

California University JOURNAL

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Newest Alumni Look to the Future

Great jobs. Big dreams. Cal U's newest alumni were looking ahead when they left the Convocation Center after the University's 184th Commencement.

Graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2017 took place May 12 and 13 — and on May 14 Alexis Livingstone, of Newell, Pa., reported as usual to her postal service job.

A city letter carrier for the past three years, she graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree in business administration with a concentration in finance and plans to pursue an MBA through Cal U Global Online. Her goal? To become an inspector in the U.S. Postal Service's financial division.

"Going to Cal U worked out for me, because I was able to adjust my schedule to online and night courses when I started working," Livingstone said.

"You have to have a master's degree to do what I want to do."

Jessica Seisay, a Presidential Scholar from Uniontown, Pa., earned her bachelor's degree in sociology, with a concentration in social deviance. She is one of the first black females from her community to graduate with honors, she said, and she doesn't want to leave the area to start a career.

"I'm thinking about a master's degree, but ultimately I'd like to start a program for at-risk kids in my community, to give them a better opportunity," she said. "Some people outgrow their pond. I want to grow my pond."

"I love Cal U," she added. "I love the students, the teachers, everything. Cal U for life!"

In all, University President Geraldine M. Jones conferred degrees upon nearly 1,300 students, although not every student attended Commencement.

"I am proud of you, our graduates, for your hard work and the sacrifices you made to get to this point," President Jones said. "I encourage you always to discover and acknowledge people's strengths, and to utilize those strengths on behalf of the greater good. "No matter what career path you choose, those special moments you spend taking time to understand, help and mentor others will shape you into an even greater human being."

Thomas L. Bakaitus Jr. '83 addressed the graduates



Above, Martha Anastasia Roege reacts to her fellow graduates as she prepares to receive her degree in science and technology multidisciplinary studies with a minor in biology at graduate Commencement May 12 in the Convocation Center. Right, alumnus Thomas L. Bakaitus Jr. addresses the audience.



at both ceremonies.

He is a certified public accountant, partner and operating officer at Herbein + Company Inc., a CPA firm employing more than 180 people in eight offices across Pennsylvania.

"Class of 2017, make no mistake — today is about you," he told the graduates.

"As you stand on this threshold today, knowing the quality of education you have received, ... you are ready and equipped to begin your journey."

An avid golfer, Bakaitus referenced the movie *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, which depicts a down-and-out

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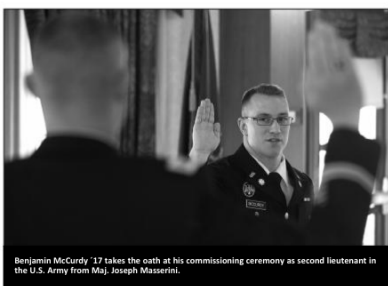
ROTC Cadet Becomes Officer

Continuing a proud Cal U tradition, ROTC cadet Benjamin McCurdy '17 was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army at a Department of Military Science's Reserve Officer Training Corps commissioning ceremony May 12 in the Kara Alumni House.

Before taking the oath of office and receiving the gold bars signifying his new rank, McCurdy and guests heard welcoming remarks by University President Geraldine M. Jones.

"I am confident that the strong leadership skills and exemplary conduct that have epitomized your time as a cadet will continue to flourish as you become an officer," the President told McCurdy. "We are impressed with all you have accomplished, thrilled to see you earn your commission, and prayerful that when your service is complete, you will find your way safely home."

"God bless you and your family." Guest speaker was Robert Prah '06, '10,



Benjamin McCurdy '17 takes the oath at his commissioning ceremony as second lieutenant in the U.S. Army from Maj. Joseph Masserlin.

a captain in the U.S. Army reserve and director of Military and Veterans Affairs at Cal U.

McCurdy had been a student worker in Prah's office for the past

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Women of Year "Touch Lives"

The President's Commission for the Status of Women selected four recipients of the spring 2017 Woman of the Year award for their work on behalf of women at Cal U and in the community.

Graduate student Cherie Sears, undergraduate student Jaclyn Boehnke, staff member Sheri Anderson and faculty member Dr. Melanie Blumberg were recognized at a reception May 3 in Manderino Library.

"The consistent theme among all these women is that they touch people's lives," said University President Geraldine M. Jones.

Sears, president of The Village Early Childhood Education Center in

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Forty years after taking her first college class, Judith Hough eagerly looks forward to accepting her bachelor's degree in social work at Cal U's undergraduate commencement ceremony.

