GRADUATE STUDIES NEWS
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Articles by Carson Medley
CSU, Chico Thesis Editor

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GRAD SCHOOL CORNER:
TALKING FROGS WITH COURTNEY SILVER

Courtney Silver received her Master of Science degree in biology in summer 2017. Her thesis is titled “Population-level variation in vocalizations of Rana Boylii, the foothill yellow-legged frog.”

Where are you from?
Los Angeles, but I consider myself a Chicoan.

How did you get to Chico from Los Angeles?
I had never heard of Chico. My high school principal’s brother went to Chico State. She told me one day that my parents had to take me to Chico for a visit. And they did.

Where did you earn your undergraduate degree? What was your discipline?
I earned a BS in Biology: EEO (evolutionary, ecological, and organismal biology) from Chico State.

What are you studying in graduate school? Why?
Ecology and herpetology are my main focuses. I want to be a professor. I love academia. I love teaching and never enjoyed a job so much as I have teaching in this department. I originally thought I wanted to spend all my time out in the field. But I soon came to accept that I was a tiny little Jewish girl with asthma. I’m not really suited to hike 10 miles a day. I’ve tried many times.
What is a day in the life of Courtney Silver, graduate student, like?
Wake up (feeling stressed). Go to my lab and work on my thesis or my coordinating job. Teach between one and two classes. Go back to the lab or my home office and work on my thesis. Cook a delicious meal—that’s my therapy and I’ve become a darn good cook. Grade labs/assignments and work on my other job (Feather River frog project). Finally give my dog some much-needed attention. Go to bed (feeling stressed).

What has been your best experience as a graduate student?
Collecting data and teaching. I spent the first year of graduate school out in the wild standing in the middle of creeks and rivers listening to frogs. I can’t tell you how many times I looked around and started laughing because I just couldn’t get over the fact that I got numerous grants to do this—to play outside in a creek. I was a little girl again. Just me, my recorder, my Subaru (Carth Vader), and the great outdoors. It was sublime. This year, I started teaching. I have never enjoyed a job so much. Besides studying frogs for the rest of my life, I plan on being a college professor. I love being in front of a class. I love teaching others about what I’ve devoted my life to. Plus, I get to be funny and laugh at my own jokes. My students this year are not biology majors, so I get to give them their one college biology experience. That’s an honor. Like I tell my students, my hope is that they leave this class as responsible voters, stewards of the environment, and thinking that biology is cool.

Tell me about your frog. How did the two of you meet?
I took field ecology with Professor Christopher Ivey, who ended up being my mentor throughout my undergraduate days. He’s now my advisor in graduate school. I owe it all to him. Anyway, we had to do a semester project. I finally got my chance to work on frogs. I chose Rana boylii since I could find it in the Chico area. I did the project with my group members and submitted it to the Biology Department Symposium. We won!

“I just couldn’t get over the fact that I got numerous grants to do this—to play outside in a creek…”

How are you going to get your frog on the public’s radar like, say, the spotted owl?
Well, I’m trying to champion it, but not sure if I’m there yet. My frog, Rana boylii, the foothill yellow legged frog, is a threatened species that will soon be put on the endangered species list. It’s a small little inconspicuous frog that most people don’t seem to care about.

However, people really should, especially the people in this area. Chico has a healthy population of them and that’s really rare. We must keep the Rana boylii alive and thriving. As for getting it on the radar, I will present my data to whomever will listen! Conferences, students, articles like this. If I get the opportunity I’ll go on the radio. I’ll go on TV. I’ll scream about it from the mountain tops.

They are declining across their entire range and have basically become extirpated from Southern California.

When did the frog obsession take hold of you?
I’ve been obsessed with frogs since I was 3 years old. I don’t necessary have a first memory. I remember catching tadpoles in a creek. I was little and standing in a creek with a fish net catching tadpoles. It was the coolest thing. I got to take them home and raise them. I didn’t realize that once they turn into frogs, they jump out. My mom was upset. She was the one who had to chase them down.

What was it like being obsessed with frogs?
Little kids, when I was growing up, were always playing with dolls and horses and toys. For Hanukkah, I got science kits and bug-catching kits. My parents pushed me toward it.

What are your main research interests with frogs?
Mating and sexual selection.

Were there any awkward first-date moments with your frog?
My frog is a challenge. The thing about this frog is that they vocalize underwater. I knew nothing about frog vocalizations. It’s about sound. I had to record and then feed the recording through a sound analysis. I had to learn about wave forms and spectrographs. I had to learn another field of sound analysis. There was nobody here to teach me. And I am not computer-savvy. But I learned how to use Raven Pro from Cornell labs, used mainly to study bird calls. The field is called Bioacoustics.

How did you do get access to the equipment?
I wrote several grants. I taught myself, and Dr. Ivey helped me. Most of the grants were through the University. I couldn’t have done the research without all of these grants. It was enough money to buy all my equipment. Once I got the equipment, it was time to go out into the field. I went to site one which is the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve. I needed one other site. It’s hard to find a frog that’s disappearing. I wanted to find isolated populations where they were not mating. I searched all over Chico. I went all the way up to Los Molinos.

Tell me about the search.
I strap on my Merrells and get my recording device. I find a stream where I think my frog might be. I often hike into dangerous areas. Try to listen. Besides at the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve I wasn’t finding a thing, but I wasn’t about to give up. I heard of one reserve in Los Molinos where my frog might be. I found one frog in three visits, but there was a
slight problem. My frog was being eaten by a snake. Dr. Ivey suggested I contact other people who study this frog. I knew I wanted to contact Dr. Sarah Kupferberg, a big-time *Rana boylii* biologist. I wrote to her and it was full-on fan girl status. I have read everything she has ever written. So I sent her my proposal. Can we talk? Get advice? I couldn’t believe it. Not only is she a scientist but a massive advocate. I set up a conference call with her. I was super nervous. Not only did she tell me one particular area to go immediately on the Pacific North Coast, but she asked me to go and stay with her in that area the following weekend. She said she would meet me at her site and show me around.

