

GRADUATE STUDIES NEWS

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*Articles by Carson Medley
CSU, Chico Thesis Editor*

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ANGELA TRETHEWEY: THE INTENDED SCHOLAR AND ACCIDENTAL LEADER



Dr. Angela Trethewey, Chico State graduate studies alumna and dean, College of Communication and Education.

Can you tell us about your journey to Chico State for your BA and MA?

Well, I was born in Washington state, but we moved to the North State because my dad got a job teaching at a public school. Not only that, but we had mold on the walls of our home in Washington, which made me really sick. We wanted to move to California for a new start, and we landed in Marysville. I grew up in the valley and years later I received a scholarship to study at University of California, Davis, but we came to visit California State University, Chico when my mom was a student here. She had gone back to school. My mom, by the way, is the smartest woman I've ever met. She took classes at the local community college while I was growing up, and

Office of Graduate Studies
California State University, Chico
400 West First Street
Chico, CA 95929 0875
Student Services Center 460
Phone: 530 898 6880
Fax: 530 898 3342
www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies

it was my senior year in high school when she went back to school and came to Chico State. She took 48 units in one year and got her teaching credential here.

So your mom being a student here inspired you to attend Chico State?

Yes, I ended up going to college with my mom. When I came to visit her at Chico State, I got to sit in classes with her. I was hooked. I knew Chico State was the place where I wanted to be. I came here and earned my BA.

During my senior year I started interviewing for jobs—sales and some other things. I got some nibbles and realized sales really was not

what I wanted to do. One of my professors suggested I think about graduate school. I was like, ‘Oh, is that a thing? Tell me about it.’ I had no idea what the options were back then. I loved being a student, and I loved learning. I remember going into my “Organizational Communication Theories” class back in the day, and every time I came out of the class, the world felt different. I’d come out from that class and have a different frame for looking at the world. That was so exciting to me. It literally changed the way that I viewed the world and my place in it. It changed the way I thought about communication, and what it means to communicate. I was intellectually challenged and pushed in ways that were exciting to me.

What kind of an impact did faculty have on your pursuit of graduate school? Can you share your experience with us?

When faculty suggested that I think about graduate school, I did. The wonderful thing about the Chico State faculty back then was they told me that I had what it took to be a scholar, and I

believed them. So I stayed and got my master’s degree. It was such a wonderful opportunity. I eventually got to teach college-level classes, and I remember thinking on my first day in the classroom that I’ve found my home. I knew this is where I should be. I had a great experience. A faculty member urged me to attend a conference in San Francisco. I had no idea what it meant to go to a conference. While there, my Chico State faculty introduced me to faculty from across disciplines. I had been reading the works of many of these scholars whom I admired, and now I was going to meet them. That conference was a transformational

moment for me, an instrumental way for helping me find my way as a young scholar. I met faculty from Purdue University, and that’s where I ended up going next.

Do you feel that graduate school at Chico State provided you with a strong foundation for your doctoral work?

Yes. One of the things that struck me about being a new doctoral student at Purdue was how prepared I felt from having studied for my master’s here at Chico State. I was surrounded by students from all kinds of universities, and I hit the ground running. There was no “imposter syndrome,” and it

was all because of the preparation I received here at Chico State. I felt so grounded in what it meant to be engaged in scholarly inquiry. I knew what it meant to be a graduate student, the kind of focus and discipline and

intellectual curiosity you need to be successful. I got all that here. For current Chico State graduate students, if you are interested in that path, this is a place where you can get really, really good preparation.

So how did you get back to Chico State?

My first job out of Purdue was at the University of Washington. I was there for a couple of years, and then I was recruited by Arizona State University. I ended up moving to the desert, where I stayed for almost two decades. It was a wonderful professional opportunity. I started off as an assistant professor and I left as the director of a large school. I might have stayed there forever were it not for the opportunity to come back to Chico State. The chance to come back to the place that provided me with the foundation to have not only a career, but a life I loved, was too great of an opportunity to pass up. I wanted to come back to Chico State to give back to this place that I love. I felt that I could come back here and help other students have the same academic experience that I had experienced, and to help them feel well-prepared for whatever career or graduate education they wanted to participate in. I thought, ‘Wouldn’t that be a wonderful thing?’

When I interviewed here, almost five years ago, I realized I have kind of an interesting story. I was here and I came back. I felt rooted to Chico. My

mom got her credential here, I got my degree here, and now my daughter is a student in the college. I have this Chico story. Then I got here and realized I’m not that special, because everybody here seems to share that Chico story. There’s

**“...every time I came out
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something about Chico that really does draw you back. I feel a debt of gratitude to Chico and Chico State. It's a great community, and the University makes it intellectually powerful.

What were your fondest memories here as a graduate student?

Oh, being in the classroom and testing out the waters of a potential career. I think in any graduate program, if you get some taste for what your future might be, that's a powerful thing.

