

GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY'S MAGAZINE

GCU today

SEPTEMBER 2015

Faces of the Future


Five-star
freshman
class is
ready
to shine

GRAND CANYON
UNIVERSITY



GCU
BASKETBALL

CANYON
2


LOPES
RISING

★ EST 1949 ★

Season tickets now available at **LopesTickets.com**

GCU Today Magazine is a quarterly publication of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at Grand Canyon University.

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Kayla Sands, a senior nursing student at GCU, cuddles with baby Same in his village near Kalomo, Zambia. Sands and other future nurses spent nearly three weeks in May on a medical mission in the African bush.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELLE LAVIN

Features

6 Here They Come

There's a lot to be said about the big, bright Class of 2019. Meet some freshmen eager to make their mark on GCU and the world.

12 Reality Tech

The new engineering program at GCU starts this fall, and students will do far more than learn from books. They'll see firsthand how things really work.

16 It'll Be a Kick

GCU's soccer program is aiming high, as demonstrated by the hiring of renowned coach Schellas Hyndman. He brings a lot to the conversation.

18 Right Prescription

The Transition to Professional Nursing Practice program gives students real-world experiences in hospital settings before they graduate.



In Every Issue

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- 30 Parting Shot

ON THE COVER: GCU rolled out the welcome mat for thousands of new students this fall, including (clockwise from bottom) Shelby Langston, Stephen Parisi, Denisse Delos Santos, Emily Branch and Kerry Boykins. PHOTO BY DARRYL WEBB

Sound Bites

What favorite comfort item did you bring with you to college as a freshman?

Two years before my father died of an aneurysm, he gave me a Zippy monkey holding a bottle of perfume for Christmas. He said even though I was growing up I would always be his little girl. Zippy was riding on my shoulder when I walked into my freshman residence hall.

Deann Hart,
technical services librarian

My portrait of The Flash, my favorite superhero since I was a little kid.

Peter Delgado-Murillo,
GCU freshman

My grandmother quilted me a comforter after high school graduation. It's a tradition she has upheld for all 22 of her grandchildren. She picks the color and design uniquely based on each grandchild's preference and personality.

Ellie Evans,
enrollment counselor

My camera. I'm a digital film and production major, so I'm going to need it for school and it's my hobby, too.

Abiel Valencia,
GCU freshman

My grandmother's pillow case.

Maggie Swift Cady,
GCU alumna

BE THERE

September

16

AIR1 POSITIVE HITS TOUR

David Crowder is joined by Lauren Daigle, Finding Favour, Christian rapper NF and special guest 3 For 3. 7 p.m., GCU Arena. gcuarena.com

20

NEWSBOYS

Founded in 1985, the Australian group long has been among the most popular Christian pop rock bands. 6 p.m., GCU Arena. gcuarena.com



Newsboys

October

9-11

FAMILY WEEKEND

The annual celebration for families of GCU students features family Chapel, Movie on the Lawn, a kickball game, a 5K run and more. www.gcu.edu/familyweekend

9-11, 16-18

'SCAPIN'

In the first play of its kind performed on the Ethington Theatre stage, the trickster Scapin gets a clown makeover in the three-act French comedy. 602-639-8880, www.gcu.edu/ethington

16-17

ONLINE COMMENCEMENT

More than 9,000 graduates are eligible to walk, and for the first time there will be three ceremonies in one day. 5 p.m. Oct. 16; 9 a.m., 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Oct. 17, GCU Arena

November

5

MEN'S BASKETBALL

After finishing second last season in the Western Athletic Conference, the Lopes open with a 7 p.m. exhibition against New Mexico Highlands in GCU Arena. Their official home opener is Nov. 13 vs. Portland State. 602-639-8992, gcuarena.com

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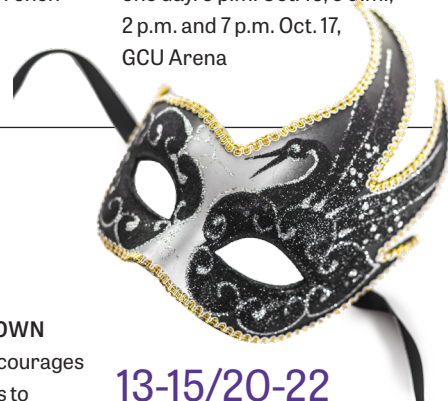
ULTIMATE STEM SHOWDOWN

This spirited competition encourages Arizona high school students to blend their technical capabilities with creativity in designing devices for labs in GCU's new College of Science, Engineering and Technology. 8 a.m.-noon, GCU Arena. www.gcu.edu/stemshowdown

13-15/20-22

'DIE FLEDERMAUS'

A doctor gets revenge for a practical joke in this farcical German opera, directed by GCU alumnus Scott Campbell. 602-639-8880, www.gcu.edu/ethington



Opt In



Of the hundreds of internships for which GCU students may apply, which of these locations do you think would be the coolest?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> GCU cadaver lab | <input type="radio"/> Ping! Development |
| <input type="radio"/> Arizona State Fair | <input type="radio"/> Camp Zanika Lache |
| <input type="radio"/> Mountain Ridge Church | <input type="radio"/> Free Arts for Abused Children |
| <input type="radio"/> i9 Sports | <input type="radio"/> Banner Health of Arizona |

Vote for two and check results at news.gcu.edu.

Results from the last poll

What's your favorite place at GCU?

Arena	27.68%
Thunder Alley/Thunderground	21.57%
Library	12.75%
Fitness centers	10.45%
Swimming pools	8.68%
Student Union	8%
Athletic fields	5.56%
Quad	5.29%



Got Your Number

The new Grand Canyon University Hotel, at 27th Avenue and Camelback Road near Interstate 17, opened on Aug. 1. It serves two valuable purposes — it provides a clean, secure and convenient place to stay for GCU visitors and anyone else who wants a reasonably priced room, and it creates an excellent learning environment for students in the new hospitality program in the Colangelo College of Business. Some things to know about it:

\$69

Cost of regular room, including breakfast

\$74

Cost of suites

10 Number of suites

117 Rooms available at opening

152 Total rooms

Lisa Harman will use her considerable experience as a mom to help students work through mental health issues. "Motherhood is the greatest opportunity to love someone through their life, to believe in them, encourage them and help them see their value and the unique gifts that God has given them."

PHOTO BY DARRYL WEBB



5 ON 5 WITH

Lisa Harman, Residence Life

Lisa Harman and her husband, Greg, GCU's executive director of strategic educational alliances, helped their four kids get through college life. Now, as the new case manager for Residence Life, Lisa will be shepherding about 16,000 students through any mental health issues they might encounter. GCU Today talked with her about her role and its significance.

1 What is the bird's-eye view of what you'll be doing? I'm not a counselor, and I won't be counseling them. I'm the connector on campus to get them the resources they need. If we get reports that they're at a crisis level, then I'll meet with them and, if appropriate, set up meetings for them with Student Disability Services and with Counseling for an assessment. We can't require continual counseling, but we can require an assessment.

2 What are the warning signs of depression or mental illness? They feel like they can't get to classes, they can't do their homework, they don't want to go out with friends. Our greatest concern, of course, is making sure that students considering suicide get the resources they need, but depression can result from something as simple as being severely homesick. Resident

advisers, resident directors and life leaders are able to help and support, but they can't reach all the students.

3 How great is the need for crisis counseling? According to the American College Health Association, at any given time 32 percent of college and university students are dealing with mental illness. We're not seeing that high of a statistic, that we're aware of, but even if you cut that in half it's still 16 percent — that's a lot.

4 What experiences have prepared you to do this work? I was a lay counselor in my church for a number of years and have worked in student conduct here for two years. This summer, I've done gateway training for suicide prevention and certification training for behavioral intervention teams and for case management with the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association, which deals with these issues on campus. You learn best practices, how to be in compliance, how best to care for these students, how to follow through, things of that nature.