**What was the weekend with Dr. Kupferberg like?**

It was one of the most exciting weekends of my life. I felt like a real scientist. I am out with my headphones and recording device in paradise. I kept waiting for someone to kick me out. I felt like I shouldn’t be enjoying this so much. I was playing in a creek yet collecting data. I was a little girl again. Covered in mud and catching frogs. Being out at any sites collecting data is the best feeling in the entire world. I get to do this for the rest of my life. How is that possible?

**What were you listening for?**

The main point of vocalizations is for mating in the hopes of beating out another male. Hence the *Lexicon of Love*

poster at the conferences. Before I could put a meaning behind a call, I had to figure out what calls were being made in the first place. Were they different in the different areas? The one study from 1994 showed five calls. I now had hours of vocalizations. I would sit for 8-10 hours a day listening to the frogs. That was the hardest part. I spend countless hours listening and feeding vocalizations through Raven Pro looking for measurable differences.

Different parameters. Length, dominant frequency, pulses, notes, what is highest frequency. Looking for all parameters and comparing to other populations. I had close to 900 individual calls.

Far too many for a thesis. The previous researcher who found the five calls had only analyzed 50. I had 900. I analyzed about 300 calls. I also discovered more than five calls. I found one additional call at all three locations, and one other call I found while frogs were mating.

**Let’s go back to the mating calls of the frogs. I have this vision of frogs speed dating.**

Kind of. Imagine the female frog in a room and there are five male frogs trying to woo her. She’s going to pick the frog with the sexiest voice. She picks her man, but the other four frogs keep croaking.

Have you coined any frog speak?

I made up a call and named it “chuckle.” The other one I named the warble. From hereafter, based on my thesis, people will have to call these chuckles and warbles.

**Does your frog have a rival?**

Not necessarily a rival, but there are a couple frogs that get more attention: the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (*Rana sierrae*), the mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*), and the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*).

**Why should we pay attention to this frog? Why should we pay attention to frogs at all?**

Frogs are awesome and they have the cutest little punins! Second, frogs are bioindicator species, meaning that they can tell you the health of the environment. When the frogs begin to disappear, which they are worldwide, you know that there is something wrong with the environment. As for my frog, you should care because it is disappearing across its home range at an alarming rate.

This frog only exists in California and a small part of Oregon. If it disappears in these areas, it is gone forever.

You say “I can’t”—well, watch. I will work harder than the person next to me.

**What do you plan on doing after Chico State? Where can we see you, and your frog, 10 years from now?**

I will soon be applying to PhD programs. After that I hope to get a tenure-track position at a university where I can teach and study frogs. Who knows, maybe I’ll end up back here at Chico State.

**What advice do you have for future and current graduate students?**

Take care of yourself mentally and physically. Graduate school is awful and wonderful at the same time. Sometimes you just need to throw your arms in the air and say ‘You know what—I need a glass of wine.’ Also, make sure you love what you’re studying. There will be times when you’ll question why you’re doing this. Also, just keep working and writing because you’re never doing enough. And the imposter syndrome is a real thing and it needs to be acknowledged.

Finally, women, stay with it! We need more women in STEM fields.

**What have been some of the greatest challenges you have encountered?**

I have Crohn’s disease. I’m also super dyslexic which makes it incredibly hard to be a graduate student and finish in a timely manner. It’s been hard. Awful sometimes. I don’t see the correct words. It happens with numbers. I have a hard time picturing numbers in my head. Plus, there is this stigma. You shouldn’t go into science. You say “I can’t”—well, watch. I will work harder than the person next to me. School has always been a struggle but also my safe place. Science was about the concepts. I had family and teachers who cultivated and nurtured me. I fell in love with science. I also got
really sick one semester. I have to deal with daily pain. I don’t have a day without intestinal pain. I got this when I was 12. It’s just something I have to deal with. There are days when I can’t go to work. I have to work through intense pain. I related to this frog on the learning disability side. Struggled since kindergarten. I have always considered myself an underdog. This little tiny frog is ignored and no one seems to care. I have to fight for this frog the same way that I had to fight for myself.

What advice to you have for young girls?

If you like something, pursue it. Find the thing you love and stick with it. Who cares if you’re the only woman in the room? Women have to show the world that we belong in the STEM fields.

It’s already been proven we can do just as much as men. We belong here. We are just as good at this. Who care what anybody else thinks? If you love something, then figure out a way to do it and just do it. Don’t second-guess yourself.

What’s the final message you would like us all to hear about your frog?

The environment needs protections. Climate change is real! You can clearly see its effects in the global decline of frogs. Science and evolution must also be taught in school! The public needs to be educated if we expect to see any change in our current trend of destroying this planet. If we stay on this path, my grandchildren might never have the chance to catch frogs in a creek like I did as a child.

CSU, Chico graduate programs have an unrivaled reputation for offering our graduate students unique opportunities that other graduate programs across the state cannot provide. But the opportunity that Suzanne Carpenter, a graduate student in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program, would receive on the night of February 12, was an accidental, unintended opportunity—a real life and death situation. Winston Churchill wrote that “Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it.” Carpenter, who in addition to being a graduate student also works with a local foster family agency as a social worker, represents just how high our graduate students can fly despite gale winds.