I got that taste at Chico State in sampling what it might be like to be a faculty member. But whatever your graduate studies path is, if you have a chance to participate in the activities of your field, I think that's really powerful. Teaching was a great experience, and I loved engaging in my own research. I have fond memories of using my little Mac computer to write my thesis.

How did you go from being an academic and scholar to also being a dean?

I certainly don't think anyone ever aspires to become a dean. I love my job, and I feel so honored and grateful to be here, but I was never interested in being a dean. If you had asked me when I was in graduate school if I would one day want to be an administrator, I would have said no way. That was by no means my goal. My interest was problem solving. Studying organizational communication helped me figure out how we communicate in an organizational context. How do we make sure that the ways we engage with each other, honoring our intellectual and emotional selves and non-work selves? How do we create a context for these?

never wanted to be a leader. That was not my career goal. I wanted to be a faculty member. I think what happens, though, is you start looking around at ways that you can serve and wondering how you can serve broadly and in different capacities.

Early in my career, my focus was on how I could serve my students immediately and how I could be of use in my classes. Then I started having opportunities to think about how I could be of

use structurally—from an organizational point of view. What are the things I can do to support not just my students, but students across an entire program? That's what encouraged me to start thinking about leadership, and how leading might be something that I wanted to do. How could I be of systemic use?

What is a day in your life as a dean of two schools? How does this compare to a day in your life back when you were a graduate student?

You know, the major difference between being a graduate student and what I do now is the kind of luxury you have to really think and focus when you're a graduate student. That's

such a gift.

Graduate school gives you this intense period of concentration in your life when you're really only focused on the work, that intellectual pursuit. I know our graduate students have all kinds of challenges in terms of their work life and balancing school and

academics. There are so many things that pull at all of us, but to be in that short period of your life during graduate school where you're intellectually focused is so fun. I remember back in my graduate program at Purdue and there were three days of eight-hour comp exams—I just loved it—this synthetic moment when you're asked to bring together all these things you're learning in a way that you haven't before, and it was so hard yet so enjoyable—oh, the focus! Now my days are much more fragmented, always moving from one thing to the next. I do miss that kind of deep focus and engagement on one thing. Being asked to do deep intellectual engagement as part and parcel of the work—that's the luxury. But if someone would have told me back in graduate school that I'd be an administrator someday, I would've been totally miffed.

What advice do you have for our graduate students who, like yourself, must balance school with their personal lives?

It's all about focus. I remember being a graduate student and thinking that I'm never going to get my thesis done. I recall calling my mom and telling her I couldn't do it—I was done. But I learned that if you just put your buns in the seat and pretend that you're being productive—just pretend—that three hours later I would have produced something significant.

“Graduate school gives you this intense period of concentration.... that intellectual pursuit.”

It's about learning the habits of being a disciplined student. One of the most important books that I read as a faculty member was a book written about the most productive scholars. The most productive scholars, in terms of those who are the most

Trethewey continued from p3

prolific, made writing—whatever the work is in your field—a moderate priority. It wasn't higher than sleeping or eating, but it was higher than checking your phone or surfing the internet. The most productive scholars did this not for eight hours at a stretch, but for an hour or two every day. It's focus work. It's deep work. It's a habit that every single day you write. I would encourage graduate students to really develop these habits of daily writing where you really can get sustained work accomplished over time. ☺



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ELIZABETH ALANIZ: THE LEADER WHO HAS BEEN THERE, DONE THAT



Elizabeth Alaniz, Chico State graduate studies alumna and assistant director, Financial Aid & Scholarship Office

Your higher education journey began right here at Chico State, didn't it?

It did. I was a communication design major with an option in media arts for my undergraduate degree here at Chico State. When I was an undergraduate, I worked as an Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) intern on the admissions side of the office. My job was to call EOP students to see if they would be coming to Chico State. When I talked to these students, I would tell them about my own experience—I was also an EOP

student and first-generation college student—at Chico State. I really enjoyed this. So, during my senior year, when the opportunity arose to become a peer advisor and work as an EOP paraprofessional intern, I applied.

Is this when you started thinking about graduate school?

Yes. It was during this time that I decided to take a different career path. I wanted to change my major, but it was too late. That's when graduate school entered my mind.

I had a rough time as an undergraduate. It took me six and a half years to get through. I'm the youngest of four. My two older sisters had already graduated from Chico State. When I started working in EOP, I noticed that a lot of us did not know anything about graduate school. This conversation wasn't coming up.

When working in EOP, two of my mentors whom I really looked up to had their MA. I knew I wanted to be in the student affairs world of higher education, so I started asking questions. I also knew it would be hard to get a job in higher education with a communication design degree. So I thought to myself, 'Maybe I can do graduate school' But like I said, I struggled as an undergraduate. I took the GRE and tested poorly. I applied to the social science graduate program anyway, and I didn't get in. I wrote and sent in an appeal letter. This was the first time in my life I had advocated for myself, and it worked. I was accepted conditionally, and I was told that if I could take 12 units that fall and earn a 3.0 or higher, I would be officially accepted. I did just that. And I finished in two years—thesis and all.