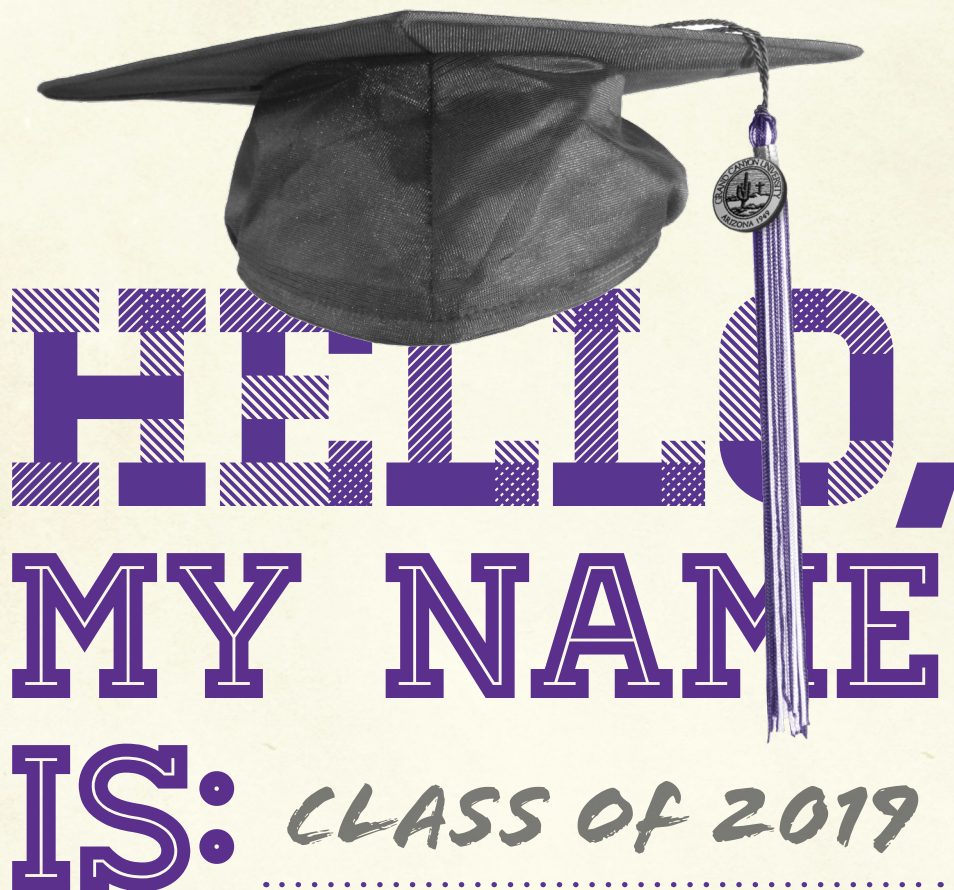
5 How did motherhood prepare you for this role? It's funny — you back away from saying that is one of my qualifications, but it's a huge one. I love watching how God prepares you. I feel that I'm at a place where all the pieces have come together.

Oh, Yeah?

The Havocs, GCU's raucous student section, have made the Arena a tough venue for the competition. This year, look for these Canyon Crazies to generate even more sound and antics at home games as the old Monsoon section

is swept away by an expanded group with as many as 1,000 members. The Havocs also will be motoring in the new Game Day golf cart, a mobile pep rally with loud music and Lopes gear. "We'll drive around campus to create a buzz before games," said senior Brandon Kaiser, Havocs president. "When students see us they'll say, 'That's the Havocs. It's crazy time.'"





Bright, talented GCU freshmen poised to make their mark

They are tomorrow's electrical engineers and computer wizards, entrepreneurs and innovators, worship leaders and teachers, medical professionals and lawyers, musicians and thespians.

They will help solve global challenges, spread the Gospel, invent the next great thing and make their loved ones' hearts burst with pride and joy.

They are a smart bunch with an incoming GPA of greater than 3.5, and so young, too: One in five is under 18 years old. They primarily hail from the western U.S. – Arizona, California, Colorado, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii – and while some literally are neighborhood kids, others were born far away, in South Korea and Nigeria.

They are our hope for the future. They will do great things at home and abroad. Welcome, Class of 2019. We've been preparing for you.

STORIES BY JANIE MAGRUDER





Aven Ault, 17

Hometown: Fresno, Calif.

Major: Biomedical engineering

From the moment the Ault family stopped by campus to visit a friend and hopped aboard the GCU welcome wagon (guided tour, purple T-shirts, free tickets to a men's basketball game), they were sold.

"It was a whole cool adventure," said Aven Ault, whose family rolled through Phoenix in their RV on the way home from a trip to Texas a couple of years ago and found themselves at a boisterous Arena event.

The thrill continues now for Ault, the Class of 2015 valedictorian at Clovis East High, where he also was the top player on the

boys' tennis team. And he's recruited several friends from central California to GCU, including his roommate, Trevor McIntosh.

Phoenix's heat might be an adjustment: Ault spent the summer at mile-high Hume Lake Christian Camp in California, leading devotions and recreation for hundreds of young campers. Serving the Lord always has been important to this son of missionary parents, who grew up in Spain making friends with the locals and becoming fluent in Spanish.

The GCU factor: The family loved campus so much that Ault's stepmom, Colleen, applied for a job and was hired as a regional admissions representative in California.

Briana and Brian Norheim, 18

Hometown: Bermuda Dunes, Calif.

Majors: Nursing (Briana) and Biology (Brian)

Among the record six pairs of twins and 470 freshmen entering GCU's Honors College this fall are Briana Norheim and her one-minute-younger brother, Brian. They have a yin and yang that is both fiercely competitive and sweetly protective.

The competition shows up mostly on the basketball court, where Briana and Brian have bounced around together since they were old enough to walk. Briana played on her brother's team in middle school because there was no girls' team, and both were multiyear captains of their respective teams at Desert Christian Academy near their home in Bermuda Dunes, Calif.

Both played piano and were in AP and honors classes during high school. Briana also packed in volleyball and cheer, while Brian was drawn to ministry in the academy's elementary school.

They each describe themselves as hard working, but she is positive, energetic and persistent while he is more strong-willed and dedicated.

Her favorite Bible verse is Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." His is Romans 8:37-39: "... neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"We complement each other very well," Briana said. "Whatever I'm weak in (math), he's very strong

in, and whatever I'm strong in (English and history), he's not."

Briana chose nursing but has not ruled out becoming a teacher because she wants to make a difference in people's lives. Brian plans to become a doctor and has heard about the hands-on opportunities that pre-med students have in GCU's cadaver labs and on medical mission trips around the world. He is interested in pursuing orthopedics in mission work, if that's where God calls him.

The twins have been in the same classes at the same school all their lives, and when they began to think about college, Briana initially was open to being at a different place than her brother.

"One of the main reasons she wants me to go to the same college is to help her in math," Brian joked. To which Briana replied, "God gave me a math tutor."

And it's not as if the twins won't know anyone at GCU: one quarter of their 32-member graduating class is enrolled, too. Still, watching out for each other will be a priority.

"Briana is a strong woman of faith, and if I need her she'll be there for me. She would drop whatever she's doing," he said. "I'm blessed to have a twin sister."

The GCU factor: "Our parents are very secure in how the campus is and with how affordable it is, and I think GCU will provide more opportunities than other colleges could provide," Brianna said. Added Brian, "I have a great opportunity to do well as I prepare for med school and become a doctor."



Denisse Delos Santos, 18

Hometown: Phoenix

Major: Electrical engineering

But for that one B, in Spanish, Denisse Delos Santos would have a 5.0 GPA. The Class of 2015 valedictorian at North High in Phoenix, who took four years of the boot camp equivalent of learning — International Baccalaureate — had to settle for a 4.92.

Delos Santos insisted she's not that smart.

"I'm just really determined when it comes to work. It runs in my family," she said.

The tests, essays and homework at North were a grind, but she refused to be one-note.

Choir, playing piano and guitar and drama were mixed in with U.S. history, pre-calc and physics.

Delos Santos, who was born in San Pablo, the Philippines, chose electrical engineering because her father, a teacher, is a "frustrated engineer" who couldn't afford to follow his dreams. "I said, 'OK, Dad, I'm going to finish your dream off for you.'"

The GCU factor: "I'm really excited to be in the first class of engineers. We're making history. We're the first to be in the new building and classrooms, and whatever we do, the next class will have to follow us."



Easton Barbour, 18

Hometown: Hershey, Pa.

Major: Christian studies

From a ready smile to the "I am Second" bracelet to his confident stride, Easton Barbour has the countenance of a young pastor.

"I'm hard-wired for the ministry, especially for fellowship and discipleship. I don't have a passion for anything else," he said.

When Barbour's parents moved their family from North Carolina to Gilbert in 2011, it was a faith wakeup call. His new school, Basha High in Chandler, had more than 2,500 students, and Barbour felt a bit lost.

He joined the school soccer team and

tackled the books, finishing with a 4.75 GPA and amassing more than 30 required college credits.

"I took AP classes so I wouldn't have to take them later," he said. "I wanted to focus on Christian studies."