Carpenter was just enjoying what little remained of her weekend when she heard about the evacuation order in Oroville.

“I was at home watching the news with my family. I was also on call for my foster family agency, Remi Vista, Inc.” While many towns were on the verge of flooding, the highway itself had already become a metaphorical flood. The television showed images of cars pouring into Chico, but the cars would soon stop flowing into Chico and become stalled: Highway 99 looked like a parking lot. Carpenter—the perpetual social worker—immediately cast her thoughts to the Oroville families and youth connected to her agency. She acted quickly.

“I began calling all my families to inform them of the evacuation. I told them to evacuate immediately and pack only what they would need for the next few days,” Carpenter said.

Many of her families were stuck in traffic for hours as they tried to reach Chico. She went straight to the fairgrounds.

Carpenter said the need for help at the fairgrounds was overwhelming. Carpenter was one of the first volunteers to arrive. She noticed the immediate need for medical care.

“Fortunately, I have medical care experience. Right away, I was directed to the medical building where persons with dire medical need had been placed,” she said.

Carpenter was alarmed that only one volunteer from the American Red Cross was present.

“I started trying to register people but soon got overwhelmed by the paperwork and the turnout of people needing medical attention.”
Carpenter took on the role of helping read and fill out forms. “I have never been trained in filling out this kind of paperwork. I was unclear about some of the questions asked. I thought it would be important to fill everything out. So the American Red Cross volunteer and I both began reading the intake forms left to right, top to bottom, making sure to be thorough and include all the needed medications,” she said.

When Carpenter got a brief reprieve from the mad rush, she took a deep breath and paused to reflect. “I just stared at the large stack of forms we’d just filled out,” she said.

Carpenter looked around, pleased that the cots had finally become available for the sick. However, something did not make sense: Only two to four nurses had volunteered initially. One of the nurses was Carpenter’s friend from high school and current Chico State nursing program student. Carpenter, reacting to the nursing shortage, contacted her friend through Facebook. “I asked her to bring her fellow colleagues and gear. She and five other nursing students arrived, but we still had limited medical supplies,” she said, noting they quickly got to work. “They started taking vitals, checking wounds, assisting people with incontinence, cleaning up vomit, and stabilizing community members with mental health needs.”

Carpenter said that panic was increasing by the second. “Calls were made to 911 for ambulances. Sadly, they were unable to respond right away. The dispatchers reported they had no ambulances available to disperse because the hospital was full. We were told it would be at least an hour before help could arrive,” she said.

One ambulance did arrive with a paramedic and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) on board. “They stayed with us to help calm the rising nerves of individuals who had reached a stage of panic. We had people without oxygen, high blood pressures, uncontrolled diabetic sugar levels, many other issues. A lot of those arriving did not have family to assist them,” she said, adding that many of those whom she was caring for could not remember the names of their medications. “That’s when I decided to start making a list of supplies that we immediately needed.”

Carpenter said the experience opened her eyes to the critical need for all community members to be prepared for immediate response crisis work. “Even when experience is missing, the value of a person’s presence and willingness to help others is vital to success in disastrous emergency situations. Sometimes the only thing a person needs is for you to sit, talk, and listen to them. No experience is needed to demonstrate care and compassion for your fellow community members. After all, their needs can’t be met until the community understands they can and should just show up. You never know when the next need for help could be yours,” she said.

Carpenter has debunked the Mark Twain adage not to let school interfere with your education. It turns out school—in this case, graduate school—actually made the education Carpenter received on that panic-stricken fairground possible. And if this is the kind of schooling and education you are seeking, well, the Master of Social Work sounds like a path you might consider.
that the law was more about circumventing justice. I was taking a class titled “The Politics of Nuclear War.” I didn’t know anything about the Soviet Union. I just remember all the duck-and-roll exercises we had to do back in school when I was a kid. So it was in this class about Soviet history when I fell in love—right away. I kept wondering: Are these people really that horrible? The history was so tragic, so dramatic. It was the first subject I had really been excited about. So one day I went and saw my professor during office hours. I was really shy. I simply went in to ask for advice on succeeding on an upcoming test he was about to give. We never got around to talking about the test. He gave me a bunch of papers and said I needed to go and get them signed immediately and turn them in—warning that that deadline was approaching. The papers, it turned out, were to change my major to Russian history. And I’ve been in love with it ever since.

What specific field of history do you study?

I am a cultural and social historian. I look at how people made love in the past. What they chose to eat and why. There is so much passion. I often find myself telling students: ‘Hey, I’m not making this stuff up.’ Human history is just so interesting.

Now, you’re a renowned scholar in human trafficking. How did you become interested in this?

I was living in Moscow. I was researching a book about the history of sex, drugs, and rock and roll in Russia. I spent the summer hanging out with prostitutes, drug addicts, and alcoholics. I met a woman who had escaped sexual slavery in Russia. Not long after I read about a girl from Mexico who at age 12 was sold into the sex trade—a trade that took place at Disneyland. I got to thinking: I could and should write a book about this. So I applied for the Lantis Endowed University Chairs grant—a $40,000 professorship award to support my research—and went back to Russia and starting writing.

Why do historians write so well?

The writing of history demands precision. A writer has to say precisely what he or she means. Everyone I know in our department has written or is working on a book. Faculty in our department are always publishing articles. We hire professors highly regarded in their fields. When they get here, we support them in their endeavors. That is the culture of our department. We see ourselves as teachers and scholars.

Has your teaching style from today changed from when you first entered the field?

I’ve adjusted my pedagogy to keep pace with a new generation of students. I’ve grown bolder. I used to tiptoe around sensibilities that might possibly disrupt my students’ worldview. But they have to see it all.