Tell me about your thesis.

My thesis title was "Needs Assessment for a Graduate Support Program on Campus." I drew from my personal experience. When I was going through the graduate school application process, there weren't a lot of places to turn to on campus for guidance. I used my own experience, and I looked at EOP juniors and seniors. I surveyed first-year graduate students, and I discovered that EOP juniors and seniors had not been exposed to graduate school. I knew graduate studies was trying to make their programs more diverse, but what I

discovered was that they weren't providing outreach to programs where there were already many diverse students in place. I found that first-year graduate students who were not in EOP had been exposed to graduate school, and received that exposure through their parents.

"I surveyed first-year graduate students, and I discovered that EOP juniors and seniors had not been exposed to graduate school."

How has your own experience taking out loans informed your current practice of advising students about student loans?

Back then, I took out a lot of loans. Today, when I tell people how much I owe in loans, they assume it's because I also went to graduate school. But what people don't know is that I took out most of my loans when I was an undergraduate. When students come into me today requesting financial aid, the first thing I do is ask them if they are sure they really need the loans. The whole loan process was new to me when I came to college. In addition to loans, I was getting grants. I had never had so much money before.

It was so easy to take out loans, so I just kept doing it. I was really bad at handling money. I spent it all. Today, when I work with a senior and see that they hardly took out any loans, I congratulate them every time.

I've only known financial aid on this campus. I remember as an undergraduate how scared I was to go into the financial aid office. I was terrified of any tax questions. One of my worst experiences came when I was asked to turn in verification documents, which is essentially an audit for financial aid. I remember the financial aid

advisor asking me who this person on my dad's exemption was, and I recall saying, 'Oh, that's my cousin.' The financial aid advisor said, 'Oh, she lives with you? How old is she?' I didn't know if I could say she lived with us or not. I was scared I was going to get my dad in trouble. I had no idea what these questions meant, nor why I was being asked them. I remember that day very well. When I started working as a financial aid advisor here, I vowed not to treat students like that. It's hard because we have to ask students the hard questions. I let them know I just need to know the truth so I can help them. A lot of students don't even know—I didn't—what a W-2 form is.

What are some of your fondest memories of graduate school?

I loved my classmates. I loved going to class and conducting research. I often suffered from "impostor syndrome." One of my professors, Art Sanchez, was always trying to knock that concept out of me. He always had to remind me how much I deserved and had earned the right to be a graduate student here. I had that feeling—and still do at times—that someone was going to kick me out.

"He always had to remind me how much I deserved and had earned the right to be a graduate student here."

Our graduate studies dean, Sharon Barrios, often talks to new students about the "impostor syndrome." Was there a moment for you that helped you get over that feeling?

Yes. I had an honors student in one of my graduate classes. I remember scoring higher on an exam than she did. Never in a million years would I have thought that I would have scored higher than an honors student. She was so smart, and scoring higher than her gave me confidence. I started to think that, yeah, maybe I do belong here.

Can you tell me a little about your work as coordinator of the Dream Center?**How did the center start?**

When I was a young advisor here in the financial aid office, back in 2006, I had a student visit me. She wanted to know what kind of financial aid she could receive. I asked her several questions, and because I spoke Spanish, she felt like she could trust me. She opened up and told me she was undocumented. Back then, there were no Dream grants. There was nothing yet. I was still learning about the financial aid world, so I was searching to see what she could qualify for; there was nothing out there. She was actually born in the United States near the border, and the doctor who delivered her told her mother to walk back across the border to Mexico and register her. That's how she became classified as undocumented: the doctor wouldn't register her at the hospital. So her mother did what the doctor said and then walked right back into California. I was blown away. Then I started hearing more and more stories about students in this kind of situation.

I started thinking about what we could do to help these students. Not long after, I went to a financial aid conference hosted by the California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA). There was a drawing for a \$1,000 scholarship. If you won, you could award the scholarship to any student at your campus. My name was drawn. I did an internal search for an undocumented student here at Chico State. I was amazed to discover the large number of undocumented students on our campus. I was able to find my undocumented student and award her the money. So I started looking for other scholarships that did not require U.S. citizenship and I

was disappointed to discover that most required U.S. citizenship or permanent residence.

In 2010, a group of us on campus—the Dream Student Support Team—started meeting. I became well-known amongst the undocumented students as someone whom they could trust. I started meeting more and more with undocumented students. One day a distraught student came into my office. She was experiencing so many different emotions. She was tired of being called illegal alien. She was exhausted from having to explain to

people what AB 540 meant. She was simply fed up. This moment inspired us to start a student organization. At the same time, the California Dream Act became a state assembly bill. I was so excited we would start processing Dream applications here. I told my boss, right away, that I would be happy to take the lead on that program.

What drives you?