Barbour has taught children and teens at Mission Community Church and co-founded Basha's chapter of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He recently spent three weeks in Europe, a pack on his back and God on his heart and lips.

The GCU factor: "I wanted to stay local for college because I want to stay connected to my church and keep those relationships."



BY THE NUMBERS

Here's a look at Grand Canyon University's incoming class of students, which brings total ground enrollment this fall to a record 16,000:

- **Gender:** 66 percent female
- **Age range:** 15 to 50
- **Home states:** 46
- **From Arizona:** 55 percent
- **Living on campus:** 70 percent
- **Studying in STEM fields:** 60 percent

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Current as of Aug. 7, 2015

SOURCE: GCU





Hope Tedrow, 18

Hometown: Gilbert, Ariz.

Major: Psychology

"Well-rounded" comes to mind when thinking of Hope Tedrow:

- Voracious reader with early preferences, Clifford and Junie B. Jones, edged out by current favorites, Karen Kingsbury and Michael Crichton
- Singer who performed with a show choir in Hollywood
- Fluent Spanish speaker
- Visitor to the equator
- Co-valedictorian of the Gilbert High Class of 2015, with a GPA of 4.79

"I'm not a natural genius," she said. "I'm pretty good at organizing my time to get my work done."

The proof: She completed her freshman year of college, with 15 AP credits and one semester of dual enrollment, while in high school. Tedrow enters GCU with 35 college credits and a blank canvas on which to paint her future. She's interested in how the mind works, maybe counseling or law.

Intramural volleyball and the Learning Lounge at GCU also have enlarged her sphere of interest.

The GCU factor: "My best friend since I was 6 goes there, and I like the smaller class sizes and the fact that there are tons of options — if I ever change my mind."



Joey Bombaci, 18

Hometown: Phoenix

Major: Digital design

Joey Bombaci grew up drawing anything with wheels or wings and playing ice hockey. When his parents suggested he pick art or sports, Bombaci hung up his skates and sharpened his pencils.

As a sophomore at Sandra Day O'Connor High in Phoenix, he was part of a team whose designs were among the top 50 in Vans Custom Culture, a national contest that inspires teenagers to embrace their creativity using the blank canvas of blank canvas shoes.

Bombaci pursued a job at a local Vans, not to perfect the art of selling apparel, but to learn the process of design. His creativity landed on the radar of Steve Van Doren, son of Vans co-founder Paul Van Doren, who sent Bombaci a pair of size 66 blank canvas high-tops to customize for display in the Cypress, Calif., corporate office. Bombaci has since personalized more than a dozen pairs of Vans for friends and is looking forward to exploring digital design at GCU.

The GCU factor: "I want to use my art to show a dark but creative world that there is light, and that light is God."

May Carreon, 18

Hometown: Phoenix

Major: Business management

GCU has been a part of May Carreon's life since grade school. She grew up eight blocks away, never missing a Fall Festival or Christmas party on campus and dreaming of being the first person in her family to go to college, in her very own community.

But money was tight, and Carreon realized during her senior year at Alhambra High that she was responsible for her future. Her math teacher directed her to the University's Learning Lounge for pre-calculus tutoring, and Carreon

sought its help in writing applications for college scholarships. She enrolled in GCU's "Jump Start to Jobs," coming to campus on Saturdays to build her resume and practice job interview skills. Carreon had never before held a job.

Her initiative succeeded: a full-ride scholarship from the Colangelo College of Business and a paid summer internship at Wells Fargo. Carreon has her sights on landing Jerry Colangelo as her mentor. Bank on it.

The GCU factor: "I consider it part of my family. I've known it since I was little. This is my second home."





Kara Sutton, 18

Hometown: Charlotte, N.C.

Major: English for secondary education

Kara Sutton didn't move to Phoenix in the most climate-friendly month — June — but she couldn't be coming to GCU at a better time.

Sutton has plenty of speech and debate experience as a teacher of younger students and a participant in the National Christian Forensics and Communications Association. Members of GCU's speech and debate team this spring won for the second consecutive year national titles in individual events at the National Christian College Forensics Invitational.

Sutton, who was homeschooled, doesn't

know if God will lead her to teach in a public or private high school or a university. But she's certain she's been called to share her Christian worldview through teaching.

"It may not be rewarding as far as pay goes, but the rewarding part for me was getting to see the students grow," she said. "It's a blessing to see students who at first dreaded giving speeches be so much more comfortable by the end."

The GCU factor: Sutton wants to explore GCU's global mission program. Her heart was captured by a February journey to China to minister in a nursery for babies abandoned because of their disabilities.

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"EVERYONE SEEMS SO FRIENDLY,

AND THE CAMPUS LOOKS LIKE A RESORT."

— RILYNN HANSEN
.....

Rilynn Hansen, 18

Hometown: Grants Pass, Ore.

Major: Communications

Rilynn Hansen was a high school freshman in 2011 when she and her sister, Morgan, won first place in a national Future Business Leaders of America contest for their financial plan on a mock business. No other Oregon ninth grader had ever done that.


Hansen again wowed FBLA judges at the 2012 nationals, earning another blue ribbon for a real community service project. She and other students at Hidden Valley High launched the Josephine County Foundation in a region plagued by higher child poverty and unemployment rates and lower high school graduation and college achievement.

"We wanted to do something real. We saw our county struggling and we wanted to

make a difference," she said.

Hansen became proficient at grant writing and building relationships. The nonprofit began with community vision clinics, where 200 pairs of used glasses were handed out to low-income people.

Hansen's newest FBLA national project was Youth Education Success, a partnership with a local television station that made 11 grants to area teachers. They purchased heart-rate monitors for PE classes and ceramic kilns for student artists and established a life-skills garden and dental clinic, among other services.

The GCU factor: "Everyone seems so friendly, and the campus looks like a resort." 



VIDEO



Get to know some of this year's incoming freshmen and hear about their expectations for their first year in a video at news.gcu.edu.



Engineering the real deal

BY MICHAEL FERRARESI • PHOTOS BY DARRYL WEBB



You think your summer was hot? Engineering student Joel Conrad spent his in an internship where he tested and calibrated fiery furnaces.

Starting early

GCU already was putting students in the workforce before the program had even started. Case in point: sophomore Joel Conrad.

Growing up in Phoenix, Conrad developed his interest in engineering by working on his family's dirt bikes. He took parts off the Kawasaki two-stroke and Yamaha 500 and dreamed of customizing his own vehicles someday, perhaps as an engineer for an auto manufacturer.

Knowing GCU eventually would offer engineering degrees, the 19-year-old began as a freshman in the new computer science program but looked forward to transferring into mechanical engineering.

"I was drawn to that since it's a little broader (than biomedical or electrical)," said Conrad, who was homeschooled through high school. "I wanted to take my interests a step further, from mechanics into engineering."

Before beginning his engineering studies, Conrad already had worked with GCU faculty to land a summer internship at Phoenix Heat Treating, an engineering firm with aerospace contracts that deal with everything from airplane landing gears to satellite parts. The University plans to funnel more interns into local companies to experience the real-world applications of principles from their classrooms.

Conrad's summer internship required him to test and calibrate furnaces that run as hot as 2,300 F. But he learned how to run base tests on systems, making sure the furnaces were accurately calibrated for temperature uniformity. He also helped upgrade controls and bring new

Three branches of engineering, one goal: workforce readiness



GCU is training tomorrow's engineers in an interdisciplinary setting that replicates the workforce environment. Here's a snapshot of each program emphasis:

BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING

Also known as "bioengineering," this field produces technology for medical devices and other health care purposes. It's where engineering and medicine come together to solve humanity's biological problems and improve patient care through automation.

Innovations: Implants that regulate the brain's response to hunger and guide weight loss in obese adults, optical scanners that analyze the skin to potentially reduce the need for routine dermatological biopsies, and microchips that alert doctors to potential heart attacks

Major course topics:

Biomedical Design Elements, Biomaterials and Biomedical Instrumentation and Devices



ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

From portable electronic devices to robotic manufacturing systems, engineers in this broad field work on hardware that delivers data for a range of everyday purposes. The technology they build and maintain keeps everything from wireless networks to power plants humming along at an optimal pace.

Innovations: Renewable energy delivery systems, such as high-efficiency solar cell materials, and microcircuit boards and nano-electronics for biomedical implants

Major course topics:

Advanced Circuits, Electromagnetic Fields and Optics, and Communications Signal Processing

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

Considered the broadest of all engineering disciplines, mechanical engineers often overlap in their careers with electrical engineers. Both deal in mechanical systems, but mechanical engineers specialize in how structures and machines withstand stress, systems that convert energy into power and the design of machinery.