What kind of graduate students does the history department attract?

We get a lot of students from the humanities. But we look for students with a strong background in research and writing. We look for students who have a background crafting arguments—students who come from disciplines that practice those skills. We want curious students, and we want talented students. By talented I mean students who have solid research and writing skills. Students who know how to think critically.

Why would a student want to study history at Chico State when practically every university in the country offers MA degrees in the discipline?

We have the ability to mentor and work more closely with students than most other universities. Our students have easy access to faculty. We are also really lucky that we can offer support to our graduate students with the History Writing Center (HWC) and teaching assistant positions. We also model research, writing, and teaching to our graduate students. Our close interaction with students might help them with admission into a competitive program. Our faculty have an entire network for our students.

And the history department even has its own writing center, right?

Yes. The HWC not only helps students with their writing, but also provides a service that lessens the burden of already overwhelmed faculty. It also gives us another way to support our graduate students.

Does the history department help fund graduate students?

You bet. We just awarded two McIntosh-Hutchinson Graduate Fellowship Awards this year. Jeanette Adame and Carol Celic each received $10,000 in support of their studies.

What exactly does someone with an MA degree in history do?

Our graduate students can do anything that involves reading, writing, research, and talking. Name a communication skill, and history students can do it. Our graduates don’t just go into teaching—they do all kinds of things. One of my former students manages a Four Seasons hotel in Lake Tahoe. CEOs look for the skills history graduates possess.
Editor’s note: Recent graduates from the History MA program have achieved success in many fields, working as lecturers at Butte College and Chico State while also making immediate contributions to the field. One recent graduate, Dillon Carroll, who received his BA (2007) and MA with distinction (2009) from CSU, Chico went on to study the history of the Civil War, gender, and medicine at the University of Georgia, where he successfully defended his dissertation (“Scourge of War: Mental Illness and Veterans of the American Civil War”) in June 2016. He received numerous awards during his time at Georgia. His publications include “The God Who Shielded Me Before Yet Watches Over Us All: Confederate Soldiers, Mental Illness, and Religion” in Civil War History Vol. 61 No. 3 (September, 2015). Also, “Civil War and PTSD” in the New York Times Disunion Blog in May 2014. Carroll’s works has also appeared on the History Channel miniseries “Blood and Glory: The Civil War in Color.” Carroll has presented at numerous conferences, including annual conferences of the American Historical Association and the Southern Historical Association. In October 2016, he presented at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine’s Annual Conference. Currently, Dillon is adjunct assistant professor at Hofstra University (New York) and the University of Bridgeport (Connecticut), teaching the history of the World Wars, history of gender, history of medicine, and the American Civil War and Reconstruction.

If you are interested in pursuing an MA in history, please contact Transchel at ktranschel@csuchico.edu or 898-6417.
Dawn Frank, Chico State graduate student alumna and current coordinator of the First-Year Experience Program, is not just resilient but downright tough. First-generation college students such as Frank often have that kind of mettle. What first-generation college students might not have in social and cultural capital, they make up for in aspirational capital. Frank is living proof.

She persevered through graduate school—earning a master's degree as a single mom of two while also working full-time.

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) office where Frank works is busy; students hustling and bustling left and right, phones ringing, keyboards pounding.

I knock on Frank’s door.

“Come on in,” she says. “I don’t have a window, but I’ve got everything else.”

A window would only detract from the character that permeates her office—an office that feels lived in.

The First-Year Experience program, which Frank runs, poses myriad challenges—challenges that have put her graduate degree to good use.

“Our students encounter so many obstacles,” she says. “A lot of times the University or the student culture doesn’t meet students halfway, whether it’s financial challenges or family difficulties. This is why students leave us. It’s often no fault of their own, and it kills me.”

Frank has recently been working with many students from our DREAM population.

“Many of these students come into my office in tears. They are second-guessing their purpose, their commitment to getting a degree. They feel like the University is not supporting them and failing them, even.”

She tells the story of one student who was out walking one day. A car slowed, and someone stuck their head out the window and started hurling racial slurs and insults at him.

“A lot of students will come in to my office and say things like, ‘Hey, you told us at Bridge this summer that Chico values diversity. Well, you lied to us.’ I tell them they need to redirect their own education—that continuing and graduating is the best act of resistance they can put forth. Make that political statement!”

Path to College

A graduate degree certainly provided Frank with the ethos and academic pedigree to run a big program. However, the graduate degree, coupled with her own life experiences, has given her the street credibility to make a positive influence in the lives of her students. Growing up poor, one of five children to a single mom—four of the five earned college degrees (although Dawn is the first with a graduate degree)—has given her the empathy and understanding she needs to be the best at what she does.

“I learned that going to college wasn’t just about readiness but full-personal development—the whole person. A combination of strength, efficacy, and sense of self.”

Dawn Frank received her bachelor’s degree from Chico State in multicultural and gender studies with an emphasis in women’s studies. She also received her master’s degree in social work from Chico State. In addition to her role as coordinator of the First-Year Experience program, she is an active member of the Black Faculty and Staff Association, Gender Sexuality and Equity Center advisory board, and Conversations on Diversity Committee. This October will be Frank’s ninth year working at Chico State.
“I took a women’s studies course. I was hooked. Fell in love immediately. It all clicked. I went straight into the women’s studies as a major.”

Frank remarks that it was like studying her own life. Frank transferred to Chico State in 2002. She also worked for a local nonprofit where she counseled the homeless and runaway youth.

“I was helping teens get through that tough balance of a hard home life and high school. I kept telling them, ‘Look, you can’t control what happens at home, but you can control what happens at school.’ ” Frank emphasized the first step to get away from the damaging home scene was to not only finish but to succeed in school.

