bucket."

The Pettits' gift will certainly be more than a drop in the bucket at the World War II Institute.

"This generous gift helps us save priceless documents from World War II veterans and makes them available to future generations of students, scholars, and members of the general public," says G. Kurt Piehler, the institute's new director. "This financial support will enable the institute to develop a number of new initiatives to ensure the letters, diaries, and other documents are used by historians in the writing of the history of World War II and are studied by students from high school through graduate school."



Brooks Pettit served in the U.S. Marine Corps.



Almena and Brooks Pettit

Photos courtesy of the Pettits

FSU's Army ROTC recruiter named best in nation

By Jeffery Seay

The U.S. Army's Cadet Command has named retired Army Capt. Bob Lovins, Florida State University's Army ROTC recruiting operations officer, its 2010 Recruiting Operations Officer of the Year.

The distinction signifies that under Lovins's watch, FSU's Army ROTC program, known as the Seminole Battalion, met its mission to transform Florida State and Tallahassee Community College students into lieutenants better than any of the other 273 Army ROTC battalions.

"This award is really not about me, but about core groups of people who work together to achieve the same goal," said Lovins, who received the same national distinction in 2006.

Lovins praised the battalion's past and current military personnel, its staff of civilian employees, and the cadets themselves. He also lauded Florida State's faculty and staff, and the Tallahassee community at large—groups he characterized as highly supportive of ROTC's mission.

Lovins spends a limited amount of time discussing the advantages of the ROTC with high school students at college fairs. For the most part, he focuses his recruiting efforts on the Florida State campus.

"This is the best place to recruit because the students here have already made the cut to get into Florida State," Lovins said. "I do a lot of recruiting right here in my office with assistance from the cadets who are in the program already. They are the best recruiters because they tell their peers about the training they've received in order to be able to do a certain job two or three years down the road."



Retired Army Capt. Bob Lovins

When it comes to explaining the ROTC to potential recruits, Lovins tells them that being a lieutenant is the toughest job in America but also the most rewarding.

"Most officers say their favorite time in the Army was serving as a lieutenant, when they had the opportunity to lead and have a direct influence on their troops," Lovins says.

A lieutenant's first job is usually as a platoon leader, leading 40 to 50 soldiers. Most businesses in America have fewer employees than a typical 22-year-old second lieutenant manages.

"I tell potential recruits they cannot beat the experience, regardless of what their technical skill sets are," Lovins says. "This is going to prepare them for any other challenge they will have in life. When they finish their service, they'll have a proven track record."

As platoon leaders, lieutenants also are responsible for equipment worth hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars, and the battlefield decisions they make can easily have international ramifications.

"Our lieutenants must be agile, smart and morally upright," he says.

When Lovins started at FSU in 1997, the Seminole Battalion had about 75 cadets. Despite the nation being at war, the battalion has grown to about 180 cadets.

"Young people today want to serve, at least at Florida State," he says. "There is a real sense in this student body of young people who want to make a difference. And one of the places that they can make a big difference is as a military officer."

Even though he is a tremendous advocate of ROTC, Lovins is not an ROTC alumnus.

"I was going to school in the mid-1970s at West Georgia College (now the University of West Georgia), working two jobs," he says. "I told myself, 'There has to be an easier way of doing this.' At the tail end of Vietnam, there wasn't a big emphasis on ROTC, so I went down to the recruiter and enlisted."

Lovins intended to serve three or four years of active duty and then use the GI Bill's education benefits to pay for his tuition. In January 1976, he started basic training at Fort Ord, Calif., and unexpectedly fell in love with the Army. After eight years of enlisted time, he went to Officer Candidate School. Nearly 35 years later, Lovins has earned two Associate of Arts degrees (general studies, German), a bachelor's degree with a double major (history, political science), and two master's degrees (history, philosophy). Currently, he is working toward a doctorate in history from Florida State.

"The Army paid for my education in one shape, form, or fashion," he says. "I wound up achieving my objective, just not in the way I imagined. As an academic advisor to the Seminole Battalion cadets, I try to return some small portion of all the Army has done for me."

