Scholarship winner prepares for PR future

By Marisa Schwimmer

Most would agree it isn’t easy being a college student. The demands of school, work and a healthy social life can be hard to balance with feeling pressure to excel.

For some, it’s normal. Brenna Robinson, a senior in the public relations option with a minor in marketing, is one example of the many journalism students who go above and beyond.

Robinson works at Chico Performances where she does public relations and marketing. She also refines her public relations skills as an account executive for Tehama Group Communications, a member of the Tehama Group Communications’ Hall of Fame.

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As for life after Tehama Hall, Robinson hopes for a job in Los Angeles at a public relations firm doing consumer public relations and/or brand marketing, she said.

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While the Orion staff is up to its ears in awards such as the National Pacemaker Award and first place in Best of Show, public relations students have no choice but to sit back and anxiously wait to be recognized on the same level.

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The stage is set. Tables, chairs, linens and flowers check. Alumni, students, faculty, family and friends reminisce about old times and pose for pictures as they wait to celebrate excellence.

The second annual Celebration of Excellence inducted alumni and past faculty into The Orion Hall of Fame and Public Relations Hall of Fame Friday, Oct. 5. Sixty guests attended the Chico Women’s Club to recognize Hall of Fame inductees and scholarship winners.

PRSSA needs alumni support

By Carly Smith

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Public relations students may soon have their chance to compete on a national stage. Faculty is working hard to bring a Public Relations Student Society of America chapter to Chico State.

PRSSA offers many benefits such as giving public relations students a chance to compete against other schools, attend national conferences and interact with professionals in the work field.

The major obstacle the department faces is the PRSSA’s five-course requirement. Chico State offers all but one: “Public Relations Research.”

Tehama Group Communications, a chance to be recognized by potential clients.

Debra Johnson, professional-in-residence and current member of Public Relations Student Society of America Sacramento, has already taken the initiative in this process.

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Despite odds alumni follow dreams to D.C.

At 1 a.m. most people are snuggled up, warm in their beds, dreaming of exotic beaches, far-off lands and winning a Pulitzer Prize. At 1 a.m. most people aren’t finishing editing the sports section or waiting for the Senate to adjourn.

But Greg Finley and Jen Scholtes aren’t most people. These two Chico State alumni graduated in May 2007 and uprooted their lives for a shot at making it big in the nation’s capital.

The Washington Post and Congressional Quarterly are where these two 20-somethings reside in the hustle and bustle of political life in Washington, D.C.

It wasn’t an easy battle, but with a dose of determination and a sense of patience, two high-spirited personalities found their way to working for publications that some thought were impossible to work for at such a young age.

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Financial alumni in Washington, D.C.

Greg Finley and Jen Scholtes are not the only journalism alumni in Washington, D.C. Jeff Friedman graduated from Chico State in fall 2003 from the news-editorial option with a minor in international relations. Once in Washington, D.C., Friedman began interviewing and eventually landed a job at Congressional Quarterly.

Congressional Quarterly is where these two began their careers. Friedman has moved through the ranks and is now the homeland security deputy editor.

Rebecca Hanks-Fisher graduated in 1999 with a double major in journalism and political science. Hanks-Fisher worked her way from press assistant to press secretary for Sen. John McCain. She became the director of the Senate Commerce Committee while Sen. McCain was the chairman. She is currently the Federal Communications Commission Media Bureau’s communication director under Sen. John Ensign.

Her hard work paid off as she earned an interview with Congressional Quarterly, she said. There were no positions open at the time, so she took an internship with the Oakland Tribune.

A few months later Scholtes received a call from Congressional Quarterly. A position opened up, and they wanted her to interview again.

She flew to Washington, D.C., on a Wednesday, she said. And within a week she had a full-time position at the publication tracking bills, reporting actions on floor votes, writing summaries and sometimes writing up to 15 leads a day.

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Finley started at The Washington Post with a three-month internship during the summer, he said. When the internship was over he was offered a job.

But before getting on that plane, managing editor at The Washington Post, he said. Both sections have their perks, he said. The financial section can be slow at times, but the sports section makes him want to rip out his hair at other times because of the rush to get the story online.

So what does a 21-year-old do next when already working at his dream job?

Finley is happy where he is, he said. But there is a chance he will go back to school to study economics.

“People in their 30’s do the same job as me and are happy as clams.”

Scholtes is another 21-year-old, three-year graduate with dedication engraved in her mind.

Her road to Congressional Quarterly began in the spring of her first year as a Chico State student, she said. Scholtes wrote an article on Rep. Wally Herger for Leslie Layton-Flores’ “Magazine Writing” class, which was then published as an online story for the Chico News & Review.

A LexisNexis search by Congressional Quarterly found Scholtes’ article, and was contacted by an editor, who then encouraged her to apply for a job when she was done with school, Scholtes recalled.

When she was ready to apply for the job she “kind of got the cold shoulder” from the publication, she said.

But it only made her work that much harder to get an interview.

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A Taste of Journalism

Glen Bleske’s Vegetarian Chili

Everything You Will Need:
• 2 28-ounce cans of diced tomatoes
• 1 15-ounce can of kidney beans
• 2 teaspoons dry oregano
• 2 chopped chipotle peppers from the can
• 1/2 bottle of Sierra Nevada Pale Ale
• 1/2 cup of chopped cilantro
• 1 tablespoon of ground cumin

Method (Serves 12):

In a large soup pot, saute onions in the oil. After onions start to turn brown on edges, add celery and garlic powder. Cook over medium heat for a couple of minutes. Add chili powder (begin with 3 tablespoons), oregano, pepper and cumin. Stir constantly for a couple of minutes until you can smell the spices roasting (do not BURN).

Add beer, juice from the canned tomatoes, cinnamon, adobe sauce and chipotle peppers. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Simmer for 30 minutes. Add the beans and chopped chiles. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cover.

Simmer for about 30 minutes or until the celery is cooked but not mushy. Make sure heat is low enough that it does not burn, stir often. Taste and decide if you want more chili powder. Add chopped cilantro about five minutes before serving.

Great to make a day ahead of time. Usually improves in the refrigerator. freezes well. I store in small containers that hold two servings. Enjoy!