Path to Graduate School
Frank ran the Safe Place violence prevention program before taking her current EOP post back in May 2012. She would take advantage of the wonderful benefit the University offers staff: to take classes for a small fee to work toward an MA or MS degree.

“I started looking around. Many of the students I had mentored would soon be getting their MA. My mom even took me aside and told me I better get busy and start working toward a graduate degree, too. I realized that I had another barrier to hurdle. I had to go for it.”

Going for it seems easy when you do not have the responsibilities of having a demanding full-time job and the even harder, more important job of being a single mother raising two teenage boys.

“It was a difficult decision for sure, particularly having a young family. But there never seems to be a good time, right?”

Frank shakes her head when recalling the tough decision she made, knowing she would miss many of the milestones her teenage boys would undergo while she was away at school or at home with her nose in a book.

“My boys and I did homework together, though,” she says. “They were in school. I was in school. So I served as a model for them—hey, look, mom’s doing it, so I can, too,” she recalled.

Frank’s life would soon reach chaotic proportions.

“I would get up every morning at 4 a.m. and do school work. I’d get the boys up at 6. Make breakfast. Get them ready for school... make it to work by 8.

Frank says her son was the main motivation to push forward; there would be no turning back. Frank would also find the gateway class to her current career. In 2000, she reenrolled at Butte College.

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Frank urges other Chico State staff to have a serious discussion with their family and close friends before making the commitment to pursue a graduate degree.

“Identify your support group, right away, and talk to them. You must make sure that your support system trusts that you will succeed and has your back. If you are considering graduate school and you have kids,” she says, “you have to trust that they are just as resilient, if not more, than you are. Make sure you do your homework when they are doing their homework.”

She catches her breath.

“I had guilt about not being there for my boys,” she says, “but I knew this was the best thing for my family.”

She pauses.

“And my mom,” she says, “my mom. I could not have done this without her. She was with those boys for three years.”

On Succeeding

Frank also advises not to pursue a graduate degree if the piece of paper is the only reason for the pursuit.

“You need more than that to drive you,” she says. “You must have a passion and intense curiosity for what you’re studying. You need that hunger to sustain you through the drudgery of homework and papers. Sure, there will be times when you have to skim an article before class, but there’s nothing more euphoric, really, than digging into material that inspires you.”

Frank speaks of the thrill that comes from the interchange of theory and practice that working at Chico State and taking graduate classes provided.

“I got to apply everything I was learning in class to my career,” she says. “There was always this simultaneous feeling of leaning what you thought you already knew. That moment of reflection when you step outside of yourself and think: Oh, so that’s what I was thinking when I did—or didn’t—do that.”

Frank’s graduate degree has opened doors to her that would have otherwise been closed. “The thing I love most about my graduate degree is that I get to teach courses. I love it.” Frank has taught several classes at Chico State.

“I get so much enjoyment from taking material that I have engaged closely with and developing a curriculum from it. I get so excited watching my students grapple with the tough material and then entering into a dialogue with their peers. And to see them get excited is amazing—to see them realize that something they are reading or writing has actual meaning in their own lives,” she said.

Frank says she is now catching up for lost time with her sons.

“I missed so many of the small details. I had no idea that my son had the skills to build his own PC from scratch. I was so busy with work and school that I didn’t pick up on how talented and well-versed he was with the intricacies of computers. Meanwhile, my youngest son had gotten really into popular culture. Now I’m spending time really getting to know them, and really getting to know their friends.”

Photo: Frank and her boys.

Frank’s life has come full circle. Now it is time, maybe, to create a new circle. The young woman who once gave advice behind three feet of mahogany while blowing the suds off a freshly poured Sierra Nevada pale ale is still giving advice—only most of her students aren’t yet old enough to drink.

Frank points to a slogan on her wall. “But they are old enough to understand that: Mistake are proof that you’re trying. If you’re not struggling, then you’re not learning.”

As I exit her office, she tells me one last thing.

“My mom,” she says, “the woman who inspired me to earn my graduate degree and raised four kids who all earned college degrees.”

I nod.

“She also went back to school and earned her degree.”

LeŌ: Frank is now enjoying making up for lost time with her sons.

Right: Frank with her mother; both are now college graduates.
When did you graduate?
I graduated in 2013 with my BA in English education and a minor in creative writing. My initial plan was to teach high school, but my interest grew in teaching in higher education and specifically creative writing. So, I continued my education and graduated in the MA program in English with a focus in creative writing.

Did you write a thesis?
A project titled Long Journey Home. In retrospect, the title isn’t that creative. However, it really does encompass the content of the writing. The title is interesting because it talks about my journey to self-discovery, acceptance of myself, and my family heritage. The last story of the project ends with me driving away from my home in Southern California to Chico, so in a way the title speaks to Chico being my “home” as well.

What is the process of a project like?
In one word: drafts! Working alongside Professors Rob Davidson and Jeanne Clark, my writing mentors and now friends, guided me through the process by giving me feedback, and challenging me by posing deep and sometimes uncomfortable questions to help in my nonfiction essays. Since I write nonfiction, the process is also very emotional. Media played a big part in developing my personality and was a big component of my childhood. So, riddled throughout my essays are lyrics and scenes from movies and TV shows. In order to evoke certain periods or people in my life, I listened to music that I remembered hearing on the radio, I went back to reflect on TV shows and movies and looked at pictures from my past. Another aspect of the writing process was reading other autobiographies and nonfiction writing guides.

