



Students continue to 'bring home the bacon'

By Carlee Buckner

Each year, a select few of the University of Arkansas' top students are chosen for prestigious campus-wide and nationally competitive academic awards. The recipients are considered the best of the best, and only those who receive them know exactly how much work is involved in preparing to compete for them.

But AECT students and faculty aren't ones to shy away from hard work.

In fact, several students in the AECT Department have recently received these high honors – so many, in fact, that the department is becoming known for producing prestigious award winners year after year.

Assistant Professor Jill Rucker is one faculty member who works closely with students to help prepare them for the application process of these highly competitive awards. Her passion lies in investing in others.

"That's one of the greatest joys in my career, and quite frankly in my life," Rucker said.

Factors that weigh heavily in the selection process for these awards include a high grade point average, involvement with leadership opportunities, leadership involvement and passion.

Rucker said the application processes, some of which include rounds of interviews, can be tedious for the students, and the deadlines can be tight.

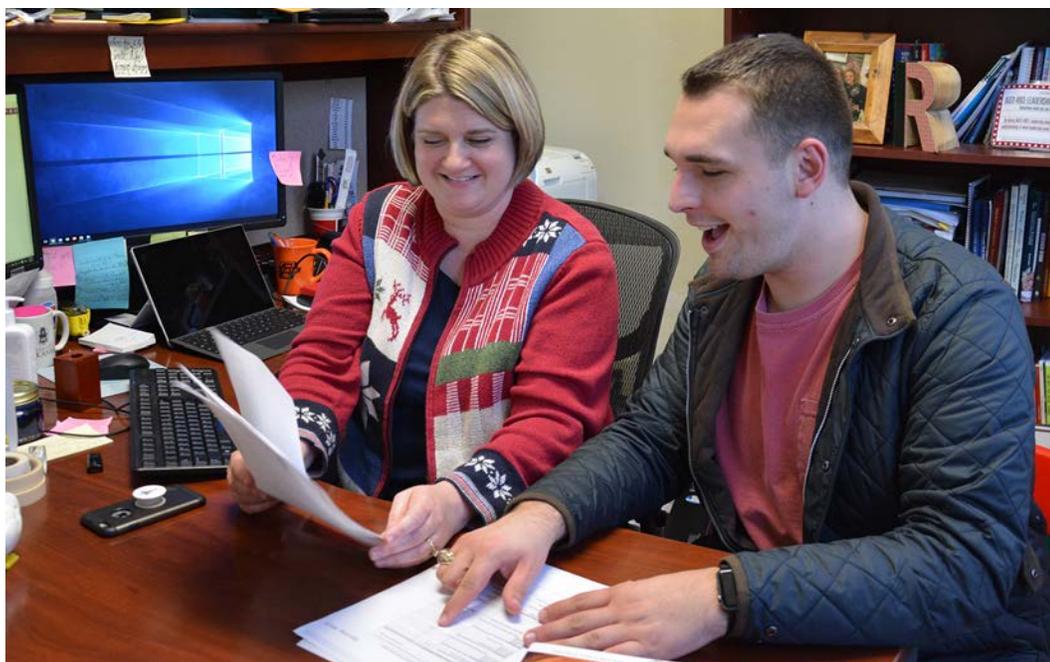
"They have to have a passion for working through the process," Rucker explained.

Merging students' education with their passions aligns them for success, said Rucker.

Sam Harris, a senior with an Ag Leadership minor, was selected as a Harry S. Truman Scholarship award recipient this year. Rucker and Harris worked closely to meet deadlines, and the process began quite early. The Truman Scholar application process consists of many different facets, including letters of recommendation, an interview and having a well-rounded application, he said.

"Dr. Rucker helped with interview prep and the formation of my application which includes editing, brainstorming and creating a narrative about myself and my leadership abilities throughout the application," Harris said.

The Truman Award, a national award presented to only 62



Assistant Professor Jill Rucker works with senior Sam Harris as they review and edit an award application. Rucker has advised numerous students who have applied for prestigious awards.

students nationally in 2017 supports student leaders who are destined to become leaders in public service. One of last year's recipients was ag communications student Victoria Maloch, who also won a 2018 Marshall Scholarship to Oxford University. Rucker mentored Maloch.

When AECT students receive recognition, Harris said, it "sends a message that our students are capable and actively engaged in academia and public service."