Never Too Late

Forty years after taking her first college class, Judith Hough graduated on May 13 with a bachelor's degree in social work.

In between, Hough, who will turn 57 this month, had three kids and a career as a classroom assistant, helping young children with developmental disabilities. But she never gave up on finishing what she started.

"I got two years in," Hough said of her experience at Cal U from 1977 to 1979 as an early childhood education major and then as a biology major. "I did OK, but I skipped my last year of high school at Kinggold to enroll in college and just wasn't ready for the college experience."

The incomplete degree stuck with her as a bit of unfinished business.

"I came to campus to pick up my son for the weekend and decided to stop in at Academic Records just to see what it would take to come back. They said all of my previous credits would count."

So, in 2014, Hough picked up where she left off, doing well enough academically to receive a Presidential Scholar (minimum 3.25 grade-point average) at Honors Convocation in April. She also received a Ratledge Scholarship, which is awarded to non-traditional students with families.

"I think I'm a better student now," Hough said. "I know exactly what I want, and I don't want to waste any time."

She has been accepted into the Master of Social Work program at Cal U.

Hough has words of wisdom for today's college students, who, like herself all those years ago, may find the road to a diploma to be difficult. "Don't stop. Do anything you can to finish your degree. People will help you. I'll help you—I'll be your study buddy. But don't quit. Stay in school."

She has some advice for parents of college students, too. "I'd tell them that it's never too late to go back."

Graduates Look Ahead

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goller attempting to recover his game and his life with help from a mystical caddy who tells him to "find his swing."

"Inside each and every one of us has our own authentic swing, something that's ours and ours alone," Bakaitus said. "Class, it's time to play your game with your true swing."

After 30 years in the workforce, Harry Wietrzykowski II was forced to make a career change, but he regained his swing by earning a master's degree in legal studies, with a concentration in law and public policy. The Global Online student traveled from Green Cove Springs, Fla., to take part in Commencement.

"Cal U has been a blessing to me," he said. "The education, the professors—it's all been great. I'm proud to have had the chance to earn a degree here. I would recommend Cal U to anybody."

Jared Sofranko found his direction during an internship with the Popa & Associates accounting firm of Bethel Park, Pa. A University Honors Program student, he graduated *magna cum laude* and started as a full-time accountant with the firm this month.

As an undergraduate, Sofranko was the business director for WCAAL, where he also hosted several radio shows. He served on the Student Honors Advisory Board, held a position in student government, and was a student ambassador with the Cal U Welcome Center.

He'll begin working toward his Certified Public Accountant credentials this fall.

"I think I've made the most of things here at Cal U, and it's definitely been a lot of fun," Sofranko said. "I've had so many experiences that I otherwise would not have had."

Before undergraduates received their diplomas, senior class envoy Chelsea



Maya Jefferson celebrates earning her bachelor's degree in business administration and her birthday following Cal U's undergraduate ceremony.

Keenan presented President Jones with a check for more than \$14,000 contributed by graduating seniors and their families.

With this gift, more than \$184,000 has been raised for an endowed scholarship since the first senior class donation was delivered in 2010.

President Jones acknowledged Ketske Emma Cox, Leah Marie Seader and Juliana Marie Lepek for earning bachelor's degrees while attending a perfect 4.0 grade-point average.

"Please recognize that your education is not done," she told the Class of 2017. "I have always believed in the power of lifelong learning to enrich our lives."

"May you find happiness and satisfaction in the days and years ahead."

Woman of the Year Honorees "Touch Lives"

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California, Pa., graduated May 12 with her master's degree in early childhood education. She also earned her bachelor's degree from Cal U in 1981.

"Cherie went back to Cal U to get this graduate degree in order to better serve The Village and everything the center is trying to accomplish in order to better the lives of others," Ashley Roth, director at The Village, wrote in her nomination letter.

The Village supports single parents enrolled full-time in school by providing scholarships for free child care while they are in class. Many of the recipients are women enrolled at Cal U. In addition, many Cal U students work at the center, earning real-world experience in the early childhood education field.

Sears supports the Cal. Arthur L. Bakeswell Veterans Scholarship at Cal U, which is named for her father. She also is active in the community with the Rotary Club of California and will serve as district governor for Rotary International in 2018-2019.

Boehne graduated May 13 with a degree in social work and has been accepted into the Master of Social Work program at Cal U. As a work-study student in the Women's Studies Office, she helped to plan events such as Audrey-Beth Fitch Women's Studies Conference, the Free the Girls bar-collection campaign to raise money to rescue women from sex trafficking, and performances of *The Vagina Monologues*.