What were some of your most memorable experiences at Chico State?
Living in the Lassen Hall dorm. It is where I met friends who I now consider family. We all navigated our first year together and continued to watch each other in the years after inside and outside of Chico as we came into adulthood. The other experiences include the first time I walked into a classroom in Tehama Hall to teach my first English class by myself. Also, my first public reading in the Performing Arts Center. And how can I ever forget speaking as the commencement speaker on the Laxson Stage for my graduating master’s class of 2015?

After having some temporal and physical distance from Chico, I realize that I think about Chico every day. It sounds corny, yes, but Chico is my fairytale. Chico came into my life the way some people meet spouses—unexpectedly and through a friend. I think about all of my experiences in Chico daily because it’s where I grew up. Whenever I make a decision, it’s a choice I remember making in Chico.

Has an English degree from Chico State afforded you opportunities you might not otherwise have had?
Of course! The wonderful thing about being an English major is that we are versatile. Creative writers are just that: creative. We can adapt to any position and really contribute in a meaningful way. My MA degree in English has allowed me to become an educator for all types of writing—technical, creative, and academic writing. Since graduating a few years ago I have worked as a script reader at Zucker Productions, worked as an English Lecturer at Cerritos College, and worked in Las Vegas for Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. Regarding the latter, my degree has also allowed me to know how to communicate and help build communities.

Wow. Let’s start with Hollywood first. Tell us about it.
My time in Hollywood was great! It was brief but very fulfilling and eye opening. I got to see the production process as it starts from scraps. Somebody sends a script they’ve written. Various people like me read it and write feedback for the script. We then send it to the producers who do the same. Eventually, after going through everyone’s assistant, if the project is ready to go and well
written then it will be produced. It’s not as easy as it sounds, though, and the entertainment industry can be brutal and take up a lot of time in your life. I realized how dedicated you have to be for this type of art. I know that contributing my own art to this industry is something that will happen in the future.

What prompted you to leave Los Angeles and move to Las Vegas to work for the Clinton campaign?

There was a moment my junior year at Chico when I saw a picture of then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and an article about how many countries she had traveled to and how many bridges she was building for our country. I was so proud to be represented internationally by her. My family voted for and benefited from the first Clinton administration, so when she announced her presidential campaign, I was ecstatic. I followed her campaign. Then, during the primary, I decided to volunteer and eventually became a team lead for my city. As the attacks on her grew and the stakes grew, I knew I had to ensure this presidency. So, I took a semester off from teaching and was hired to work for the campaign full-time in Las Vegas, Nevada. Although we didn’t receive the results we wished for, we won the state of Nevada for Secretary Clinton. I met so many wonderful people throughout the country fighting daily for what they believe in. That gives me hope.

You have a popular podcast. Can you tell us about that?

My current podcast project is titled Red, White, and You. It was started as a way to compile actual stories from volunteers and Clinton staffers that worked on the campaign through the country. On my episode, I talk about being physically threatened, followed to my car while registering voters, and getting harassed daily. There are a lot of criticisms about the campaign from people who weren’t a part of it, so this podcast will give a voice to those people who were out in neighborhoods and communities enduring tough political climates for what they believed in.

What is harder: graduate school or the working world?

I think graduate school is harder! What made it hard for me was all of the deadlines I had to adhere by. But again, the wonderful thing about graduate school is that it prepares you for the working world so that it doesn’t seem as daunting. If you can get through grad school, you can do anything!

There’s a quote by Steven King in his novella The Body where his protagonist looks back on his childhood and says: “You’ll never have the kind of friends you had when you were 10.”

What about graduate school—will you ever have friends like those again?

The interesting thing about graduate school and university life in general is that it creates a tight environment where you become incredibly close working and studying with each other on and off campus. I’m hopeful that I will find friends like that again, but if not, I’ll always have the ones I’ve already made.

What advice do you have for current graduate students? And what are the selling points of Chico State for other future graduate students who are shopping schools?

My advice to current graduate students is to get sleep! Nothing is more important than your personal health. Eat, sleep and make time for friends. It’s also a healthy decision to take an extracurricular class or see friends outside of your cohort in the department. It’s always good to have a balance at school. Personally, I took concert band during grad school and began mindfulness meditation. Each graduate program is rigorous and will help you to learn how to collaborate with others, research, and think critically, and teach you how contribute to your profession. If anyone is shopping around for grad school, I’d just say go to the Chico State campus and take a walk downtown. There’s nothing I can say that could sell the school more than a walk in downtown Chico.

Were there any professors here that just blew your mind?

I love and respect all of my professors, and it would be unfair to say any single one blew my mind since they opened my mind in so many different ways. But if I were to give an example, again I would shout out Professors Jeanne Clark and Rob Davidson. I entered the creative writing program because of Dr. Clark. She reminded me of Carole King and she appreciated my writing. She taught me how to respect my own writing and writing of others. She also taught me how to reach out to my community in a different way. Dr. Davidson is a man of the arts in so many ways. He’s a musician, a writer, a playwright, an actor, and even though he doesn’t know it—a comedian. He showed me how to contribute to the community in multiple fashions. He also taught me how to be self-disciplined with my art.

What is a day in the life of Marty like today versus back then?

Today my life is filled with a lot more compassion for myself. I spend a lot of time giving to others, so I’m learning how to give back to myself. I’m also able to spend more time with my family and my puggle. Today’s Marty is also giving back in more ways than just in a class by getting involved with community groups and being a bit more of an activist.

Any advice for new graduate students about succeeding in graduate school?

Chico State is an extraordinary place where we learn about ourselves and, most importantly, others. Whenever we can, we should use our skills that we’ve learned in each of our programs to help each of our individual communities. Whether it’s through social work, nursing, or even English, I’d like to think that there are Wildcats spread throughout the world making a difference in their own way. I would also just like to say thank you to everyone at Chico State. The memories that were created there are forever.