Sending a message that AECT students are among the best on the campus and in the country is important to Harris, who appreciates how the AECT Department supports its students.

"It's clear that our students are prepared and capable because of the strong faculty commitment that our department has to ensuring student success," he said.

Last year, the AECT Department had four recipients of the University of Arkansas Seniors of Significance award. This award recognizes the top one percent of all University of Arkansas graduating seniors. Three-fourths of the students recognized this year from the Bumpers College belonged to the AECT Department.

The student award preparation process begins as early as a student's freshman year. Faculty members work closely to help guide students to meaningful opportunities that will help set them apart from their competitors' applications.

AECT students promote National Teach Ag Day

By Carlee Buckner

The AECT Department's involvement this fall in National Teach Day and its participation in the national Teach Ag campaign was noticed not only throughout Arkansas, but also nationwide.

Hailey Gates, an agricultural education graduate student who advises the department's Collegiate FFA Alumni Club, said the overall purpose of National Teach Ag Day is to encourage agricultural education and "recognize the important role that agriculture teachers play in our schools and communities."

"National Teach Ag Day has become this one day where we push to advocate for our profession," Gates said.

She said in years past, the National Association of Agricultural Educators has held watch parties and webinars broadcast all day around the country. This year, NAAE encouraged students at colleges that have agricultural education degree paths to participate in a collegiate video competition.

Gates said the video needed to be 30 seconds long, promoting their school and program. It was required to include a tag line and incorporate the Teach Ag logo.

AECT students with concentrations in Agricultural Education worked together to create a creative promotional video for the competition. Gates said the video had just shy of one thousand views on YouTube. Students worked with the department's Agricultural Communications Experiential Learning Lab to help shoot and edit the video.

Besides for the video, AECT students promoted Teach Ag Day as a "new, immersive experience" for prospective students seeking a degree on The Hill.

"Initially we wanted our National Teach Ag Day experience to be a recruitment tool, but we also wanted to target those who might be interested in ag education," Gates said.

High school students interested in teaching agriculture were invited to visit campus that day. They sat in two agricultural education classes, engaged with professors and attended a faculty question and answer session. Gates said faculty answered prospective students' questions about scholarships and what student teaching is like.

"We built some strong bonds with these students, and ultimately we hope that will translate into increased enrollment in the

future," Gates said.

National Teach Day is an initiative through the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

Du Pont Pioneer, CHS Foundation, Growth Energy and BASF all sponsored this special event project of the National FFA Foundation.



New Graduate Student SPOTLIGHT

Kylie Ehlers

Hometown: Anderson, Missouri

Undergraduate: Crowder College, Associate's Degree in Pre-Veterinary Medicine & University of Arkansas,, Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and Ag Comm

Ehlers is working closely with Professor Jefferson Miller. Her master's thesis research will analyze blogging in agriculture and "why agriculture should be blogging."

"It's about the overall efficacy of blogging as a whole – communicating from producers to consumers or from agriculturalists to the rest of the world," Ehlers explained.

She credits her decision to look at a master's program in the AECT Department to taking one of Miller's classes.

"I became interested in agricultural communications as a whole after taking his Communicating Agriculture to the Public class. It worked out really well," Ehlers said.

Another thing she enjoys about the AECT department is the invaluable networking opportunities. She believes getting to know other graduate students will help her be successful. Ehlers has found she is able to seek out the wisdom of second-year graduate students who have already gone through their initial year. Connecting with faculty members and building relationships with them also has helped give her confidence and reassurance.

"The faculty here are all so supportive and gung-ho on students being successful with their academic and professional career. That has been the biggest thing for me, to find a niche and to find support. I have been able to find that here," Ehlers said.

Ehlers' future career plan is teach in the communications field. She hopes to keep herself diverse so she is able to teach a multitude of classes and utilize her practical skills in the classroom.

All AECT concentrations see enrollment increases

By Carlee Buckner

The AECT Department prides itself in reflecting a family like atmosphere. There is something for everyone, whether students already call Arkansas home or if they're from elsewhere, they find themselves fitting in easily. And the family continues to grow.

This fall, the department saw yet another increase in enrollment of both new freshmen and transfer students.

AECT instructor Casandra Cox plays an essential role in departmental recruiting. She actively coordinates recruitment efforts for the department. This consists of engagement with other faculty members, collecting materials and getting student REPS (Representing Excellence, Pride and Service) members involved in recruiting. Incorporating the REPS members into the recruitment process aides in the student presence with the faculty members.