It's a combination of my own personal experiences and hearing the stories of the students I work with. People forget, or don't understand, what it means to come from a mixed status family—when some family members are citizens, some might be residents, and some might be undocumented or on a temporary visa. People don't understand that experience unless

they have actually lived it. When I was young, I lived in such fear of my family being deported or separated. I'm passionate because I've witnessed it. A lot of times, students don't even know they are undocumented until they fill

out their FAFSA. They ask their mom and dad for their social security number and discover they don't have one. They go through their entire school life not knowing until it comes time to apply to college. This is such a blow.

What were some of the greatest challenges you encountered in graduate school?

I worked a lot. I had three jobs. I was an EOP intern advisor, I worked in the financial aid office for about 10 hours a week, and I was a file finder. I also worked at Fox 30 for Univision from 6 p.m. to midnight. I would be at school from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., then off to Fox 30. In all, I was working at least 50 hours a week, in addition to the time I spent studying.

Do you have any advice for students either considering graduate school or for graduate students who are currently in graduate school?

Don't be afraid that you won't qualify. If you really want to go to graduate school, you'll find a way to make it happen. I think back to the appeal letter that I wrote way back then, and then about a letter of support I recently wrote for someone who had also been rejected and was writing an appeal who got in. Don't take no for an answer. Appeal. Try

"Don't take no for an answer. Appeal.... If you really want it, do it, and don't let anything stand in your way."

applying to another program, even if it's on another campus. If you really want it, do it, and don't let anything stand in your way. If you want to put yourself in a position to change policy, get your master's degree. Also, for current graduate students, search and apply for scholarships. This is something I regret having not done when I was in graduate school. I didn't apply for many scholarships because I had a fear of being denied. Don't be afraid of rejection. &

JENNIFER GRUBER : THE SCHOLAR AND THE TRAVEL BUG



Jennifer Gruber, graduate studies alumna and coordinator of Study Abroad and International Exchange

What launched your current career in Study Abroad?

Well, I'd gotten the travel bug—more like a cultural awakening—earlier when I had spent a semester studying abroad in Italy during my junior year of college. The travel bug never went away. After college my friends and I saved up some money, quit our jobs, and backpacked around Europe for four months. So, yeah, it was traveling around Europe for those four months that got me hooked. We went to 16 different countries. I came home broke and moved back to Red Bluff. Not long after, I got a job here at Chico State working in the administrative office for Associated Students. I then started the Master of Public Administration program.

Tell me about your research during graduate school.

I wrote a project that focused on study abroad programs. I had just started working in the Study Abroad office, so it was perfect. I looked at the learning outcomes associated with study abroad participation, and I used our office data and created a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative survey for our current students. I then developed an alumni survey and I sent this out to everyone who had ever studied abroad through our programs. I wanted to know where they went, how long they had studied abroad, what was their language acquisition like, if they participated in an internship, and I looked at gender. Using our internal data helped me get to know our programs and

students in-depth, and also the strengths of each program. It allowed me the time to look at all of our programs—short-term programs, medium- to long-term programs, direct integration programs with languages or what I call “bubble” programs. I wanted to see which programs had the greatest learning outcomes.

What were your most surprising findings?

The percentage of female students participating who study abroad is much higher than males. Nationally, it's around 65 percent female and 35 percent male. Chico State is pretty comparable. I also discovered that it wasn't necessarily the type of program that mattered, rather it was the duration students spent studying abroad that made the greatest impact. The students who were going

for the entire academic year revealed much greater progress in intercultural communication and professional and emotional development. This is great because it's what our study abroad program is known for. We are a nationally ranked program—No. 2 in the nation for the number of students we send for a full academic year. We preach this from day one: go for as long as you possibly can.

Is there anything about studying abroad that might surprise students?

I pull data all the time about the demographics of our students, and more than half of them, around 60 percent, utilize their financial aid to study abroad. Also, the ethnic breakdown with our students studying abroad are consistent with the population of our students at Chico State. Another thing students assume is that it will be much more expensive to study abroad for a year than it is to study at Chico State. Sure, that might be true if a student chooses to study in London, but if a student goes someplace like Thailand, Costa Rica, Poland, or Ghana, just to cite a few, the student will actually save money. These programs cost much less than staying in Chico for a semester or a year.

What was it like having a full-time job while also going to graduate school?

I didn't have children yet, but it was tiring. I also had a really supportive boss. Also, the MPA program has flexible hours. My classes were always after 4 p.m. I would work all day, and they either go to a 4–7 p.m. seminar or a 4–10 p.m. seminar. These were only once a week.

The students who were going for the entire academic year revealed much greater progress in intercultural communication and professional and emotional development.

What are some of the greatest challenges you encounter in your job?

Many individuals think we just stamp student passports, but we have to become familiar with every major and minor on campus. We have to understand the intricate details of GE pathway and the requirements for graduation. Additionally, we have to know more than 200 program sites and the academic programs offered there, and we are responsible for ensuring our students are progressing through their degree. We also have to make sure their health and safety needs are met when

abroad. We have to determine their financial aid and determine if it's applicable to certain programs. There are students who have never been abroad before, and many of them have no idea how to apply for a passport. Many don't even know what a visa is. We have to start from square one with every single student who walks through our office door. This year we are sending away more than 340 students, and those are just new participants—not every student we are advising on a weekly basis.