Innovations: Advanced computer-assisted design modeling programs and alternative fuel systems, in addition to 3-D printers that use additive direct laser sintering and microelectromechanical systems, or MEMS

Major course topics:

Mechanical Instrumentation and Devices, Structure and Property of Materials, and Solid Mechanics

furnaces online while honing the professional soft skills many employers desire in their entry-level staff.

Conrad said he chose GCU for its Christian worldview, which would help him ultimately “respect God’s creation” in everything he does as an engineer.

Astounding demand

Last summer, Sheller joined CSET Dean Dr. Mark Wooden and other faculty to develop the curriculum and set a foundation for GCU’s future technology and engineering academics. But the University began tapping the industry for input three years ago.

Leaders have joined various GCU advisory boards to share their advice on the technology, programs and skills they expect their employees and colleagues to understand. From startup entrepreneurs to high school science teachers to the directors of tech companies, the feedback was overwhelming proof that students must be prepared to work right out of college.

Studies in the past year have shown that the national demand for STEM jobs will grow by as much as 26 percent through 2020. Locally, the industries of aerospace and defense, technology and innovation, renewable energy, bioscience and health care, optics and photonics, and advanced manufacturing are key sectors for ongoing job growth, according to the Arizona Commerce Authority.

The Greater Phoenix Economic Council reported that “biomedical jobs are growing three times faster here than the national average” and that more than 20,000 jobs in health care and personalized medicine have been created since 2007 in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Dr. Mike Mobley, executive director of GCU’s Center for Integrated Science, Engineering and Technology, characterized Arizona’s need for technically sound electrical and mechanical engineers as significant, too, based on technology workforce reports. GCU wanted to address the challenge of retaining STEM-minded local students to meet those local needs.

“To keep students involved with STEM, we’re learning not to discourage them really quickly with theoretical classes in math and science, but to engage them in a problem-solving atmosphere and exciting hands-on activities ... and weave in those theories as they go, so they’re more likely to stick around longer and finish their degrees,” said Mobley, who came to GCU two years ago.

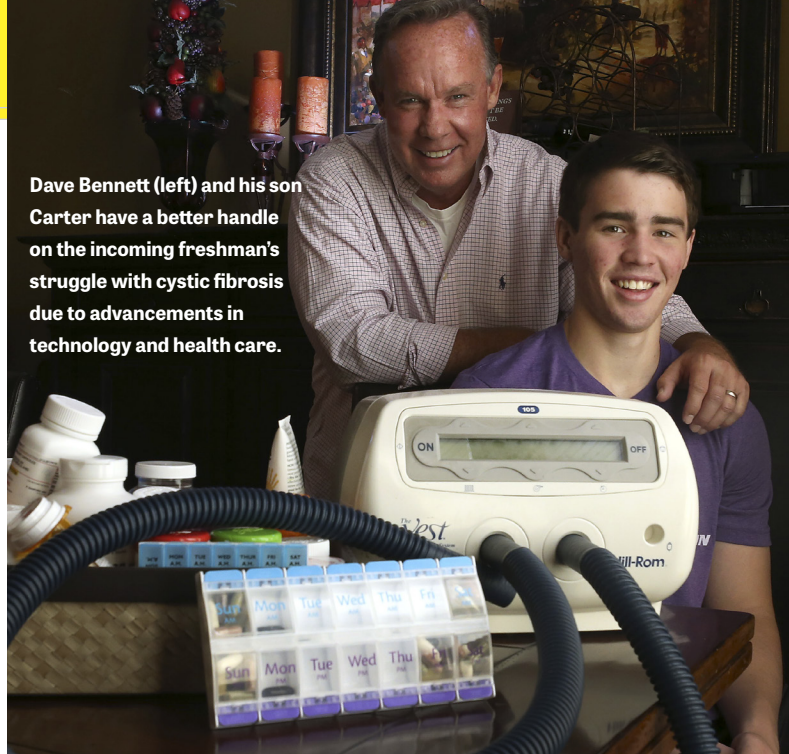
For Sheller, the advent of GCU’s programs has allowed him to tap longtime colleagues such as Tim Stippick for ideas. The engineering entrepreneur, who runs Escape Velocity Mechanical Design in Phoenix, has contributed his ideas to Sheller’s engineering course design.

Stippick agreed to develop a prototype for a robotic hand that students will program in their course and lab, “Success in Computer Science, Engineering and Technology.” Sheller, who has collaborated with Stippick on numerous biomedical devices, said the project would merge the various engineering disciplines with computer science for an overview of programming a machine with logic that makes it mimic human movement.

That’s powerful stuff for a group of freshmen to experience so early in their collegiate careers.

And with that, by programming a machine to do something as simple as clench a fist or flash a Lopes Up, students can see what it means for a team to create from scratch — and the responsibility that goes along with it. **G**

Dave Bennett (left) and his son Carter have a better handle on the incoming freshman’s struggle with cystic fibrosis due to advancements in technology and health care.



‘Precise medicine’ helps freshman breathe easier

There were times when Carter Bennett felt asphyxiated, as if someone was sitting on his chest or thrusting a knife into his lungs. Throughout his youth, the Grand Canyon University freshman relied on his parents, Dave and Kimberly, for relief from the suffocating complications of cystic fibrosis, a genetic disorder for which there is no cure.

When Carter was diagnosed at age 9, his father was a software entrepreneur. But the family’s ensuing experience with doctors and insurance companies led Dave into the emerging field of health care information systems. He became focused on the blending of technology with personalized health care.

The Bennett family learned to understand Carter’s disease and to investigate his genetic makeup. They tailored his treatment plan by zeroing in on his disease mutation, one that affects only 4 percent of cystic fibrosis patients.

They researched new drugs for Carter’s mutation and actually brought information to their doctor about one that has helped him thrive.

“It’s kind of unfortunate that the

doctor didn’t know it, but it’s not really the doctor’s fault since he didn’t really have the systems to do it,” said Dave Bennett, a member of the GCU President’s STEM Advisory Board who has shared his industry insights with the College of Science, Engineering and Technology and its science, technology engineering and math programs.

Today, as vice president of healthier populations at Orion Health in Scottsdale, he develops “precise medicine” solutions that allow doctors and patients to access and use personalized health care data.

“I became real passionate about how we can fix the health care system, how we provide docs and patients with more concrete support,” he said.

Seeing his son off to college this fall marks a transitional point in the family’s journey.

“Thinking about your son dying before you is quite frightening,” Dave said. “But when we understood the mutations a little more and we started following this drug, we were excited ... we thought, in a couple years, Carter would have a shot to outlive me and grow up big and strong.”



Alberto Sanchez Garcia, GCU's leading scorer last season with eight goals, is one of the team's top returning players.

PHOTOS BY DARRYL WEBB

GOAL-ORIENTED

Listen up! Hyndman kicks off new era in GCU soccer

BY RICK VACEK

Y

ou want to talk impact? Just ask new coach Schellas Hyndman about his plans for the Grand Canyon University men's soccer program and let him unleash the boundless enthusiasm of a martial arts expert who greets you with a hearty handshake and a clap on the back and describes his energy as "contagious."

"There are so many great things here," he began, warming to the subject the way a summer day in Phoenix tends to test a thermometer's upper limits. "I loved where I lived (Dallas). It was more of a personal challenge to me to give up that comfort zone and come here.

"But I was truly excited to be working with Mike Vaught (GCU's vice president of athletics) again, and the first time I met President (and CEO Brian) Mueller, it was like, 'Wow, where has this guy been my whole life?'"

You can't help but think of the scene in "Scent of a Woman" where Al

Pacino bellows to the assembly, "I'm just getting warmed up!" Let the man talk — he has more to say.

"I think the impact we can make is the same thing we learned when we were children and our parents told us, 'Always be cautious of your first impression. It's everlasting,'" Hyndman said. "I want to have a really good impact here — I use the word 'impression' — that we're committed to this program.

"I think we also have a wonderful opportunity to have an impact in the community. This is huge. I see a lot of similarities between Southern Methodist University when I started in 1984 and GCU."

So where is the GCU program? It's the only NCAA Division I men's soccer program in Arizona, in an area that loves the world's most popular sport. It's the focal point of what promises to be a beautiful new stadium, scheduled to open next year. And it aims to be a nationally recognized destination for



Goalkeeper Luca Licciardi (left) appreciates coach Schellas Hyndman's input: "Every word that he says gives us a chance to learn something."

the top collegiate players, led by a man who is sixth among D-I coaches with 466 victories.