FSU Photo Lab

Ph.D. student in English receives national recognition

By C. Noel Rivera

Award-winning literature Ph.D. student Meaghan Brown describes herself as a materialist; however, her description of a materialist might not be what most people expect.

"I like physical objects," she says as she picks up a book bound in goatskin parchment. "I like the touch and feel of the materials, and I think they have a great impact on how we treat what's inside them."

In an age when so much relies on computers and when physical texts are slowly being weeded out in favor of electronic copies, this focus on the tangible seems to go against the flow. Yet Brown, a student in Florida State's History of Text Technologies (HoTT) program, pushes on with the belief that the physical qualities of an object are as essential as what is inside.

"I think that the materials do matter," she says. "I think that they have inherent properties that dictate how we handle them, that dictate how we treat them, and that situations where things like reading take place can also dictate how we feel about the material afterwards."

To illustrate how a particular situation can affect a person's reaction to a book, Brown adds, "It's different if the book is brought to you on a velvet pillow, which they do at some rare book libraries. You can have the cheapest paperback from 1952, but if it's brought to you on a velvet pillow, you will treat it differently."

Brown capped off the 2010-2011 academic year by being one of the 15 students out of 488 applicants nationwide to win a Mellon Dissertation Fellowship for Research. Her work, which also won her a Bibliographical Society of America (BSA) fellowship for the summer of 2010 and a Folger Shakespeare Library seminar acceptance for the spring of

2011, focuses on how "the manufacturing of printed works affects what we've come to see as the cultural artifacts of the book" during an era when the printer was more important than the author.

The BSA fellowship awarded Brown \$2,000, allowing her to spend three weeks in London researching in the rare books section of the British National Library. She describes it as a massive reading room wherein other researchers can be seen poring over books that range from large, elegant folio books in Italian to tiny, fragile books in German.

"You walk by and everyone's working on something that looks absolutely fascinating," she says.

Brown attended the Folger Shakespeare Library seminar for 10 weeks, from January through April of 2011. The topic of the seminar was the history of the Stationers' Company—the guild in London responsible for printers, publishers, and booksellers. This subject fit well with Brown's research in book production because it offered background and supplementary material in the areas she is investigating. Also, because it was an international, multi-level seminar, she had the benefit of discussing the subject with academics from all over the world.

More recently, Brown won an FSU International Dissertation Fellowship for 2011-2012. This fellowship allows her to spend two semesters researching at the British Library and the Lincolnshire Archives.

"I'm really excited to get the chance to go back to the British Library," she says, "and I'm looking forward to exploring other archives in Great Britain. I'm very glad FSU has given me the opportunity to do more archival research."

After returning from overseas, Brown will likely complete her doctorate in 2013.

Interdisciplinary background

Her interest in books as physical objects, as well as in the history surrounding them, is not surprising, considering that Brown hails from an interdisciplinary background. She received a bachelor's degree in history from Oberlin College in Ohio in 2006, and a master's in information science from the University of Texas at Austin in 2008.

Initially, Brown planned to go into book conservation but soon found obstacles in her path. "I have an intense mold allergy, which I discovered in an internship in Natchez, Miss., one summer in an un-air-conditioned 1910 schoolhouse."

Allergists often advise people with mold allergies to get rid of old books and newspapers.

After taking the mold allergy into consideration, Brown decided to pursue a more academic route by studying the history of the book. Only two programs in this field exist in North America, Brown says, one of which is Florida State's HoTT program. Brown applied and was accepted to both, but she made FSU her final choice.

"I was able to visit here, and the people were incredibly nice," she says. "I got the sense that I would have a sort of mentor relationship, and that people would actually care about my career here."

She found that mentor relationship with Professor Anne Coldiron, a scholar of late-medieval and Renaissance literature who recently won two prestigious fellowships—one from the National Endowment of the Arts and one from the Folger Shakespeare Library. They met during Brown's first visit to FSU, and Coldiron later became her major professor.

"I came here specifically wanting to work with her," says Brown. "Getting to work with Dr. Coldiron is an honor." When Brown is in Tallahassee, she sometimes works in Coldiron's office, surrounded by Vermeer prints and piles of books, when the professor is away.

Because Brown and Coldiron have similar research interests, they have worked closely on several projects. Coldiron's opinion of Brown is favorable, and she speaks highly of both her personality and her work.