So now you have children, you're working full time, and you're in a doctoral program. How's that going?

People look at me like I'm crazy, but my philosophy is that time passes regardless. You might as well be chipping away at something. The three years I spent working toward my master's degree went fast. I figured this would, too, and it has.

How did graduate school at Chico State prepare you for your doctoral work?

Chico State made me a better writer. My writing skills developed significantly as a result of the MPA program. I also had a really strong mentor during this time who used to be an English teacher. She would read all of my papers, along with her red pen, and mark my drafts up substantially before I turned them in. It was humiliating. My papers would come back all slashed in red, but it taught me how to revise. We often learn from our embarrassment. So, at the end of three years, my writing skills were much better. I'm so much more confident now, and I send hundreds of emails each week. Also, the master's degree not only prepared me for my doctoral program, but I don't think I would have been in my current position were it not for my master's. I finished in 2011, and the following year I was appointed program coordinator.

Can you tell me about your doctoral work?

It's an online doctorate program in educational leadership through CSU, Channel Islands and CSU, Fresno. My dissertation



Gruber traveling abroad to check in on her students.

will look at the Graduation Initiative 2025, and I'm working with Institutional Research to find information on those who study abroad and those who don't, and looking at how these numbers relate to retention at the University. I want to find out, amongst those who do study abroad, who represent first-generation, underrepresented minority (URM), and Pell-eligible students. And from this population of students that study abroad, I want to find out if they are graduating sooner or later as a result of study abroad participation.

Studying abroad is a high-impact practice, so I will tie that in. My research will be mixed methods—mostly quantitative—as I look at multiple variables, such as gender, ethnicity, and time-to-degree. I will also pull in qualitative data about the students' experience to better understand the perceptions that first-generation college students have about studying abroad. Also, I

want to understand what challenges first-generation students who studied abroad experienced during and after their time abroad. I want to see how the experience changed them, and see if they feel like it helped with their time-to-degree completion. I want to look at these learning outcomes and the personal and professional development. I have a hunch that my findings will debunk the myth that studying abroad delays time-to-degree but actually makes it faster. As a result, I hope my office can apply for GI 2025 funding and create customized programs for students who are first-generation college students, URM, or low-income.

I would love to create a faculty-led study abroad program where students can knock out three GE classes, maybe during a summer term, so they can progress their degree, enroll in a high-impact practice, and stay at the University. This is my hope. They can complete almost a full semester's worth of classes, and not only that, but they can come back here reenergized and with a new enthusiasm for college and maybe even have a new career plan.

What if instead of going home for 10 weeks in the summer, they go abroad? The faculty-led program would have structure in place for them every day. They wouldn't have to figure out all the intricate details, such as applying for a visa. We'll have two or three Chico State faculty going with each group. I'd love to create a summer program where the students go abroad, and use a program like this for a case study in my dissertation.

What advice do you have for current graduate students who are also staff and juggling all that you have juggled and continue to juggle?

Take it day by day. Some days are exhausting. There will always be times when you want to quit or you're not motivated to move forward. Days will pass no matter what. Get lots of sleep. If you fail, grab a cup of coffee and try again. Some days you will feel defeated, but there are so many more days where you'll have that "ah-ha" moment with faculty. Also, I would urge graduate students not to be victims of the "impostor syndrome." It's really easy to build this up in your head. But once you get to class, you realize that everyone is feeling the same thing and you're more capable than you think.

What's next for you?

Right now I'm just focusing on my qualifying exams for my doctorate that are coming up soon. ☺



Information about Chico State Study Abroad can be found on the web at https://www.csuchico.edu/study_abroad/

MEREDITH HUDDLESON :

A C.S. LEWIS SCHOLAR OBSERVED

Where are you from? And how did you arrive at Chico State?

I'm from the small town of Los Molinos, about half an hour from here. I graduated high school at 16, and I started Chico State right when I turned 17. It took me a little longer to graduate, as going from a small town to Chico was a tough adjustment.

What did you study?

Liberal studies. I had always planned to be a teacher. Things changed, though, when I was hired as a student-worker in the office of the Vice President for University Advancement. Working in that professional environment changed my path. I loved our campus and loved working here. I knew Chico State is where I wanted to spend my time. It was all the focus on the lifetime of personal growth that got me hooked.

What happened once you graduated?

I started applying for jobs on campus. I got hired for testing on campus. I worked there for several years. I left for six months—even though I was kept on as an intermittent night worker in the testing office—and went to work for the family-owned business, Dudley Excavating, where my dad has worked for 25 years.

Can you tell me about your journey to graduate school?

I had a minor in philosophy, and I've always been drawn to the humanities. Actually, I wished that I would have majored in humanities. So I saw graduate school as a chance to go back and study what I loved. I particularly wanted to earn a master's in religious studies, but Chico State does not offer this degree. So I created it through interdisciplinary studies. The interdisciplinary studies program allowed me to pull from many areas in the humanities, such as philosophy, religion, and English. I've been able to create a unique degree that allows me to think about the big things. I don't think people do this enough—just sit there and contemplate the meaning of forever.