Soccer is about to be a much bigger deal at GCU. Friday night games this season will feature a student "March to the Match," and the Havocs student section, the Thundering Heard Pep Band and the cheer and dance teams all will be part of the festivities at home games. Soccer will be to the fall sports season what basketball is to winter's.

Vaught had witnessed Hyndman's magic touch firsthand when he was SMU's deputy director of athletics, and when Vaught approached Hyndman about the job, he was considering three other coaching offers and also was the keynote speaker at the National Soccer Coaches Association of America convention.

"We have the best coach in college soccer," Vaught said of Hyndman, who took SMU to 22 NCAA tournaments in 24 seasons and also coached FC Dallas of Major League Soccer for six years and was named MLS Coach of the Year in 2010, when FC Dallas went all the way to the league final before losing. "With his connections we had a top recruiting class even though he had only two weeks to recruit. That's only going to improve. And with our new state-of-the-art soccer stadium he's going to have an opportunity to win a national championship here."

Other GCU coaches have tapped into Hyndman's wealth of knowledge. "He's a great guy, and it's nice to have someone like that who is very forward-thinking," women's soccer coach Stevie Gill said.



Women's coach Stevie Gill

Gill, like Hyndman, is looking forward to a season in which both GCU teams have high hopes. The GCU women, whose schedule includes a visit to defending national champion Florida State, won seven of their last eight matches last season to tie for third in the Western Athletic Conference and figure to be a WAC title contender this year.

"It really boosted our confidence," said goalkeeper Blakely Fraasch, WAC Freshman of the Year last season. "It showed we have a lot of potential and can compete in the WAC."

The forecast for the GCU men is equally bright, and it started with the arrival of Hyndman. "His desire to coach the players and create relationships with them was instantly noticed," goalkeeper Luca Licciardi said.

Hyndman noticed in spring practices that "we have some pretty dag-gone good players right here — they just need a little bit of refining." And the players certainly noticed Hyndman's input.

"He's really relaxed but so sharp," Licciardi said. "He's a thinker. You can tell what's going on in his mind because he'll analyze and then pick the right time and explain it. When Schellas is talking, everyone's listening. Every word that he says gives us a chance to learn something."

Hyndman's goal is to make the program a staple on campus — he and longtime assistant Brent Erwin even taught a "Soccer 101" seminar for students and faculty — and a player on a national scale.

"One day this could be like what Omaha is to NCAA baseball," he said, referring to the site of the College World Series. "We're aiming for Division I soccer playing its championships at GCU because of the field, the facility and, remember, the weather."

Don't forget the presence of Schellas Hyndman. He's just getting warmed up. **G**

VIDEO



Meet Niki Jackson, one of GCU's nine local products, and hear why the highly touted student chose GCU in a video at news.gcu.edu.



Preliminary career diagnosis

Transition to nursing program, a first in Arizona, gives students on-the-job view of what's ahead

BY JANIE MAGRUDER



Diana Puente Head barely had time to remove her coat on her first day of work in the intensive care unit of a west Phoenix hospital when she was called on to help save a life.

A patient had coded 20 minutes into Head's shift at Abrazo Maryvale Campus where, as a student in Grand Canyon University's College of Nursing and Health Care Professions, she had begun a residency in the Transition to Professional (TTP) Nursing Practice program. The 1-year-old TTP is the only program of its kind among Arizona universities and colleges offering nursing degrees.

"It was pure adrenaline," the 34-year-old former medical assistant said of that morning last January. "You see how the unit collaborates, communicates, how it all comes together. We talk about medical emergencies like this in lectures and simulations, but actually being a part of it is amazing.

"It's a sign that I was meant to do this."

Head is among more than 130 GCU nursing students who have gained practical knowledge and experience and made connections in



Diana Puente Head (left), a 2015 GCU alumna, continues her training as a registered nurse at Abrazo Maryvale Campus with clinical coordinator Anna Ward. Head completed GCU's Transition to Professional Nursing Practice program last spring. PHOTOS BY DARRYL WEBB

ICUs, emergency rooms and other units in Abrazo Community Health Network and Banner Health hospitals since TTP began.

Dr. Melanie D. Logue, CONHCP's new dean, said the program is necessary because patients are sicker and health care delivery is more complex than ever. Nurses must be prepared to hit the ground running and function as safe, effective team members, she said.

"Entering into the field of nursing is more stressful now than ever before, and nurses require a high degree of confidence to be successful," said Logue, who herself completed a nurse residency at Phoenix Children's Hospital as a GCU student in the early 1990s. "GCU understands the real-world need and is responsive to this need by offering the first program of its kind in the state."

Head is a stellar example of how the program works: She started her final-semester clinical rotation in the ICU in February, graduated from GCU in April and became employed by Abrazo as a nurse extern in May.

"I knew I wanted to be somewhere fast-paced, where I was constantly challenged," Head said. "The ICU is that place, and I can't imagine doing

anything else. GCU gave me that opportunity."

Nurses and the future

With chronic disease in the U.S. at epidemic proportions and expectations for the quality and accessibility of health insurance raised by the Affordable Care Act, multiple sources have predicted a critical shortage of nurses. As Baby Boomers age (and the generation's nurses retire) and the complexity of health care grows, the Bureau of Labor forecasts 1.05 million job openings for registered nurses by 2022.

At the same time, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2011 called for 80 percent of the U.S. nursing workforce to have bachelor's degrees or better by 2020 and for nurse residency programs to be in place. Such programs, the IOM said, reduce turnover and costs, stabilize staff and support newly licensed nurses in the development of their clinical decision-making and autonomy.

Taking the report to heart, Dr. Dawna Cato, a GCU alumna, adjunct faculty member and architect of the TTP residency, got together with other state nurse leaders to form the Arizona Action Coalition. Cato focused her 2013 Ph.D. dissertation on the relationship between

nurse residency and evidence-based practice, an increasingly popular interdisciplinary approach. It integrates the best available evidence on a treatment's efficacy, clinical expertise to identify a patient's health and appropriate diagnosis, and the patient's preferences and values.

"If we empower our new grads, they can transform the profession," said Cato, market director of professional development for Abrazo, which recently was awarded \$661,000 in state funds to establish a workforce pipeline with GCU on specialty fields in nursing.

Tyna Williams, chief clinical value officer and regional chief nurse executive for Abrazo and its parent company, Dallas-based Tenet Health Care, said the nurse residency/nurse fellowship program will transform 192 new graduate nurses from novice to expert. The goal is to certify more nurses in areas such as intensive care, emergency department, operating room and telemetry.

Research shows that as many as 50 percent of newly graduated nurses don't feel prepared to assume responsibility for patient care, Williams said. TTP gives participating hospitals a close look at a prospective nurse's skills and personality before making formal employment offers.

"Nurses drive patient care," said Cato, who has a BSN and a master's in nursing education from GCU. "We've been very good at providing research on best practices of patient care. For example, we know what we need to do to prevent a catheter-associated urinary tract infection or pressure sores or falls. We know we can have better patient outcomes if we support the evidence."

"But education and practice haven't collaborated as well as they should to put the patient and family at the center of the team."

Cato said "the reality shock of being a new nurse," feeling unprepared and unsupported, almost caused her to quit the profession years ago.

From classroom to patient room

Head has had the opposite experience at Abrazo Maryvale, where she started out working a 12-hour shift each week.

"I felt very welcomed and had a sense of belonging," she said. "I learned that if there's something you don't know, you're not going to be judged. They help you — 'This is how we do it.' You learn from that. From day one I thought, 'I can see myself staying here for the long term.'"



Dr. Dawna Cato

PHOTO COURTESY OF ABRAZO
COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK

Unlike other clinical opportunities, in which teams of students regularly rotate from one supervisor, one medical department and one facility to the next, TTP placed Head in the same location with the same preceptor for 10 weeks. That enabled her to build relationships and hone her skills.

Head, who grew up in a large family in El Paso, Texas, in which Spanish was the primary language, loves connecting with the Maryvale ICU's



GCU nursing student Jordan Prudente (left) is mentored by registered nurse Patrick McConaughy, director of surgical services at Abrazo Arrowhead Campus in Glendale.

many Spanish-speaking patients. It feels like home.

“There was a language barrier, and I felt that even as a novice nurse, I was an important component in closing that gap,” she said. “When I see this population, it reminds me of my family. It’s important for them to have that nursing support and to know what’s happening with their loved one.”