"Meg is practical and clever, and she's got a great sense of humor," Coldiron says. "She is incredibly hard-working and very efficient in her work. She can do more in a day than most people can do in three days."

In addition to her own research, Brown has worked on other projects such as the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* with Associate Professor David Gants, who acts as the website's electronic editor. There, she draws on her experience in information science. She uses her skills in XML coding to revise and expand the online edition of Ben Jonson's 17th-century quartos (books or pamphlets folded to become one-fourth the size of a full sheet, usually consisting of eight pages) so that viewers can see every potential version of a single play.

Though Brown is most interested in production and the physical artifacts that result, her background in coding and information science shows that she is both experienced with technology and unafraid to use it as part of her work. This prompted her to participate in FSU's digital humanities courses, a choice that may result in some related elements in her dissertation. She is particularly interested in information visualization techniques, such as maps and other visual elements.

Though she expends a great deal of energy on her research, not all of Brown's time at Florida State has been spent in the stacks. In addition to her work on the Ben Jonson project, she also coordinated the Renaissance scholars group for a year and half, where she was responsible for scheduling meetings and speakers for



Photo by Wil Oakes

Meaghan Brown is spending the 2011-2012 academic year in London, where she is doing research for her dissertation.

graduate students and instructors working in the Renaissance era. She has also worked as a research and teaching assistant, written grants, and served as administrator of the HoTT website.

Brown's hardworking nature and reliability are well-known. "The HoTT faculty all see her as a strong Ph.D. candidate," says Gants, "and each year there is keen competition to get her as a research assistant."

Enjoys research and teaching

Aside from these projects, Brown also teaches classes of her own—something that she finds quite rewarding. Her classes have included the History of Illustrated Texts, Women in Literature, a short-story workshop, and English composition. Following graduation, she hopes to acquire a position that will allow her to divide her time equally between teaching and researching.

Ph.D. student Kate Lechler, managing editor for *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* and Brown's roommate, notes that Brown strives to perform well as a teacher. "She does put a lot of effort into her teaching, and she cares about her students," Lechler says. "She thinks a lot about them, about the assignments she's making, and about how to be a better teacher."

Brown helps her students understand the techniques they are studying—such as the manual printing press and copperplate engraving—by showing videos that demonstrate the processes. While not the same as an in-person experience, these videos are still able to illustrate the appearance and size of the materials and tools, as well as the time and effort required to produce one page or print using these methods.

Brown also arranges trips to Strozier Library's Special Collections to give her students the opportunity to interact with the texts they are studying. Students, these days, are heavily mired in digital media, which lacks the same sensory experience as seeing the artifacts up close. Brown, however, refuses to let the physical fall by the wayside.

"We can't live all in our heads," she says. "The experience of the world really does matter to all of our senses, and all of our senses affect our experience of the world."

This article was first published in the English department's alumni magazine, Scroll, Scribe & Screen, which is written and produced by undergraduates. The author of this article, C. Noel Rivera, is pursuing a degree in the department's editing, writing, and media track.

Religion Ph.D. student is awarded 2 prestigious national fellowships

Shannon Dunn, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Religion, has been awarded a highly selective \$25,000 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for 2011-2012.

She was also awarded a dissertation completion fellowship for 2011-2012 from the American Association of University Women (AAUW)—which she had to decline because of rules restricting the acceptance of concurrent national fellowships. “But I am honored nonetheless,” Dunn says about the AAUW award.

To give an idea of how selective the Newcombe fellowships are, figures show that for the previous year (2010-2011), only 20 of 670 applicants were awarded fellowships. The Newcombe, administered by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, is intended for doctoral candidates in the final year of dissertation work on religious and ethical values.

“The Newcombe award will give me relief from teaching, which I need in order to

finish my dissertation in a timely manner,” Dunn says. Dunn, who came to FSU in 2006 and hopes to finish by August 2012, specializes in comparative religious ethics, particularly Islamic and Christian ethics, with a sub-area of concentration in studies of gender and politics.

“The focus of my dissertation is gender justice in contemporary Islamic communities in the U.S.,” Dunn says. “In particular, I address how legal conceptions of gender within Islamic sharia and Western liberal political theory are problematic—albeit in different ways—with regard to the concept of private/public spheres.”