This year's enrollment increase is split across all four concentrations: agricultural education, agricultural communications, agricultural leadership and agricultural systems technology management, Cox said.

"When students come to campus, they are able to see what we have to offer. It is impressive when they come into a conference room, and they sit down, and you have the department head, the recruiting coordinator, who also serves as an instructor, and at least two to four additional faculty members. It makes a big impact," Cox said.

Grace Vehige is a freshman from Bonnots Mill, Missouri, studying agricultural communications. She said she had a positive recruiting experience and placed great importance on finding a place where she could "thrive not only academically but also professionally" as a college student.

Vehige's first visit to campus was during the summer, with "little student presence," but she fell in love with the campus. She returned for an official visit in the spring and met with Cox and Professor Jefferson Miller.

"To me, first impressions are very important. After meeting with Mrs. Cox and Dr. Miller, I knew that they would help me accomplish my goals in life and make my time at the U of A something I could be proud of," Vehige said.

According to the University of Arkansas Office of Institutional Research, growth in the department has consistently seen a steady climb. In 2013, there were 103 active, enrolled undergraduate students seeking a degree in one of the four concentrations. Currently, 115 students are furthering their education with the AECT Department.

In addition to the undergraduate growth, the AECT graduate student enrollment has also grown to a new high. Forty-three students are currently pursuing a master's degree in Agricultural and Extension Education.



Brooke Clanton and Sam Harris were recognized at the Seniors of Significance ceremony. The award, sponsored by the Arkansas Alumni Association, recognizes academic achievements, leadership skills and leadership in public service.

Additional AECT Accomplishments

Students

Hailey Gates

AAAE Outstanding Research Poster Presentation

Kylie Ehlers & Isabel Whitehead

Graduate Student Congress

Olivia Caillouet

Arkansas Flower and Garden Scholarship

Brandon Moore

Arkansas Agricultural Consultants Association Scholarship

Victoria Maloch

2018 Marshall Scholar

Sam Harris & Brooke Clanton

2018 Seniors of Significance

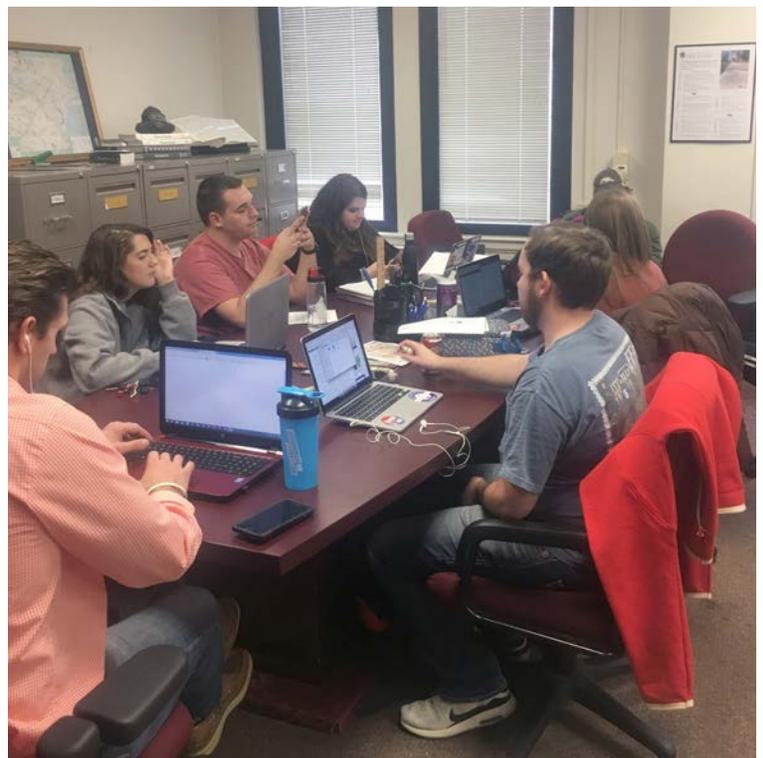
Faculty

Dr. Kate Shoulders

U of A Teaching Academy Fellow & NACTA National Educator Award

Dr. Leslie Edgar & Dr. George Wardlow

Food Systems Leadership Institute



The AECT student table – which has long been a place for students to gather, socialize and study together – grows more crowded each semester and continues to be a part of the department's culture. (From bottom left) Howie Stettmeier, Hannah Johnson, Sam Harris, Brooke Taylor, Colton Teekel, Kenley Bramall, and Foster Thompson study together in the AECT office.