What’s up for you next?

I am going to continue teaching, working on my own creative writing projects, and be more involved with my community. Most recently I have been elected and serving as the Assembly delegate for my assembly district. ☑️
Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program

Two CSU, Chico Graduate Students Chosen for Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program Michael Huston (MA, Political Science) and Robert Lester (MS Psychology) were among the 54 statewide recipients of the California State University Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program (CDIP). The very competitive program aims to increase the number of promising doctoral students applying for future CSU instructional faculty positions by offering financial assistance in the form of a loan and mentorship by CSU faculty. Huston’s faculty mentor is political science professor Lori M. Weber, and Lester’s faculty mentor is psychology professor Arthur Sanchez. Both students were accepted into several doctoral programs. Huston was accepted into Pennsylvania State University, University of Colorado Boulder, and University of Washington. Lester was accepted into Virginia Poly-technic University, Texas Tech University, and North Dakota State University.

Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholarship

Jannah Fusenig, founder and president of the Prospective Graduate Student Association and sponsored by the Office of Graduate Studies, was selected as a 2017–18 Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholarship recipient. The Pre-Doctoral Scholars Program is a highly competitive and selective program that supports the doctoral aspirations of promising CSU students. Fusenig was awarded $3,000 to be used for visiting PhD granting universities, to attend professional conferences and meetings, and to pay for other preparatory materials or activities. As a Pre-Doctoral Scholar, Fusenig also has an opportunity to participate in an eight-week summer research experience at any doctoral granting institution in the United States, with particular emphasis on the UCs.

Fusenig plans to apply to UCLA, UC Berkeley, and other PhD programs in fall 2017 and will graduate from CSU, Chico in spring 2018. Currently admitted to the Chico State Psychology Honors Program, her plan is to enhance her competitive edge by conducting research in cognitive psychology.

2016/2017 Outstanding Thesis Award

Derek A. Boyd, Anthropology, has been selected by California State University, Chico as the Outstanding Thesis Winner for 2016–2017. His anthropology master’s thesis Putting Fracture Reduction on Repeat: An Analysis of the Long-Term Health Consequences of Differential Treatment in Industrial-Era London is exceptional and reflects the level of scholarly work and faculty mentoring we strive for at CSU, Chico. Boyd and the members of his Graduate Advisory Committee—Colleen Milligan, Thesis Committee Chair/Anthropology Graduate Coordinator, and Antoinette M. Martinez, Thesis Committee Member/Department Chair—are to be commended for producing such an outstanding research study.

Graduate Equity Fellows

Two of our Grad Equity Fellows were mentioned in the Awards and Activities section of the April 2017 Inside Chico State. The Graduate Equity Fellowship Program (GEFP) began in 1986. This two-part program provides a $1,050.00 semester stipend and a $2,720.00 semester research assistantship. Stipend monies are funded by the CSU Chancellor’s Office, while the assistantships are funded by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Brian Brazale, Anthropology, was the executive producer on Stories in Thread: A Tapestry of Hmong Identity, a film by student Tamara Maxey and presented by CSU, Chico’s Advanced Laboratory for Visual Anthropology. Maxey’s film was also picked up for nationwide PBS distribution by the National Educational Tele-communications Association (NETA).

Donna Kreskey, Psychology, presented her coauthored paper “Universal Screening in An MTSS World: A School at Risk” at the National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas on February 21–24, 2017. This work, completed with graduate students Carina Gutierrez and Carmina Vital, represented a collaborative project between CSU, Chico and a high-needs local school system. The collaboration modeled best practices in school psychology service delivery, and resulted in approximately 400 children in kindergarten, first, and second grade receiving early intervention services in the area of social emotional learning.

Biology Awards


Dylan Stompe was awarded a $12,000 scholarship from the Northern California Water Association that funds his thesis work “Sacramento River predation rates among native and non-native predatory species.”

Nick Balfour was awarded a $2,500 scholarship to attend a five-week summer program at Friday Harbor Laboratories that provides rigorous training in fish swimming physiology and kinematics.
History Awards
The Department of History has been able to award two McIntosh-Hutchinson Graduate Fellowship Awards this year. Jeannette Adame and Carol Celic each received $10,000 in support of their studies.

Environmental Science Awards
Kristin Kaczynski, Environmental Science professor and graduate coordinator, won the prestigious Paul Persons Award at this year’s “This Way to Sustainability” conference. This annual award recognizes a faculty member who contributes strongly to involving students in sustainability initiatives at the University.

Sandrine Matiascek was awarded the 2017 Outstanding New Investigator Award from Research and Sponsored Programs.

Public Administration Awards
Amalia Rodas, a first-generation college student and public administration major, was awarded a full scholarship for the Hispanic National Internship Program by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. She worked for the federal Office of Minority Health this summer in Washington, DC.