What makes Chico and Chico State so special for you?

Chico State is so unique. We have so many different spaces and places on campus where you can go to fulfill whatever



Meredith Huddleson, interdisciplinary studies graduate student

connection you need to be fulfilled. You can connect to people if you want. You can connect to nature if you want. You can connect to your books. There's just all these different places that you can choose from to grow yourself.

What is your current position on campus?

Right now I'm the records lead in the Office of the Registrar. Everything that touches a student's record—grades, transcript requests, repeated forgiveness, planned educational leaves—goes through our department. I oversee three staff and six students, and try to make sure everything is running smoothly. I'm the point person for records oriented questions.

What are some of the benefits of being both a staff member and a graduate student?

You don't have to rush. You can take your time. This is what I meant earlier about personal growth. I am a much different person today than I was back when I started my graduate program in 2013. It's great having the ability to space out your

“...Chico State does not offer this degree. So I created it through interdisciplinary studies.”

education in a way that meets your needs. My program gives you seven years to complete the degree. Also, if you're someone like me who knows they want to stay on campus, this takes some of the pressure off to finish sooner than if graduate school was a job-driven pursuit.

Can you tell me about your research regarding C.S. Lewis?

When I was in the last year of my undergraduate studies, I was grieving the loss of a relationship. I randomly found the book *Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis. It was on my sister's bookshelf. I started reading it, and was struck by how different this book was from his other works. It immediately gripped me. All the real humanity and raw emotion that Lewis evoked. The thing that I love most about Lewis is that he knows exactly how to put into words what you're thinking or something that you've felt before but didn't know how to describe. Sometimes it's difficult to understand what he's saying, but when you do get it, that lightbulb turns on. Reading him almost becomes an addiction. I read his works and everything clicked for me. He also has a lot of humility, and I am really drawn to that.

Reading *Grief Observed* allowed me to connect with how important grief and death is, and how it's not something we focus on in our culture but should. Reading that book opened up my desire to explore these taboo topics. The space graduate school allows gave me the time to explore and think about the big questions surrounding these issues. So, when I came to graduate school, the book was still in my mind, but, again, there was not a religious studies program. I went and talked to Professor Jed Wyrick, whom I knew had a strong background with Lewis and Tolkien. He helped me design my interdisciplinary studies program and helped me set up the classes, particularly the ones involving British and Romantic literature. It wasn't really until my second year in graduate school, though, that I got deeply involved with Lewis. It was a trip to Wheaton College that it did it for me.

You went all the way to Wheaton College for research?

Twice, actually. The first time was a time in my life when I had just come back to Chico State after having left for that six-month period. I wanted to see Wheaton because I knew the college had a lot of the original works of Lewis. I wanted to see the Bible that he had held. So I contacted the Department of Religious Studies, and they gave me a small grant. I also attended a religious faith C.S. Lewis conference. I got to meet Dr. Lyle Dorsett, a prominent author

and C.S. Lewis scholar who is also well acquainted with grief. He lost his daughter when she was young.

I also met the two archivists at the library who helped me out with all the Lewis artifacts. They set me up with a special pillow to put his Bible and other books on. I believe that Bible was his first. It was wooden. What interested me the most was that so



C.S. Lewis' personal Bible.

many passages were underlined in the book of Job, more than in any other section of his Bible. I found this really insightful. I discovered he lost his mom to cancer when he was nine or so. This really tested his faith. He was broken. Here was this little kid praying to his God to save his mother, and she ends up dying. When he came of age, he lost his friends in World War I. Later, he would lose his wife, and that's when I think the grief got to him the most. I ended up going back to Wheaton that same year in the summer this time. This time it was strictly for the research. I was able to get funding from the Office of Graduate Studies. I want to go back one more time before I finish my thesis. I am hoping to have someone at Wheaton host me.

What's the best thing about graduate school at Chico State?