CONHCP graduate Megan Easton did her residency in the ER at Abrazo Scottsdale Campus in Phoenix, then started in May as an extern in an even more dramatic place: the Level 1 Trauma Center at Abrazo West Campus in Goodyear.

“If I didn’t have the TTP experience, it would have been a huge shock because, although you get to experience a little through rotations, it’s not the full effect of going a couple of times a week, getting to know the staff and how it actually works,” said Easton, 27. “This eased a lot of my anxieties as a new nurse. I still have some because it’s a big job and there’s a lot on the line, but I’m more certain about what needs to be done.”

In June, GCU senior Jordan Prudente started his residency at Abrazo Arrowhead Campus in Glendale, where he is learning about pre- and post-operative care and hopes to be assisting in the hospital’s OR before completing his 109 hours and graduating.

The 20-year-old is becoming familiar with OR instruments, facilities and medical staff, performing basic procedures and seeing how effective nurses help patients who may be disoriented, fearful or uncomfortable after surgery. Prudente has had to go outside his comfort zone but knows that will build his confidence and boost his employability.

“It’s a little scary to find your way into a team that’s been together for a while,” he said. “But so far, I’ve met really great nurses who explain a lot of things and are starting to know who I am and my name when they see my purple scrubs.”

Expansion on the horizon

As of early August, 57 new CONHCP graduates had been hired as full-time nurses through the Banner Health New Graduate Transition Program and Abrazo Community Health Network. More employment offers are forthcoming.

“As an employer, we’ve seen them in action and that’s huge,” said Karen Josey, Banner’s director of simulation. “For the student, it’s about bridging the gap between nursing school and practice.”

Students in the Banner program go through corporate and clinical nursing orientations and electronic medical records training, then are immersed in their specific work areas for several weeks. After being hired, the nurses have 2-3 days of simulation training in which they “work out the kinks” by repeatedly practicing their skills on a human patient simulator, Josey said.

Students also learn whether they like the field of nursing they’ve chosen as much as they thought they would, said Noelle Trinder, a Banner RN Clinical Education Director.

“It might not be a fit for the unit or the student, and isn’t that valuable to find out early on?” Trinder said. “It really helps with the retention piece.”

The continued growth of TTP is among Logue’s priorities.

“My residency helped me to apply my learning immediately, and then I had a job right away,” she said. “The nurses nurtured me and helped grow me as one of their own. It’s an amazing opportunity.”

Although Head’s knowledge, skills, experience and confidence have bloomed in myriad ways since that dramatic winter morning eight months ago, she still repeats the same prayer driving to work every day.

“I ask God to help me get through this, give me strength, give me guidance to be a good nurse,” she said. “During my residency and externship, there were times I felt, ‘I don’t know if I can do this.’ But there was always something that occurred or that I experienced that gave me that assurance: ‘You can do it.’” **G**

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Students, staff go the extra mile (and weeks) to spread the Gospel

It started with a group of students from the College of Nursing and Health Care Professions in March and ended with a journey in July to the Czech Republic. In between, Grand Canyon University's 2015 global mission program was ... what?

"It was a roller-coaster of emotions."

"There's nothing like being on a mission to remind you that almost nothing goes according to plan or meets expectations."

"I was challenged to rely only on God."

Judging from those sentiments, the 388 GCU students and staff who went on mission trips to 21 countries and regions returned as changed people. That's a given, as reflected by the Global Outreach Ministry team's motto: "Short-term trip, lifetime impact." But this year not all the trips were short.

Not only were there more participants this year; some trips were much longer — as much as two months compared to the normal mission trip of two weeks. The extra length precluded GCU staff members from going on those trips, which meant students got to step up and lead.

"One of our visions was to have students take more ownership," said Jacob Page, GCU's global outreach coordinator. "We wanted them to take that experience and apply it locally, and I think that happened." RICK VACEK

Where in the world did GCU students and staff go?

Costa Rica 60	Cambodia 24	Brazil 6
Fiji 39	Indonesia 22	East Asia 6
Peru 33	Haiti 17	Middle East 6
Mexico 31	Honduras 15	Uganda 6
South Africa 30	Nicaragua 15	Czech Republic 5
Kenya 27	Zambia/ Philippines/	TOTAL: 388
Thailand 26	Zimbabwe 11	
	China/India 9	

THAILAND/ CAMBODIA:

"The realities of sex trafficking are overwhelming, but God showed the students that hope and redemption are bigger than the darkness."

COSTA RICA:

"The culture is to be silent on a bus, but a local missionary showed how to be bold in your faith by preaching the Gospel on bus trips."

SOUTH AFRICA:

"The people taught us about Ubuntu, which means 'I am what I am because of who we all are.' South Africans are the kindest and most joyful people we have ever met."





Zenon Castro plans to swap his cleaning supplies for textbooks and become a special education teacher, fulfilling a lifelong dream. Castro began working as a night custodian at Mountain Vista Elementary in Indio, Calif., while earning student teaching hours toward his master's degree. PHOTOS BY DARRYL WEBB

Clean break

After polishing his skills at GCU, Zenon Castro is transitioning from custodian to teacher

BY COOPER NELSON

As he cleaned the vacant classrooms in Mountain Vista Elementary School during his shifts as a night custodian, Zenon Castro could see in great detail the place where one day he would teach.

The chairs that he lifted onto the desktops to make room for his vacuum cleaner would be filled with young students eager to learn. Each wall would display the subjects students would study: an English wall with posters of the alphabet characterized by animals with names from A to Z, a science wall detailing the four seasons, and another for math with basic equations symbolized using apples or baseballs.

Castro's lifelong dream of becoming a teacher is finally within reach. The 32-year-old Grand Canyon University alumnus, who graduated with a master's degree in special education which he completed online in June, plans to teach special-needs children.

Castro began working as a custodian at Mountain Vista, a K-6 school in the Coachella Valley Unified School District in Indio, Calif., in 2012 to pay the bills while gaining the 75 hours of student teaching required to graduate. He is taking the Arizona and California state educator exams to become a certified teacher and expects to receive the results this fall.

When he finally does get his own classroom, Castro will waste no time setting it up just the way he always imagined.

"Designing my classroom is one of the most exciting things. The way you design it says a lot about you as a teacher and is the foundation of how students learn," said Castro, a Coachella native. "I've wanted this for so many years, and it's a great feeling knowing I am so close to reaching my dream."

He felt called to work with special-needs children after his mentally disabled older brother died when Castro was 3.

"I believe everything happens for a reason. Everything in my life and the decisions I've made led me to this point," he said. "I know my calling is to be a special education teacher."

Destined to teach

For Castro, helping children with disabilities started in adolescence. He remembers trips to the hospital to visit his brother, who spent his entire life there before passing away at age 5 of complications from premature birth. Growing up without a sibling was difficult, and Castro mourned that loss until his sister was born when he was 9.

His passion for helping people with disabilities carried over into junior high. Castro often took care of his best friend, who was in a wheelchair after being hit by a vehicle with a drunk driver behind the wheel. Castro pushed his friend to class and around the playground at recess, and they had sleepovers and hung out on weekends.

When his friend died during high school, Castro decided to pursue teaching as a career. He earned a bachelor's in liberal arts from California State University, San Bernardino, in 2008, then became an elementary school teacher's aide for four years before joining Mountain Vista as a custodian.

Working both jobs enabled Castro to mentor special education second-through fourth-graders outside the classroom. Many visited him as he cleaned after school, asking for homework advice or bullying solutions or, most often, just to give a hug or high-five before heading home.



Castro often worked 14-hour days during shifts as a teacher's aide and custodian.



GCU's online program made earning a degree possible for Castro. He is the first person in his family with a master's degree and finished in June with a 3.86 GPA.

One of his favorite memories was helping an English as a second language student learn to read. Castro worked with him daily, patiently helping him with basic words and sentences. After weeks of working together, the young boy approached him in the school cafeteria to read him a passage from a book for the first time.

"People belittle these kids, but they are smart. Just because they have a disability doesn't mean anything. They need guidance and without teachers like me, they can't get it," he said. "I want to be there for them and have the opportunity to positively impact their lives."

Cameron Whitcomb, a university development representative in Southern California, sensed Castro's passion for helping disabled students at their first meeting. Whitcomb had just finished speaking to Mountain Vista's teachers when Castro approached him with questions about the University's online education degrees.

His story blew Whitcomb away. No one is better suited to teach special education students than Castro, he said.