As a matter of fact, Dunn and fellow graduate student Rosemary Kellison earlier won an award for a journal paper they co-wrote about Muslim ethics and violence against women.

Dunn’s advisor is Professor John Kelsay, FSU’s Richard L. Rubenstein Professor of Religion; additionally, Dunn works closely with Associate Professor Aline Kalbian, also of the religion department.



Photo courtesy of Shannon Dunn

Shannon Dunn is writing her dissertation on gender justice in Islamic communities.

“Shannon Dunn is a wonderful student,” Kelsay says, “and those of us working with her are very pleased that she has received this recognition.”

In turn, Dunn expressed her gratitude. “I am extremely grateful to the Woodrow Wilson foundation, as well as to the many people who have helped me to get to this place.”

Student Leadership Council

Established in the spring of 2011, the College of Arts and Sciences Student Leadership Council brings together both undergraduate and graduate students selected from departments across the college. These representatives are given the responsibility of overseeing a budget meant to be used for the benefit of students throughout Arts and Sciences. With the ability to impact the student experience socially as well as academically, the council hopes to enhance student life through college-wide events such as “Meet the Deans,” held in the spring, which gave students access to their highest-ranking leaders in a way most would never get otherwise.

Photo by Will Oakes



Gift from Kitty Hoffman creates lectureship in environmental chemistry

Kitty Hoffman, a former FSU faculty member and dean—not to mention a standout student leader back when the university was named the Florida State College for Women (FSCW)—is still making good things happen at the university she has long loved.

Thanks to a gift to the department where she taught for decades, the university will be able to bring an internationally renowned scientist to campus every spring, beginning in 2012, for a colloquium to coincide with Earth Day. The \$50,000 gift establishes the Katherine B. Hoffman Endowed Lecture in Environmental Chemistry, with a focus on environmental, sustainable, or “green” chemistry.

“We are very grateful for Professor Hoffman’s gift and think it will be an excellent opportunity for our students to rub elbows with someone in such a vital area of chemistry,” says Timothy Logan, professor and chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. “The department has not yet set a date for the inaugural seminar, although a committee of faculty and students will determine who will be our first colloquium speaker.”

Joe Schlenoff, outgoing chair of the department and FSU’s Mandelkern Professor of Polymer Science, worked with Hoffman several months ago to determine the focus of the colloquium.

“Chemistry now plays a critical role in planning for a sustainable environmental future through activities such as the development of ‘green’ manufacturing processes and is the central science responsible for monitoring our water, air, and soil,” Schlenoff says.

This is not Hoffman’s first financial gift to the department. She and her late husband, Harold, created the Katherine Blood Hoffman Endowed Fund in Chemistry in

1994 with a gift of more than \$115,000 for student support. At that time, Hoffman said, “FSU has been the foundation on which my life is built. How could I not [give] when I had received so much? I had received assistance, and I wanted to help today’s undergraduates in return.”



Professor Emerita Kitty Hoffman

In addition, Hoffman has made dozens of other gifts to Arts and Sciences, including a \$50,000 gift in 1998 for symposia for the liberal arts and a \$32,000 gift in 1987 to establish an endowed chair in psychology.

Hoffman graduated from the Florida State College for Women in 1936—the height of the Depression—after famously bartering three truckloads of oranges from her father’s grove for a year’s worth of room and board, which cost \$200. At FSCW, Hoffman was a straight-A student, president of student government, and captain of at least two sports teams. In addition, she wrote for the campus newspaper, worked in the dining hall, and was one of the earliest members of the Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society in Florida.

After graduating from FSCW, Hoffman earned her master’s degree in chemistry in 1938 from Columbia University and was accepted into medical school at Duke University. Unfortunately, Duke required its female med students to stay single, so Hoffman decided Duke was not for her. Instead, she married her high school sweetheart and fellow chemist, Harold Hoffman, and in 1940 joined the chemistry faculty at FSCW.