ACT students rise to the top in UA tradition

By Kylee Sigmon

Fall at the University of Arkansas brings shorter days, crisper air and brighter leaves. As students prepare for midterms, the university is preparing for one of the most steadfast and visible traditions on campus: homecoming. The week-long festivities begin with philanthropic events and alumni celebrations, but the commemoration is concluded with the greatest tradition: crowning of the homecoming king and queen.

The honor of being named homecoming king or queen is coveted by many students, but among the nearly 23,000 undergraduates at the University of Arkansas, only a select few are nominated, and even fewer make the initial top 20 cut.

This year, three students were nominated by Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT). Two of the three students, Brooke Taylor and Sam Harris, made the top 20 selection and then advanced to top 12.

Taylor is a senior in agricultural business with a pre-law concentration and minors in agricultural communications, agricultural leadership, and political science. She is from King City, California. Harris is also a senior in agricultural business with a pre-law concentration and a minor in agricultural leadership. He is from Greenbrier, Arkansas.

After being nominated by an RSO, candidates submit a detailed resume online. Nominees are asked to answer three questions regarding their commitment and passion for the university. A panel of students, faculty and alumni select the top 20 females and top 20 males based on the application. Then, personalized interviews are conducted to select the top 12. Another round of interviews results in selection of the court, which consists of the top seven males and females.

Taylor described the interviews as being customized for each candidate.

"It's very individualized," Taylor said. "For instance, in mine they asked, 'how did your experience in D.C. change your view on politics?'"

ACT adviser Jill Rucker, said not only are Harris and Taylor both respected by their peers, staff and faculty, but they showcase a plethora of notable traits.

"Brooke and Sam are students who showcase the leadership trifecta: strong academics; leadership to the department, college, and university; and involvement in service activities to give back to the community," Rucker said.

Harris and Taylor both said they were extremely grateful to represent ACT.

"I think it was an honor out of all the awesome students that we have in our department to be selected and have that vote of confidence from the faculty and students that Brooke and I are good representatives of the department," Harris said.

Taylor said their participation in homecoming gives great exposure to ACT and everything the club is doing.

"I'm glad that we could be a part of that," Taylor said.

This isn't the first time the club has had successful candidates

in the homecoming court selection process. ACT nominated the homecoming queen in 2013 and nominated a member of the court in 2016. Harris said it's remarkable how well the relatively small club has done.

"I think it's pretty phenomenal that our organization, probably one of the smallest out of the people who made nominations, has had such good representation and success," Harris said.

There were many highlights over the lengthy application and interview process. From meeting the candidates, to a reception at the chancellor's house, along with a newfound appreciation of the university, the experience will forever be cherished, Taylor said.

"Let me say we have amazing students here. Being able to meet those people and hear about their experiences was a definite highlight," Taylor said.

Harris enjoyed being able to slow down and think about what time at the university has meant to him.

"Being able to do that truly gave me a better appreciation and understanding of what the university means and what it's done for me," Harris said.

Taylor said the university has gained a new meaning over the past three years and has truly become her home. Because of the endless opportunities and the people she has met, she no longer considers California home base.

"Opportunities, like interning in D.C. – if I were still in California, I don't think I would've been able to

do that," Taylor said.

Harris' time at the university has provided him with clarification about his passions and solidified his career goals. He said his time in Fayetteville has allowed him to understand how he can cultivate skills to make a difference in the world.

"I already knew that I had an interest in food security and ag development," Harris said. "So being here, immersed in curriculum around that, solidified what my career goals and personal goals are."

Rucker said both Harris' and Taylor's involvement on campus has helped sculpt skills that are needed for the workforce.

"Brooke and Sam have worked to build a solid personal leadership foundation that they will continue to build upon in their future careers," Rucker said.

After graduating in the spring, Harris and Taylor have similar plans.

Taylor said she plans to attend University of Arkansas Law School to pursue her doctorate of law. Then, ideally, she will obtain her masters of law in agriculture. Her end goal is to work in Washington D.C.