"I am so proud of the confident, intelligent, mature woman she has become," said Dr. Marta McClintock-Comeaux, director of women's studies and chair of the President's Commission.

Anderson, a secretary in the Department of Psychology, was honored for her tireless work behind the scenes in her nearly 30-year career at Cal U.

"She is a role model to her family, friends, staff,



Enjoying a moment at the May 3 Woman of the Year reception with President Geraldine M. Jones are (from left) Cherie Sears, graduate student recipient; Dr. Melanie Blumberg, faculty recipient and professor in the Department of History, Politics and Society; Jacyln Boehne, undergraduate student recipient; and Sheri Anderson, staff recipient in the Psychology Department.

faculty and students," wrote psychology instructor G. David Sivak in his nomination letter.

"The student workers admire and respect her. Her caring about others is to be celebrated as she deals with the pressure and deadlines in the office and carries off her duties with style and grace."

Blumberg, a professor in the Department of History, Politics and Society, was chosen for encouraging women to see themselves as "active participants in the political arena," wrote Christine Kindl, associate vice president

for communications and public relations.

Through her work for the American Democracy Project at Cal U, Blumberg has empowered women to seek life-changing experiences. In 2016, for example, two female students attended the national political conventions.

"As a colleague, she is a stalwart support of equal opportunity for all. And through her own political engagement, she makes it plain that women can, and do, make a difference in our society."

BotsIQ Students Prepare for Careers

Pennsylvania's manufacturing industry is ripe for an influx of new workers. And the 1,100 students who came to Cal U for the 12th annual Southwestern Pennsylvania BotsIQ Finals may represent the future of that field.

More than 70 robotics teams from area high schools and career centers filled the Convocation Center April 28-29 for the gladiator-style competition. At the opening ceremony, speakers reminded the students of opportunities ahead, whether they enter the workforce directly or earn a career-focused college degree.

Eileen Cipriani, deputy secretary of the state Department of Labor and Industry, noted that 55 percent of manufacturing jobs in Pennsylvania are held by people age 45 or older.

"There are many industries right here in Pennsylvania that are looking for talented, committed and skilled young people to fill these jobs," she said.

University President Geraldine M. Jones pointed the teens toward another path.

"For many years Cal U has had a special mission in science and technology," she told them. "Our hands-on academic programs prepare students for careers in a wide-variety of STEM-related fields."

This is the fifth consecutive year that Cal U has hosted the BotsIQ competition. Students spend months designing and building the 15-pound robots before sending them into battle.

Behind the scenes in the



For the fifth consecutive year Pennsylvania high schools and career centers brought their custom-built robots to the Convocation Center for gladiator-style competition at the Southwestern Pennsylvania BotsIQ Finals.

Convocation Center, students repaired damaged 'bots and met with teams of judges who evaluate their engineering, documentation and presentation skills.

Nick Kingslande, a senior at Belle Vernon Area High School, focused on the required documentation, but during bouts he was in the ring helping driver Jonas Cramer guide their creation, called Harambos.

"You can't learn any of this from a classroom," said Kingslande, who wants to be a robotics engineer. "This has taught me so much."

Sophomore Dreyvan Shaffer, a robot

designer and driver from Punxsutawney Area High School, said being involved in BotsIQ has boosted her confidence. Her team received the Spirit Award for cheering on their robot, Galacto.

"It's nerve-racking when you're out there (driving the robot), but the excitement pushes that out of the way and it's a great time," she said. "I really enjoy the outcome after all the time we've spent in the shop preparing."

Many Cal U alumni return to campus for the event, including Greg Schutz '14, a third-year technology education teacher at Ringgold High

School. He first volunteered with BotsIQ when he was a Cal U student.

"This gives our students ... so much to work toward," he said, noting that the teens study engineering principles and learn to work with a variety of materials. "Also, you have to tip your hat to the students for reaching out to the sponsors. Getting a company such as EQT to write a check for sponsorship is pretty cool. They learn to work with robots and also with people."

One of Schutz's students, freshman Ian Drolli, created many of his team's technical drawings, including a 3-D view showing all robot Stingray's components.

"I am just helping out wherever I'm needed," he said. "I'm just watching, learning and hoping nothing messes up." Hempfield Area High School's ELI team won the Grand Champion award for a third consecutive year; it recognizes the team with the best overall performance in competition, documentation and team interviews.

Admiral Peary AVIS' Crusader team was the definitive winner in the battles, winning the Championship Bout. Mark Vaughn, chairman of the National Tooling & Machinery Association, noted that the NTMA's Pittsburgh Chapter brought BotsIQ to the region in 2005, when just six high school teams competed.