With energy and drive like that of a marathon runner, Hoffman served on the faculty throughout the World War II era; through FSCW’s transition to a co-ed university; through the years when male recipients of the GI Bill flooded the university’s science classes; through the tumultuous years of the 1960s and ’70s, during which she also served as the university’s last dean of women from 1967 to 1970; and into the early 1980s, when she served as president of the Faculty Senate from 1980 to 1982.

Over the course of her career, Hoffman authored many publications, including a book called *Chemistry of Life*, which received a favorable review from *The New York Times* in 1964. And in what is perhaps her most enduring legacy, she taught thousands of students and received multiple teaching awards. To mark that legacy, in 1984, the year she retired, the chemistry department dedicated the Katherine B. Hoffman Teaching Laboratory in her honor. And in 2007, the university awarded her an honorary doctorate.

“Hoffman was a great role model and mentor for women joining the faculty and for her chemistry students,” says chemistry Professor Emerita Penny J. Gilmer, who joined the FSU faculty in 1979. “She inspired faculty and students alike with her love of chemistry and her ways of working with others.”

FSU Photo Lab

Alumna's generosity helps grad students in English department

By Krista Wright



Photos courtesy of Nancy Smilowitz

FSU alumna Melissa Berger and her husband, Dan Berger, display a one-of-a-kind fused glass piece made for them by the Master Craftsman Program. The artwork shows words found on the entrance to Dodd Hall: The half of knowledge is to know where to find knowledge.

Earning an advanced degree is never easy on the wallet. But thanks to the generosity of Florida State University alumna Melissa Berger and her husband, Daniel Berger, getting a graduate degree in English has just gotten a little easier.

Because of the newly established Melissa and Daniel Berger Graduate Fellowship, a fortunate graduate student will have some relief from the financial stresses of his or her coursework. Created for English department graduate students who excel, the fellowship will be awarded annually, beginning in Fall 2011.

"Dan and I are very happy to be fortunate enough to provide a graduate student with the freedom to concentrate more on their work, and have to worry less about financing their education," says Berger, who graduated from Florida State in 1991 with a

major in English on the literature track, with an emphasis in business.

Berger, originally from New Jersey, moved to Florida with her family when she was 5. After high school graduation, she and two of her best friends enrolled at Florida State. While at FSU, Berger worked at the Sweet Shop and enjoyed attending Seminole football games.

Berger chose to major in English because "I have always liked writing, but I was always terrible in math," she says jokingly. "I could always write a good paper and I love to read, so I think that's what led me down that path."

Of her experiences in the English department, Berger says, "The classes and the department were just really top notch." Although she says she did not have one favorite course, "I really liked every writing and literature class I took. I found them all to be engaging and interesting."

Berger expressed her appreciation for the variety of classes offered within the literature track because she was able to explore genres that she would not normally have read on her own.

"What I remember most about Florida State is that I really felt like I got to check out things outside of my comfort zone," she says.

During her upbringing in Florida, Berger often visited her extended family in New Jersey, and she says that she always knew she wanted to live in New York City. After graduation from Florida State, she made the move and found a job at a law firm.

Currently, Melissa and Dan Berger live in New York City, where they are active in charities and fundraisers. Melissa has been on the Board of Directors for Sanctuary for Families, a resource for domestic violence victims, for six years.

She describes Sanctuary as "a cause very near and dear to my heart. It is just one of those things that you want to do something about. We always say at Sanctuary that we want to be out of business, but unfortunately that is just not the case."

Dan Berger, a graduate of Columbia Law School, is a director with the Grant and Eisenhower law firm and has more than 30 years of legal experience. He is a member of the Board of Visitors at Columbia Law School and a regular faculty member for Practicing Law Institute programs.

The Bergers are dedicated philanthropists and have been generously giving to Florida State for the past few years.

"We felt like Florida State deserved it," Melissa Berger says. "They gave me an education—a great education—and if I'm in the position to give back to them, I am happy to do it. I just had a great experience

at Florida State and felt like it was time to give back. When we were asked about doing an endowment or a fellowship, it just felt like it was the right thing to do.

“If you are going to pick something to support, there are so many fantastic organizations and wonderful causes. But if you look at the school where you had four or so years of great experiences, it’s worth it to give back.”