Student Research Competition
The following graduate students were winners at the 31st Annual Student Research Competition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$250.00 cash award</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erika Anderson, MA Communication Studies</td>
<td>Dr. Stephanie Hamel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Click, MA Psychology</td>
<td>Dr. Leesa Huang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Coon, MA Anthropology</td>
<td>Dr. Georgia Fox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Smith, MS Biological Sciences</td>
<td>Dr. David Stachura</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>$150.00 cash award</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arturo Berrun, MS Biological Science</td>
<td>Dr. David Stachura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aubree Bradford, MA Social Work</td>
<td>Dr. Susan Roll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chetan Kondeti, MBA Enterprise Information Systems</td>
<td>Dr. Arash Negahban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valcri Gschoiza, MA Physical Anthropology</td>
<td>Dr. Eric Bartclink</td>
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<tr>
<th>$100.00 cash award</th>
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<tr>
<td>Carina Gutierrez/Carmina Vital, MS Applied Psychology/PPS Credential</td>
<td>Dr. Donna Kreskey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Maxey, MA Anthropology</td>
<td>Dr. William Nitzky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Olson, BA Communication Studies</td>
<td>Dr. Stephanie Hamel</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The following graduate students served as delegates at the 31st Annual Student Statewide Research Competition (SRC):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
<th>Major Degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erika Anderson</td>
<td>Dr. Stephanie Hamel</td>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin Click</td>
<td>Dr. Leesa Huang</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse S. Smith</td>
<td>Dr. David Stachura</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arturo Berrun</td>
<td>Dr. David Stachura</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Diaz</td>
<td>Dr. David Keller</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacquelynn Coon</td>
<td>Dr. Georgia Fox</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie Sgheiza</td>
<td>Dr. Eric Bartelink</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
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</table>

For more information about the SRC, please visit http://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/research-competition/index.shtml

For more information on the Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program, Pre-Doctoral Scholars Program, Graduate Equity Fellowship, and Research and Conference Funding, please visit http://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/current-students/fellowship-awards/index.shtml
The Office of Graduate Studies in 2016/2017 provided funding for the following student research and conferences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Advisor</th>
<th>Funded Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meredith Murrietta</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
<td>Greg Cootsone</td>
<td>Research; CS Lewis original works at Wheaton College’s Marion E. Wade Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silena Bartun</td>
<td>Nutrition and Food Science</td>
<td>Lauren Hancock</td>
<td>Present research at the 2017 Experimental Biology Conference in Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Hari Deep Kolgani</td>
<td>MBA in Enterprise Information Systems</td>
<td>Arsh Negahban</td>
<td>Present research at the Annual Decision Sciences Institute Conference in Austin, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Coon</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Georgia Fox</td>
<td>Research at Grand Rapids, Michigan Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin Click</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Leesa Huang</td>
<td>Present research at the May 2017 Association for Psychological Science Conference in Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Maxey</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>William Nitzky</td>
<td>Present research at the Association of Critical Heritage Studies US Chapter Symposium in Alabama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed Slattery</td>
<td>Nutrition and Food Science</td>
<td>Leesa Huang</td>
<td>Present research at the 2017 experimental biology Conference in Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Brooke</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Emily Fleming Nuester</td>
<td>Present research at American Geophysical Union Conference in San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carina Gutierrez</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Donna DeVoughn Kreskey</td>
<td>Allered National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention in San Antonio, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijay Parmar</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Jaime Rigoza</td>
<td>Present research at the International Conference on Computational Science and Computational Intelligence in Las</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dinny Wankhede</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Jaime Rigoza</td>
<td>Present research at the International Conference on Computational Science and Computational Intelligence in Las</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kapil Jituri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rushi Thatkar</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akshay Gore</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Jaime Rigoza</td>
<td>Participate in the Student Poster Competition at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kshitija Karkar</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Jaime Rigoza</td>
<td>Participate in the Student Poster Competition at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahul Gaikwad</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Jaime Rigoza</td>
<td>Participate in the Student Poster Competition at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priyanka Chordia</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Jaime Rigoza</td>
<td>Participate in the Student Poster Competition at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Ricks</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Joanne Clark</td>
<td>Allered Association of Writers and Writing Programs annual conference in Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaitlyn Laczko</td>
<td>Communication Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>Jennifer Brundidge</td>
<td>Present paper at International Western States Communication Association Conference in Salt Lake City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Sghoza</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Eric Bartelink</td>
<td>Present research at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Annual Meeting in New Orleans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hilary Clair</td>
<td>Communication Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>Jennifer Brundidge</td>
<td>Present research paper at International Western States Communication Association Conference in Salt Lake City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arturo Berrun</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>David Stachura</td>
<td>Molecular biology kit to make mRNA</td>
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<td>Laurie Payton</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>David Stachura</td>
<td>Morpholimo genetic technology</td>
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<td>Hannah Metzger</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>David Stachura</td>
<td>Enzymes and Buffers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xiaoping Fan</td>
<td>Kinesiology</td>
<td>Kevin Patton</td>
<td>Present at Society of Health and Physical Educators, SHAPE America Conference in Boston</td>
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<td>Michael Huston</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Lori Weber</td>
<td>Present research at the American Political Science Association’s Annual Meeting in Long Beach</td>
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<td>Sean Lucas</td>
<td>Geological and Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>Ann Dykork Kauffman</td>
<td>Travel to Imperial Valley for geological field research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kristen Broehl</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Eric Bartelink</td>
<td>Present Poster at Paleopathology Association Meetings in New Orleans</td>
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<td>Gauri Kamik</td>
<td>Nutrition and Food Science</td>
<td>Keiko Goto</td>
<td>Present Poster at CA Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Conference in Sacramento</td>
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<td>Shannah Pierson</td>
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<td>Keiko Goto</td>
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<td>Laura Cirillo</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Eric Bartelink</td>
<td>Present at Paleopathology Conference in New Orleans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha Diaz</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Eric Bartelink</td>
<td>Present at Paleopathology Conference in New Orleans</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Future Editions

If you have any ideas for future stories you would like us to consider, or any notable events in your life, please contact either Carson Medley (cmedley@csuchico.edu or 530-898-5392) or Dean Sharon Barrios (sbarrios@csuchico or 530-898-4473) directly. We would love to hear from alumni. Thank you for all that you do.