"Our (1,300 member companies are not looking for employees," he told the students. "They're looking for talent and creativity. They're looking for you."



Dr. Michael Hummel (center) receives his Distinguished Member of the Brigade certificate from Col. Douglas G. Vincent (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Victor A. Belleterero.

Rangers Honor Hummel

Dr. Michael Hummel, chair of the Department of Criminal Justice, has been named a Distinguished Member of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade of the National Rangers Association.

The brigade annually honors a class of distinguished members, recognizing their exemplary service and contributions to enhancing Ranger training.

The award recognizes the inductees' contributions to both the special operations training community — specifically the U.S. Army Ranger School — and the U.S. Army.

A retired military officer of 23 years, Hummel served in combat with the elite Army Ranger unit and served as a U.S. Army Ranger School instructor. A decorated combat veteran, he also served in combat with the 101st Airborne Division.

Hummel's recognition as a homelander

and international security expert, and his current service as a police officer, also were considered in the assessment for this honor.

In his acceptance remarks to an audience of individuals he called "Hall of Famers in American service," Hummel said, "I am absolutely humbled and honored to be among those that have been, some giving all, to keep American citizens safe."

Ranger training started at Fort

Benning, Ga., in September 1950, during the Korean War, with the formation and training of 17 Airborne Ranger companies by the Ranger Training Command.

A decade ago, the National Ranger Association was founded, in part, to recognize the contributions of the unit's most renowned and influential members. Inductees are nominated by active-duty members of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade.

Secretary: Students Can Help Seniors

By 2020, one in four Pennsylvanians will be age 50 or older, and the state Secretary of Aging says that college students who now are studying social work and gerontology must be a voice of support for that older generation.

Teresa Osborne, who has held the secretary's position since May 2015, delivered the keynote address via Skype at "Aging: We Must Get Ready!"

The April 13 conference presented by Cal U's departments of Social Work and Gerontology focused on preparing for an aging population.

Osborne, who was planning to attend the conference before being called to a Senate hearing in Berks County, discussed the status of older adults in Pennsylvania and across the country. She also described new statewide initiatives to address this demographic group.

"Whether you're a student, a legislator, a practitioner, caregiver or advocate, how will you respond to the reality that our seniors of today want to stay at home and age in place?" she asked.

"Just talk to an older person, which is something we get to do every day. I'm sure they will tell you they've spent their whole life making decisions ... and don't want to suddenly give up that responsibility because they're older."

Osborne spoke about the importance of funding to provide seniors with necessities such as retrofitted homes, transportation, home health care and technology options.

She pointed out that the state lottery makes up 78 percent of senior funding in the commonwealth, and has raised \$25 billion since 1972.

Osborne hopes the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's State Plan on Aging for 2016-2020, can open up more funding avenues and enhance senior living.

"We need to provide them with the necessities that will help them remain engaged ... and thrive throughout their older years," Osborne said. "As social workers and gerontologists, it's our shared belief that every aging person deserves a happy and healthy life, and to age with dignity and respect."

The secretary told conference attendees that the state government appreciated forums such as the one Cal U hosted.

"You're leading us forward," she said. "Our seniors are dependent on you to provide the voices of tomorrow."

Jacob Steinhouse '15, a service coordinator for the past two years with Presbyterian Senior Care, said he was glad to return to his alma mater for the conference.

Secretary Osborne discussed things that "I have always enjoyed being with older adults. It's just something in my nature, and my degree really fit my personality."

Student Collaboration Tunes Up Device

The foam roller, a simple athletic rehabilitation device, is only effective if it's used properly. The enhanced roller developed by a team of Cal U students may help athletes get the most out of their rehab or exercise session — and enjoy a little music along the way.

Mario Gencarelli, who earned his Master of Science in Athletic Training last month, collaborated with several students from the Department of Applied Engineering and Technology to add Bluetooth-capable speakers to a foam-covered cylinder that athletes can use to massage and strengthen their muscles.

Athletes frequently use foam rollers for “self myofascial release,” or stretching the muscles before and after activity. The device also is used in rehabilitation.

Gencarelli's research shows that incorporating music therapy into the rehab setting makes it more likely that an athlete will use the foam roller properly, and ultimately benefit more from the treatments.

“Any setting where there are athletes, there's some form of foam rolling being done,” Gencarelli said, “but often athletes do not use the rollers on each muscle for the recommended time.”