For the past three years, the Bergers have hosted an annual event at their apartment in New York for professors, alumni, and friends and supporters of Florida State. The events branched off from “FSU in NYC,” a program mainly for the dance and theater schools at FSU. Melissa says there are always FSU events in the city, and after corresponding with English department faculty, she offered to host a cultivation event for the College of Arts and Sciences since she had been an English major.

She says these events have been getting bigger every year, and she has enjoyed hosting them. “It’s been great that I have actually been able to meld my two worlds by having these events every year,” she adds.

Erin Belieu, an associate professor in the English department and director of the Creative Writing Program, attended one of the events at the Berger residence.

“Dan and Melissa are two of the nicest, most generous people you’d ever want to meet,” Belieu says. “When we were in their beautiful, art-filled apartment in Chelsea, they made all of us so welcome, and their sense of enthusiasm for literature and literacy scholarship is palpable and inspiring. It was a wonderful evening for which we were all grateful.”

Everyone who has met the Bergers has described them with enthusiasm.

“It was such a pleasure to meet Melissa and Dan, who are not only generous benefactors to our department, and thoughtful, smart people, but who are genuinely fun to be around,” says Anne Coldiron, a literature professor. “They are great conversationalists on a huge range of topics—history, the arts, parenting, science, politics, literature—perhaps especially literature.”

Even though Melissa Berger loves New York City, she has enjoyed introducing her immediate family to Tallahassee when they return for visits, but she says they do not get to Florida as much as they would like. FSU football games bring the Bergers to Tallahassee more than anything else, but Melissa adds there is always one other thing they have to do when in town: “I have to go to Publix! We don’t have Publix up North, so we always take a stop at Publix at some point,” she says, laughing.

Ralph Berry, chair of the English department, says that the Bergers are playing a crucial role in the graduate program’s future. “Melissa and Dan are the sort of forward-thinking individuals on whose support talented students everywhere depend. They recognize the importance of the humanities for an educated and responsible citizenry, and they know that without material resources, humanistic education can’t survive. It would be difficult to overstate what their loyalty has meant for the department. They’re just great people.”

The Melissa and Daniel Berger Fellowship gives one graduate student per year relief from the financial burden of pursuing an advanced degree, and the gift will allow the recipient to teach fewer classes. When the amount of study time lost to grading papers, student conferences, and class preparation is considered, teaching fewer classes means more time for studying, which results in earlier graduation, enhanced opportunities, and less debt.

The fellowship will be awarded annually to a new or advanced graduate student who excels in the English department’s creative

writing, rhetoric and composition, or literature concentrations. The faculty of the specific program will determine recipients of the award based on the student’s GRE scores, a writing sample, and grade point average. The Fall 2011 fellowship was slated to go to a graduate student in the creative writing track.

“This new fellowship is extraordinarily generous—and gracious,” says Professor Kathleen Yancey, who directs the Rhetoric and Composition Program and has spent time with the Bergers. “To our graduate students, it will mean the chance to focus on their research and writing; and to FSU’s English department, it will mean that we have a living connection between our past students and our current ones. It’s a living legacy in every sense of the word ‘living.’”

Melissa and Daniel Berger are giving a ray of hope to graduate students whose future is clouded by debt.

“It has been very rewarding to me to feel like I have come full circle in my life to be able to be a part of what is going on at Florida State again after 20-something years,” Melissa Berger says. “I enjoy it and I hope that other people will be inspired by somebody or something in their life to do the same thing and give back, and that’s what it’s really all about.”

This article first appeared in the English department’s alumni news magazine, Scroll, Scribe & Screen. Its author, Krista Wright, is an undergraduate majoring in English. Katie Brown, who graduated in Spring 2011 with a bachelor’s degree in English, contributed to this article.



Melissa Berger (center) hosts FSU President Eric Barron and his wife, Molly, at an FSU event in New York City in the fall of 2011.

Alums create fund to help actuarial students in honor of professor who started program

When he was an FSU undergraduate working toward a career in actuarial science, Courtney White spent at least \$1,000 on textbooks and other materials to help prepare for a series of exams to be certified in his field.

Now, nearly two decades later and well established as an actuary, he has decided to help defray some of those costs for current FSU students.