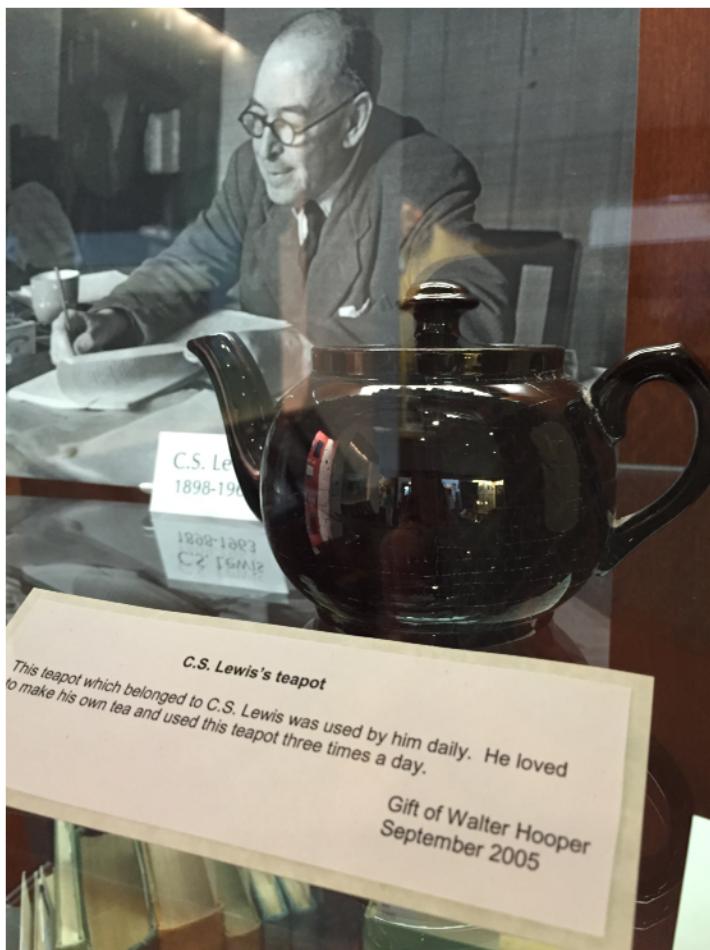
I was just telling my husband yesterday that when I'm in class and we're speaking, I feel the conversation as a mutual conversation. It doesn't feel like professors are thinking: 'Hey, I'm teaching you,' but more like: 'Hey, let's discuss things and go back and forth with our ideas.' That's the feeling I get from the faculty here.

What's next for you?

I finish up with my coursework this semester, and then I plan to spend the next several months working on the thesis. I have until 2020 to finish. I need a draft soon. I also need to make one more trip to Wheaton.

“...so many passages were underlined in the book of Job...I found this really insightful.”

Huddleson continued from p11



Huddleson plans to follow in Lewis' footsteps while she finishes her thesis.

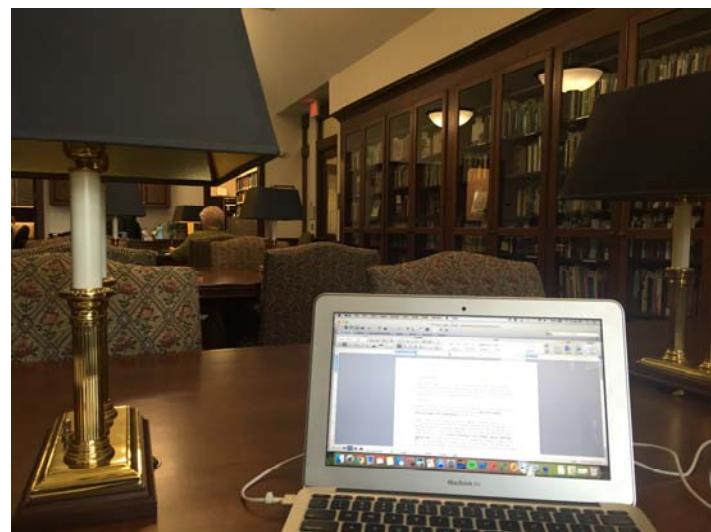
Any advice you have for current staff who are considering graduate school?

Study what you enjoy, not what you think will get you the perfect job or more money. That's the key. School is already difficult enough, let alone having to do something you don't fully enjoy or believe in. This starts with personal contentment. Be content with where you want to be, and everything will fall into place. For me, I didn't want to leave Chico State. Yes, study what you love. Think bigger than the daily stresses of life, the tedious things that get you down. 



More information about the MA/MS in Interdisciplinary Studies can be found on the web [hp://catalog.csuchico.edu/viewer/SPMJ/ISMANONEQL.html](http://catalog.csuchico.edu/viewer/SPMJ/ISMANONEQL.html).

Or contact the program Graduate Coordinator, Carson Medley, in the Office of Graduate Studies at 530.898.6880.



Huddleson taking notes at Wheaton for her thesis.

Huddleson has twice traveled to the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, which holds many of C.S. Lewis's original works. She received financial assistance from Office of Graduate Studies Research and Conference Funds and the CSU, Chico Department of Religious Studies.



GRADUATE STUDIES AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS



Art Grad Student Achievements

We've had perhaps our greatest success story for the Master of Art History: **Sara Smallhouse**, a recent graduate of our program, got a tenure-track professorship at Butte College!

Tirumular (Drew) Narayanan, current Master of Art History student, has given papers at the two most important conferences in his field, medieval studies. These are the International Congress for Medieval Studies (Leeds, UK) and the International Conference for Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI).

Our MFA student, **Jory Harms**, was in this exhibition, and there's a podcast with interviews with the artists, including Jory, at the bottom of the exhibition page: <https://nevermeetyourheroes.podbean.com/e/2017-los-angeles-road-concerts/>



Biology Grad Student Achievements

Payton Laurie presented a poster at the International Zebrafish Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

Laurie P, Stachura D. 2018. *ccf44*: A necessary gene for hematopoietic stem cell proliferation. 13th International Zebrafish Conference on June 20, 2018 in Madison, Wisconsin.