"A lot of people talk but don't do. Zenon isn't one of them," said Whitcomb, also a GCU alumnus. "It is very apparent by how hard he works and the passion he shows that he is supposed to teach special ed."

Learning on his time

Like most online adult learners, many of whom work full-time or have families, Castro needed a university program that fit his busy schedule. GCU was the only option that made earning his degree possible, he said.

For about six months, Castro taught from 8:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., Monday through Friday, then changed into his custodian uniform for his 2:45 to 10:30 p.m. shift. Castro studied and worked on class assignments during small windows of free time: before school, during lunch or late at night after work.

His wife, Anika, who at magazine press time was due to give birth to their first child, rarely saw him at home because he spent hours on homework when not at work.

"Going to GCU was life-changing for him," she said. "The hours he spent and his accomplishments just show this all happened for the right reasons."

Castro's academic success also reflected his determination. He maintained a 3.86 GPA and is the first in his family to earn a master's degree. The hard work and sleepless nights were just another step in his journey.

"It was difficult, but I am grateful. Without GCU, I wouldn't be where I am today," he said.

A classroom of his own

Castro hopes to be hired at Mountain Vista and teach one of the school's two special education classrooms for second-graders this fall after becoming licensed in California. Doing so would be the perfect fit. Castro has the full support of the school's faculty and staff and, as a Spanish speaker, is well-suited to help the student population which is nearly 94 percent Hispanic, with 35 percent in ESL classes.

Additionally, Mountain Vista has a growing number of GCU students and alumni. Second-grade teachers Maria Ramirez and Yessenia Garcia are GCU online students, and assistant principal Michael Boomer is an alumnus. All own GCU shirts – courtesy of Whitcomb – and often talk about their online classes.

Garcia learned about GCU from Whitcomb but became seriously interested in enrolling after talking to Castro. She began a master's degree in March and hopes to be finished next spring.

Garcia said everyone at Mountain Vista hopes Castro receives his own classroom there.

"Zenon went from a custodian to a teacher with a master's degree. When does something like that happen?" she said. "The whole school is behind him. He is an inspiration and we are so proud of his accomplishments."

For now, Castro will continue at Mountain Vista as a custodian, pending news on his license status. After waiting his whole life to become a teacher, he said he can wait a little longer.

"Every student I've met or taught has made a difference in my life. I feel comfortable teaching and know I am making a difference because of them," Castro said. "Watching the difference you make in their lives and seeing them succeed, that's what it's all about." **G**



Class Notes 1964 to 2014



What's new with you? Send your class notes and a high-resolution photo to www.gcu.edu/classnotes.

1960s



Norma Mercer, B.S. in Elementary Education, '64,

started a library at First Southern Baptist Church in Wickenburg, Ariz. The library had 500 books when it opened and now has more than 3,000.



Houses with Hope, a nonprofit that builds homes for disadvantaged families and

orphans in Africa and helps victims of humanitarian crises. Jordan has started a campaign to raise money for victims of the Garissa (Kenya) University College attack in April.



Daniel Miranda, B.S. in Justice Studies, '95, and James Kuzmich opened the

Miranda & Kuzmich law firm in Tempe, Ariz. Miranda has been representing clients in business-related legal matters since 2003 and focuses on commercial, business and contract law.



for Butterflies," a novel devoted to preserving heirloom vegetables. The book is based on

Hamill's garden journal, which shares the joys of daily farm life.

1970s



Mark Pitts, B.A. in Religion, '76, is senior pastor of Village Meadows Baptist Church in

Sierra Vista, Ariz. In 18 years there, Pitts has had many roles and led a church relocation.



1980s

Brian Stout, B.S. in Marketing, '89, has been involved with the Haitian church for eight

years. Stout founded Florida-based Thousand Hills Ministries in 2011 to focus on gospel-based economic-development projects.



Pamela Watts, M.Ed. in Secondary Education, '97, is director of Creative Bridges and

Discovery Tree Learning Center, a private, parent cooperative preschool in Phoenix that recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.



Aminda Parafinik, B.A. in Communications: Public Relations, '99, and her

husband, Josh, published "The Couple's Road Trip Guide: Relationship Lessons Learned from Life on the Road." The book shares tales from their road trips and discusses the similarities between a successful road trip and a marriage.



Charles Rhode, B.S. in Music Education and Elementary Education, '77, was named Elementary

School Teacher of the Year in Chesterfield County, Va., for his work in the music department at Watkins Elementary School. Rhode has been teaching in Chesterfield County Public Schools since 1985.



1990s

Eric Christensen, B.A. in Christian Studies, '93, is executive director of The Springs at

Tanasbourne, a senior housing company based in Hillsboro, Ore. Christensen has more than nine years of management experience in the senior living community industry and volunteers his time to housing-related causes.



Dr. Brian Bucina, B.S. in Biology, '98, is a general surgeon at Little Colorado Medical Center

in Winslow, Ariz., and medical director for its Wound Care Clinic. He also trains medical students from Midwestern University and the University of Arizona.



Elmer "Bud" Backer, M.S. in Executive Fire Service Leadership, '06, is chief at East Pierce Fire

and Rescue in Bonney Lake, Wash. Backer has held various leadership positions with fire departments throughout King County, Wash., including chief of the King County Fire District.

Ronna Jordan, B.S. in Elementary Education, '78, is president and founder of

Donna Hamill, M.Ed. in Secondary Education, '99, has released her first book, "Baskets

SPOTLIGHT ON Igor Kutovoy, '99



When Igor Kutovoy was a GCU student in the late 1990s, he was struck by the way “we were always looking to make a difference, both inside the University and out in the community.”

With that spirit firmly rooted in his mind, Kutovoy returned to his native Ukraine to make a difference there, using his passion for agriculture and his country. The 1999 graduate (BBA in Finance) is manager of the Ukrainian office of John Deere, an American manufacturer of farm machinery. Kutovoy, 37, also consults for the government, is on the board of directors of Ukraine's largest agricultural university and helps support an orphanage for mentally challenged children.

Not many people outside Ukraine know that it is making drastic reforms despite the threat of war with Russia. Kutovoy said the country is on track for one of the top farm yields in its history, and in Kiev an almost entirely new police force—with new uniforms, cars and higher salaries—recently was sworn in, sweeping away all but a fraction of a unit beset by corruption.

“There's a lot of optimism,” he said.

Kutovoy came to Phoenix as a foreign-exchange high school student and soon decided to attend college in the U.S., too. When GCU offered a scholarship, he signed on as a Lope.

His enthusiasm for the University was reflected in his involvement in student government and willingness to work various campus jobs. And as with many alumni, Kutovoy was stunned by what he saw during a visit last Christmas.

“It's amazing,” he said. “The University looks incredible.”

Kutovoy hopes to see GCU-like growth in Ukraine. “It's extremely exciting to witness all the change and be part of it.”



Johnathan Harris, M.Ed. in Special Education for Certified Special Educators, '07,

is the founder and headmaster of Lynnhaven Academy in

Richmond, Va. The academy provides a comprehensive college preparatory curriculum while combining experiential learning, academic excellence and community reverence.



Robert “Cory” Sanford, M.Ed. in Education Administration, '08,

is assistant principal at Dayton (Nev.) High. Sanford previously was assistant principal at his alma mater, Yerington (Nev.) High, where he started his teaching career.



Dr. Timothy Tait, M.S. in Leadership with an Emphasis in Disaster Preparedness and Crisis Management, '08, and Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership, '12, is communication director for the Arizona Department of Transportation in Surprise, Ariz. Tait also is an instructional assistant in GCU's College of Doctoral Studies.



Tasia Thompson, M.Ed. in Education Administration, '08, was promoted from assistant principal to principal at Ethridge Elementary School in Lewisville, Texas. Thompson has been with the district since 1996.



Dr. Ysanne Williams, M.Ed. in Elementary Education, '09, and Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership with an Emphasis in Instructional Leadership, '14, was promoted to reading and social studies curriculum specialist at Charles Baxter Junior High in Fort Worth, Texas.

2010s



Jonathan McMahan, B.S. in Public Safety and Emergency Management,

'10, and M.S. in Leadership with an Emphasis in Disaster Preparedness and Executive Fire Leadership, '12, is chief at Rural Metro Fire Department in Tucson, Ariz. McMahan previously was a firefighter, engineer, captain and battalion chief.



Alexis Quick, M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction: Reading, '10, received the 2015

Teacher of the Year Award at Sherwood Elementary School in Pensacola, Fla. Quick has been a kindergarten and first-grade teacher for seven years.