To do that—and to honor one of his former professors—Courtney White and his wife, Shari White, have made a gift of \$25,000 to establish the Bettye Anne Case Scholarship in Actuarial Science.

“Courtney and Shari White have made a wonderful gift that recognizes Bettye Anne’s substantial contributions,” says Sam Huckaba, math professor and interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “We are very grateful for their generosity.”

White, a big supporter of the education he received from Case and her colleagues in the Department of Mathematics, is encouraging other alums with actuarial careers to pitch in to make the scholarship program even larger. “Please join me in honoring and thanking Dr. Case for starting the program that helped us all,” he says.

“Dr. Case began the actuarial program at FSU and became my advisor during my junior year,” White says. “I give her a lot of credit for creating and building a great program for students who excel in mathematics and for helping them start a career in a rewarding profession.”

Huckaba also gives Case a lot of credit. “Actuarial science at FSU would not exist if not for Bettye Anne Case,” Huckaba says. “She is a forward-thinking faculty member if there ever was one, and opportunity met preparation when she and Courtney crossed paths.”

Huckaba, who joined the FSU faculty in 1987, remembers White. “I have clear memories of Courtney White the student, who took a linear algebra course from me in 1991,” Huckaba says. “He was a good student who was interested in pursuing a career in the actuarial field, and we (led by Bettye Anne) had been discussing an expansion of our degree offerings in that direction.”

Case was surprised and thrilled when she learned about the gift. “I am honored that my name is associated with this gift to future students from Courtney and Shari,” Case says. “Before Sam sent Courtney to see me, my initial planning for an actuarial program was in the abstract. Courtney’s certainty about his goals and willingness to work hard on extra and difficult courses gave life to those abstract ideas so I could make the best curriculum choices for the program proposals.

“It was good to have Courtney in my trial class for our first actuarial course. Most of the students had completed none or few of the related collateral courses; Courtney



Photo courtesy of Courtney White

would cite from an RMI [risk management/ insurance] or stat or numerical class to show where what might seem dull was important, hence worth the effort.”

With a strong grounding in math, statistics, and finance, actuaries analyze data to determine the risk that organizations might face if certain events occurred, such as accidents, diseases, or natural disasters. For that reason, actuaries typically work in the insurance, financial, health care, and government sectors.

However, entering the field can be difficult, as many companies expect new hires to have already passed at least one professional exam on their way to licensure. Not only are the tests difficult to pass, but they are expensive to prepare for, given that students generally spend hundreds of dollars in exam fees, textbooks and other study aids.

Appreciative of the success he has had in his own career, White wants to help ease that financial burden for some current FSU actuarial students.

“The undergraduate program at FSU taught me how to study and really helped me prepare for the first couple of actuarial exams,” says White, who is a fellow of the Society of Actuaries and a principal and consulting actuary with the Atlanta office of Milliman, an international actuarial and consulting firm. “It’s an honor to see fellow ‘Noles at client and industry meetings as well as see their resumes come across my desk.”



Phil Bowers, Bettye Anne Case, and Sam Huckaba

Photo by Torri Miller

Looking back

By Bettye Anne Case

The undergraduate major in actuarial mathematics was approved at FSU in 1993, a year after Courtney White graduated. He was the test pilot for that new major and its later extension, the state’s first Program in Actuarial Science approved by the Board of Regents. The actuarial credentialing societies quickly recognized that the program included their necessary elements for an advanced undergraduate degree—curriculum cooperation from business and statistics, advice from the industry, ethics and professionalism, exam preparation support.... Actuarial science became the department’s most-enrolled undergraduate option. It is now coordinated by Steve Paris, who proudly announces at each annual Mathematics Honors Day the many students who have passed credentialing exams.

FSU math’s presence in actuarial science at the graduate level has been gaining ground, too. For a decade, Paris and I have advised graduate students in the financial mathematics M.S. who elect an actuarial concentration; currently, two of their Ph.D. students are writing actuarial-related dissertations. If you visit the website of the Society of Actuaries (SOA), you will see that FSU is now listed in SOA education classifications as both “Undergraduate—Advanced” and “Graduate—Education and Research.”