Jamie Sydnor presented his thesis research at the poster session of the International Symbiosis Society (ISS) Congress in July 2018 in Corvallis, Oregon.

Ryan Nielsen and **Stephanye Frias** are presenting at this year's CSUPERB conference: January 4, 2019 CAMP pathway-dependent mechanism stimulates insulin secretion via regulation of miR-375 and ICER gene expression. **R. Nielsen, S. Frias, J. Teazis, and D.M. Keller.** 31st Annual CSU Biotechnology Symposium in Anaheim.

Stephanie Parker won second place for her research presentation at the 2018 Entomological Society of America, Entomological Society of Canada, and Entomological Society of British Columbia Joint Annual Meeting on November 11–14 in the 2018 Student Competition for the Presidents Prize, in the Behavior Session. Titled "The impacts of gall size and shape on housekeeping behavior of the gall-inducing aphid, *Tamalia coweni*"

He-Lo Ramirez won first place for his research poster presentation at the Botany 2018 meeting July 21–25, 2018 in Rochester, Minnesota, "Leaf trait variation in a *Quercus lobata* common garden experiment is not explained by climatic conditions of maternal seed source."

He-Lo Ramirez presented a poster at the Northern California Botanists conference Jan. 14–15, 2019 in Chico, "Variation in leaf shape in a *Quercus lobata* common garden: tests for adaptation to climate and physiological consequences."

Drew Gilberti presented a poster at the Northern California Botanists conference Jan 14–15, 2019 in Chico, "Natural history of *Disholcaspis eldoradensis*, a galling wasp of Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*): distribution, nectar, and interactions with ants."

Constantin Raether presented a poster at the Northern California Botanists conference Jan 14–15, 2019 in Chico, "Defense against herbivory by galling Cynipidae wasps in valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*): tests of two hypotheses in a large common garden experiment."



Communication Studies Grad Student Achievements

Kelsey Caldwell, (MA, Communication Studies, '13) has been invited to join the Chico State Alumni Association Board.

Stephen Graydon (MA, Communication Studies, '13) was interviewed for a story on NPR for the non-profit organization he runs, Terra Fuego, about the Camp Fire. His research while in the program was on the forest fires and now he has his own nonprofit. Here is the link to the story: <https://www.mynspr.org/post/shutdown-threatens-stall-recovery-wildfire-ravaged-paradise-calif#stream/0>

Here is the link to the non-profit: <https://www.terrafuego.org/what-we-do/>

Continued middle of p14

GRADUATE STUDIES ANNUAL FUND

As our graduate students and alumni can attest, our graduate programs offer outstanding educational experiences. However, there are significant financial barriers that prevent many of our students from pursuing opportunities and achieving at their highest potential. One way to help is the new Graduate Studies Annual Fund.

On February 14, 2019, the Office of Graduate Studies participated in Chico State Giving Day. It marked our first ever fundraiser for graduate students.

Generous Giving Day donations by 41 individuals provided \$2915 to support Graduate Student awards for research and conferences, teaching assistantships, tuition waivers, and student-organized events.

THANK YOU to all who donated!

If you missed Chico State Giving Day but still want to support us and our mission, our fundraising page is still active: <https://app.mobilecause.com/vf/chicograd>.

Recognitions continued from p13



Geological Sciences Grad Student Achievements

Jay Smart and **Sean Lucas** presented their master's research "The Painted Gorge Fault, a Potentially Active Dextral Fault in The Northeastern Coyote Mountains, Salton Trough, California" at the Geological Society of America, Cordilleran and Rocky Mountain sectional meeting in May 2018.

John Kelley presented his master's research "Using SiO₂ Concentrations to Identify Hydraulic Mining Sediment in the Willow Creek Watershed, Yuba County, CA" at the Geological Society of

America, Cordilleran and Rocky Mountain sectional meeting in May 2018.

Sommer Casady presented her master's research "Characterization of an epithermal deposit within the Antelope Valley volcanic center, Sierra County, California" at the Geological Society of America, Cordilleran and Rocky Mountain sectional meeting in May 2018.

Lexi Thornton presented her master's research "Mapping Risk for *Phytophthora Ramorum* with an Anthropogenic Focus" at the Society for Conservation GIS annual meeting in July, 2018.

Brandon Ertis was the first author on a paper based on his master's research, published in *Science of the Total Environment* entitled "Long-term

hydraulic mining sediment budgets: Connectivity as a management tool."

Cab Esposito presented his master's research "Effects of Future Anthropogenic Stressors on Groundwater Dynamics within Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems" at the First Annual Western Groundwater Conference in October 2018.



Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management Grad Student Achievements

Erik Luvaas, (MA,RHPM, '18) joined faculty at Sacramento State University in the Department of Recreation, Hospitality, and Tourism in fall 2018.

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.*