Music could serve as a cue, he thought, so athletes would know how long to use the device.

Following advice from Dr. Shelly DiCesaro, director of Cal U's graduate athletic training program, Gencarelli took his practical but complex idea to Dr. Joe Schickel, chair of the Applied Engineering and Technology Department.



Mario Gencarelli shows the Bluetooth-capable speakers that he and several students from the Department of Applied Engineering and Technology have added to a foam-covered cylinder that athletes can use to massage their muscles.

“After meeting Mario, I thought it would be a good opportunity to connect some of our innovative students with a real-world project,” Schickel said.

“This was a really good way to connect (applied engineering students with) someone who knew what he wanted to achieve but didn't necessarily have the background or means to do it.”

With additional coordination from AET faculty member Dr. Brenton Wilburn, Gencarelli began meeting with applied engineering students Kody Davis, Zachary Knight, Jeff Sokira and Kiki Yawsarpong.

After extensive research, measuring, designing and coding, the group used a 3D printer to create a model. They designed circuits, mounted speakers and electronics in the roller, and activated the wireless connection.

The device connects to a smartphone or mp3 device for a specific period of time. The music serves as a cue, letting athletes know how long to keep rolling. It's just a prototype, Sokira says; he, Davis, Yawsarpong and Knight have more work to do.

“I found it very rewarding, especially when you're up until 3 in the morning but

you finally have a working product,” Sokira says. “We seemed to be a cohesive team.”

Gencarelli appreciated the undergraduates' expertise.

“All I had was the idea, the goal and the reason why I was researching this. These guys all have workloads of their own, but they put in endless hours to build something that's the first of its kind. They're really sharp.”

Gencarelli sees a future for the invention. He has secured a one-year provisional patent license and is working on promotional strategies with Jeffrey Giovanucci, of the Department of Health Science.

He expects to introduce the device to audiences on YouTube and KickStarter, as well as hospitals, fitness centers and the National Athletic Trainers Association's annual symposium.

“I'd like to create our own brand and be on (television's) *Shark Tank* next season,” he says. “This is a good innovation for any therapeutic setting.”

The undergraduate group that brought the invention to life “will always be a part of my team,” he adds.

DiCesaro says she's excited about the impact of Gencarelli's project on athletic training, and she's thrilled to showcase the diverse talents of Cal U students.

“This is a perfect example of how our students are capable of when we have interdepartmental collaboration,” DiCesaro says. “The end product turned out great, and I look forward to seeing where Mario will take this.”

Brick by Brick

Vulcan football players (from left) Luke Hrapchack, Devonte Suber and Tristan Williams remove old bricks from the patio at the California Area Public Library during The Big Event on April 29. Nearly 300 student volunteers from various clubs and organizations worked at more than 30 community locations as part of the annual student-led service project. Student government and the University's Center for Volunteer Programs and Service Learning have been teaming up since 2007 to encourage student volunteers to lend a helping hand to neighbors and organizations in and around California Borough.



GRANTS AWARDED

The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research reports that:

- Dr. Susan Ryan, of the Department of Earth Sciences, has been awarded a \$12,656 continuation grant for the Gettysburg Visitors' Study. This project is possible through an ongoing research relationship between the Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Cal U Tourism Research Center.
- Dr. Kimberly Vanderloan, of the Department of English, has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the State System's Faculty Professional Development Council for her project, “Willa Cather's Iron City Music Concert at Carnegie Music Hall with the Washington (PA) Symphony Orchestra in conjunction with the 16th International Willa Cather Seminar.”
- Laura Giachetti, of the Department of Trio Academic Development Services, has been awarded a \$11,835 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the participation of Cal U's Upward Bound programs in the Summer Food Service Program.

ROTC Cadet Commissioned as Officer

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three-and-a-half years.

“Do not forget your experiences, because you will grow from them. They will make you a better person and a better leader,” Prah said.

“You will always go back to past experiences, whether positive or negative, and those experiences will help to shape decisions and the way you handle future tasks.”

Prah encouraged the new second lieutenant to take care of his soldiers and himself, to set goals, and to be accountable.

“You are humble, physically fit and dedicated to getting things done,” Prah said. “I am very proud of you. This is your and your family's day.”

McCurdy earned his bachelor's degree in sport management and received a National Guard commission as a transportation officer. His first duty will be to serve as a platoon leader in the 1067th Transportation Company at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa.

After family members pinned the gold bars to his uniform, McCurdy followed the Army tradition of giving a silver dollar to an officer, retired Sgt. Dallas Kirk, in exchange for his first salute.

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