Terri Anderson-Schlader, M.Ed. in Special Education: Cross Categorical, '11, teaches in the

social-learning classroom for special education students at Huron (S.D.) Middle School. She was the school's Teacher of the Year in 2014 for her dedication to students.



Michael Varnell, M.S. in Leadership with an Emphasis in Disaster Preparedness and

Executive Fire Leadership, '11, is chief at Rocky Mount (N.C.) Fire Department, where he has worked for more than 25 years.



Bryan Morris, M.S. in Addiction Counseling, '12, is senior pastor at Morris Memorial

Baptist Church in Moscow, Tenn. He previously was a minister to youth and children for five years.

Jeffrey Pilz, M.S. in Leadership with an Emphasis in Disaster Preparedness and Executive Fire



Leadership, '12, is chief at Hillside (Ill.) Fire Department. Pilz, who has been with the department

since 1990, previously was lieutenant and captain.



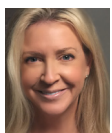
Ethelda Prophet-Vason, MPA with an Emphasis in Health Care Management, '12,

published her first book, "But God and by His Grace," a story about faith and finding oneself. Vason said of becoming an author at 65, "God does work in mysterious ways."



Robert Lonadier, M.S. in Nursing with an Emphasis in Nursing Education, '13, of Ocala, Fla.,

is president of the National Association of Orthopedic Nurses, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing orthopedic nursing through research and education.



Janet "January" O'Connor, B.S. in Nursing (RN to BSN), '13, invented a salt gargle for

sore throats called GoGargle! O'Connor and her husband, Tim, have placed it in more than 40,000 stores, she said.



Melanie Schneider, M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction: Reading with an Emphasis in Elementary Education, '13, a first-grade teacher at Centennial Elementary School in Gilbert, Ariz., was named Higley Unified School District Teacher of the Year for 2015.



Michael Serna, M.A. in Christian Studies with an Emphasis in Christian

Leadership, '13, who lives in Elkhart, Kan., published two books, "The Excellent Life: A Journey Through an Excellent Life" and "All Sufficient God: A Call for a Higher Standard."



Jennifer Amman, M.Ed. in Educational Administration, '14, was named

Teacher of the Year for the Taylor County School District in Perry, Fla. The kindergarten teacher also was honored by Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Senate.



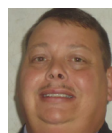
Shyra Ann Cannon, B.S. in Nursing, '14, is a nurse at Diamond Canyon School in Anthem,

Ariz., and a new member of the International Nurses Association. Cannon is working on an M.S. in Nursing with an Emphasis in Leadership degree at GCU.



Bobby Cox Jr., M.Ed. in Secondary Education, '14, was named Teacher of the Week by WITN-

TV in Greenville, N.C. Cox is a history teacher, assistant football coach and substitute bus driver at West Craven High in Vanceboro.



George Hammond, M.A. in Christian Studies with an Emphasis in Pastoral Ministry, '14, has received his license to preach, is teaching Sunday school and leads a men's group at Rock Springs Church in Milner, Ga. He also works with Turning

SPOTLIGHT ON

Heather Jancoski, '09



In just one year, Heather Jancoski has shown her students at South Mountain High in Phoenix that persistence can be glamorous in broadcast journalism.

The 2009 GCU graduate (M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction: Technology) had barely walked through the classroom door when she had a dozen disciples

("Our own little mini-family") producing Jaguar News, a weekly television program about happenings on campus.

Not long after, Jancoski's determination to make contact with the Public Broadcasting Service paid off in a collaboration on school safety with PBS NewsHour's Student Reporting Labs. "The things you taught us — that's what we're doing!" her students told her.

"To see it on the national news was great for them, too," she said.

The learning process continued with Jancoski's insistence that her class develop social media skills to apply the proper analytics to those communications. And that optimized a mash-up of story ideas.

For her efforts, Jancoski, 33, was honored in the Creative Media category in Cox Communications' 2015 Connect2STEM Awards, and even that had a side benefit: An assisted-living home wants her students to do a video about the facility and mentor residents on producing their own stories.

But the Avondale resident mainly is focused on having her students ferret out stories on the culturally diverse South Mountain campus. "I just feel like these kids have so many stories to tell," she said, adding, "People ask me, 'You've been teaching only one year and you've done all this already — what are you going to do next year?'"

Sounds like a tease for the evening news. Only this teacher is all about much more than happy talk.

Point, a Georgia-based gospel group.



Laurie Johnson, MBA, '14, is administrative assistant to the director of

Christian education at Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C. Johnson also is the public relations manager for the church's music ministry.



Eetu Karvonen, B.S. in Exercise Science with an Emphasis in Physical

Education, '14, has won more than 30 national swimming titles in his native Finland and hopes to qualify for the 2016 Olympics. Karvonen has coached swimmers for 15 years.



Erica Wadas, a GCU alumna and recent graduate of the University of Arizona's College of Medicine, is in a residency program at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H.
PHOTO BY SARAH PRIESTAP

Good ice-breaker

Wadas plows into her career in medicine with Dartmouth residency

BY MICHAEL FERRARESI

Erica Wadas will need to get used to New England blizzards this winter.

The Arizona native never has had to dig her way out of the garage or scrape a frozen windshield. But that's about to change for the Grand Canyon University alumna, who graduated this year from the University of Arizona's College of Medicine and recently began her residency at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H., just a few miles from the Ivy League campus.

Wadas, 30, is working in general medicine with a variety of patients and also is doing rotations that expose her to specialty areas of medicine, such as cardiology, endocrinology and gastrointestinal disorders.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Wadas earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication but felt drawn to medicine. After working for a surgical equipment company, she enrolled at GCU, initially thinking she would study nursing.

A mentor directed Wadas toward the pre-med program and on a path more closely aligned with that of her father, a longtime Phoenix gastroenterologist. She said GCU helped her focus on what she was truly called to do, after trying public relations and nursing first.

"It's hard to say it was in one moment when it crystalized for me," Wadas said. "As I got older, it was realizing what I loved and what I'm good at, where my strengths are, and finding a career where I could help people.

"When I got to GCU, it was the people who made me stay. They took a personal interest in me. That's pretty incredible, especially coming from a large school like ASU."

Wadas was president of the GCU chapter of the AzHOSA health professions club, which was new at the time but since has grown into the largest campus club of its kind in the U.S. As she became involved with networking and community service, Wadas saw she could have an impact as a physician, just like her father.

Wadas credited Haley Peebles, a GCU faculty member and former AzHOSA adviser, with recognizing her God-given abilities. Peebles, now associate director of GCU's Center for Integrated Science, Engineering and Technology, saw that Wadas had the interpersonal skills, passion and grades to go to medical school and pushed her to challenge herself.

"People give up on things or on other people too quickly," Peebles said. "It's nice to see that you can redirect someone's path and that pointing someone in the right direction can work out exactly as it's supposed to if you invest in people, you're there and you have their best interests at heart."

Peebles attended Wadas' graduation from medical school, and when her former student gave an impassioned speech on behalf of her class, citing the need for future doctors, Peebles knew her assessment years ago had been accurate.

As a medical student, Wadas assisted physicians at the Wesley Center in Phoenix. The clinic provides services to a low-income, at-risk population, so she had the opportunity to help heal people without consistent health care or resources about good health. She imagines her residency will be stellar, too.

"It will certainly be different in New Hampshire, with a different patient population," she said. "But what I've learned about educating people about their health, and chronic conditions like diabetes or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder, will remain the same. I really enjoy teaching people how to achieve a higher quality of life."

Now, if she could just figure out how to put chains on her tires, the roads seem to be opening up to Wadas as she motors into a future of caring for patients.

VIDEO



Watch a video about the guidance Erica Wadas received at GCU, her decision to go into medicine and her advice for freshmen at www.gcu.edu/alumni.



Wadas was president of the AzHOSA health professions club at GCU, where she first became interested in medicine. PHOTO BY ART FOXALL

| Parting Shot |





Good first impression

Nearly 100 incoming GCU freshmen got off on the right foot this summer during a special event in Playa del Rey, Calif., where they made friends with other new Lopes before heading to GCU. The students created multiple footprints in the sand, enjoying a beach party with food, swag, games of giant Twister and volleyball, and, of course, a chance to swim in the Pacific Ocean.

PHOTO BY DARRYL WEBB



You can almost feel the ocean breeze caressing your scalp and the sand squishing between your toes with our full GCU California experience — a video, feature story and slideshow — at news.gcu.edu.



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Sept. 20

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