White recalls his start in the field. “FSU didn’t have an actuarial program when I visited during my senior year of high school,” he says, “but I talked with the math department, and they assured me they could be flexible with my coursework to help me work toward my goal of being an actuary.

“While I would have preferred the risk management classes over physics,” he says jokingly, “it was too late to change my major. Dr. Case offered the first actuarial course (Actuarial Mathematics) in my senior year, so I was able to take the course and use it as an elective.”

White earned his degree in applied mathematics in 1992, around the same time that his wife received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music therapy from FSU.

“FSU is part of our family,” he says. “The kids could all sing the fight song and do the Warchant at a young age.” The Whites have four children: Melanie, 15; Dylan and Jenna, both 11; and Katie, 8.

FSU alumni Courtney and Shari White (bottom row, center) have created a fund to help FSU actuarial science students. Their children are Melanie (bottom left), Jenna (bottom right), Dylan (top left) and Katie (top right).



final takes

Using the summation convention the familiar scalar equations

$$a_{11}x_1 + a_{12}x_2 + a_{13}x_3 = k_1,$$

$$a_{21}x_1 + a_{22}x_2 + a_{23}x_3 = k_2,$$

$$a_{31}x_1 + a_{32}x_2 + a_{33}x_3 = k_3,$$

may

the

$$jx_j = k_i.$$

this is written

$$r = S.$$





Nancy Smilowitz

Assistant Dean of Development Nancy Smilowitz says she loves working with people who have a thirst for knowledge and a desire to enhance higher education. As the daughter of a professor at a large public research university, Nancy grew up in a family that valued higher education, and she sees her work at FSU as a continuation of those values nurtured by her parents.

May 2011 marked 13 years that Nancy has been in the Office of Development at Florida State University's College of Arts and Sciences. Having begun her time at FSU as an associate director, she became senior director in 2002 and assistant dean in 2008. In her 13 years as a liaison between the College of Arts and Sciences and the FSU Foundation, Nancy has raised over \$25 million through outright and deferred gifts.

Before arriving at Florida State, Nancy earned her bachelor's degree in sociology from Penn State University, where she also worked part-time in the phone center, first as a student fund raiser and later as a supervisor. Between her time at Penn State and her arrival at FSU, Nancy served as the assistant director of annual giving at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. Currently, Nancy and her husband, Matt, live in Tallahassee.

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Jeff Ereckson

Following a 17-year career in the financial services industry in Atlanta, Jeff Ereckson joined the FSU Foundation in March 2005 as director of planned giving. As a liaison to as many as seven colleges within the university, Jeff worked with several donors and development officers to raise more than \$8 million in just over four years. He also helped raise funds and gifts-in-kind to build the new FSU President's House. In November 2009, Jeff joined the College of Arts and Sciences as the director of development.

In addition to being a graduate of Florida State University (B.S., Finance, 1985), Jeff was on the Renegade Team while in school and was Chief Osceola in 1983 and 1984. Jeff was also an active alumnus with the university by serving on the FSU Alumni Board as well as the College of Arts and Sciences Leadership Council for eight years. He and his wife, Renee, currently live in Tallahassee with their two teenage sons.

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Leslie Deslis

Originally from Leesburg, Fla., Leslie Deslis graduated from FSU in 2010 with dual bachelor's degrees: one in marketing and the other in merchandising and product development. While in school, Leslie served as a program ambassador for the College of Business sales program and worked as the marketing director for the News Service of Florida. These positions enabled her to develop communication skills vital to her role as development officer for the College of Arts and Sciences. In her new role, Leslie works closely with alumni and friends of the college to ensure that they can support the college in a way that fulfills their own passions and enhances the lives of current and future Florida State students.

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Torri Miller

Torri Miller, born and raised in Miami, graduated from FSU in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in residential science. The first time she visited Tallahassee and toured the campus, she realized that FSU was the place for her. Torri met her husband, Blake Miller, while a student, and they were married shortly after her graduation. From 2002-2008, she worked at the Tallahassee Leon County Civic Center, where she learned all about catering events and the restaurant industry, and from 2007-2010, she worked at the Tallahassee Builders Association as their marketing coordinator. In April 2010, Torri joined the College of Arts and Sciences, where she is happy to be working at the university where she experienced some of the best moments of her life.

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