"I really want to go to D.C. and be a legislative assistant for someone in congress," Taylor said, "specifically focusing on agricultural issues, because that's something I'm crazy passionate about."

Harris' immediate plans are to go to D.C. and complete the Truman Summer Institute. After, he plans on going to graduate school and then to law school and focusing on agricultural policy. His end goal is also to work in a policy oriented job in D.C.



AECT homecoming king and queen candidates Sam Harris and Brooke Taylor were among the top 12 after the homecoming interview process this fall.

Shoulders recognized as teaching innovator

By Carlee Buckner

Kate Shoulders, associate professor of agricultural education in the AECT Department, has been featured as a “Teaching Innovator” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Shoulder’s innovative use of video-recorded feedback in her online research methods course was one of the main reasons she was nominated by her peers on campus to receive this recognition. Her nomination for this new innovation is one of 10 nationwide.

Shoulders’ innovative technique, which involves using video-recorded feedback to evaluate students’ Prezi presentations on research approaches, saves time for her students, while they still feel like they are getting face-to-face feedback.

“I talk through what I am thinking about during their presentation,” Shoulders said. “They get to witness the thought process of a researcher as I explain my thought process related to their project.”

Shoulders, who has been using the video-recorded feedback for three years, said this style of reviewing work in the form of video works very well. The *Chronicle* estimated that she has posted 450 videos in one semester.

Graduate student Hailey Gates was a student in one of Shoulders’ research methods course. She said the course covers a lot of information and directs students on how to conduct research. Students in the course learn about dozens of research approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, and Shoulders must provide feedback on students’ work to ensure they understand all those approaches.

“Many times the course itself seems overwhelming,” Gates said. “As you progress through the material, a light bulb comes on and you realize that it all comes together and makes sense.”

The way Shoulders’ feedback is presented to students is “what really makes the approach so innovative,” Gates said. Students are able to listen to Shoulders ask questions about students’ Prezi presentations and offer praise and criticism of student’s ideas without having to physically mark up hard copies of students’ work.

“When it comes to research, it’s not something you do once and you’re done,” Gates said. “It’s an evolving process and she introduces you to that process in innovative ways.”

Gates said before taking Shoulders’ course, she thought she knew what she wanted to do her graduate research on. But after taking the course, she was able to further refine what she really wanted her research to be about. This set her up on a path to analyze research and know how to properly conduct this process.

“Because of her class I knew how to structure questions and what process I needed to go through,” Gates said.



Quetta Wardlow (left), Kate Shoulders (center) and George Wardlow (right) enjoy a moment together at the Alumni Association Awards Banquet.

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REPS

Representing, Excellence, Pride & Service

AECT REPS organize events throughout the semester for high school students to become familiar with AECT’s programs. If you are interested in setting up a tour or have an event you want one of our REPS to attend, contact us today!

Phone: (479) 575-2035 | Email: ccrumle@uark.



Note from the department head

Editor's Note: In lieu of the department head's regular column, this semester's *Ag Wire* is highlighting Department Head George Wardlow's and Professor Leslie Edgar's national recognition as graduates of a prestigious leadership

training program. The following news release was written by Bumpers College Communications Director Robby Edwards.

Wardlow, Edgar complete leadership program

Leslie Edgar and George Wardlow recently completed the two-year-long Food Systems Leadership Institute program.

The institute is an executive leadership development program for academia, industry and government, and enhances personal and professional development by emphasizing leadership competencies, skills for organizational change, and a broad, interdisciplinary perspective of food systems.

Edgar is assistant dean for student programs and professor of agricultural communications. Wardlow is professor and head of the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology.

They completed the 2015-17 cohort and were two of 28 Fellows of the program recognized at the annual meeting of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities in Washington, D.C.

"I know what a valuable experience this is, and congratulations to both of them," said Bumpers College Interim Dean Lona Robertson, who was a Fellow of the 2015 FSLI class. "They spent time with leaders on a local and national level, and developed and refined skills that will benefit the college and serve them for years to come."

The two-year program prepares scholars for upper-level leadership roles in food system programs. It is designed for experienced leaders in academia, government and industry. Through a curriculum including three executive style residential sessions,

individual coaching, mentoring and personal projects, the institute seeks to enhance personal leadership ability, develop skills and knowledge for organizational change, and broaden perspectives on integrated food systems.

Fellows report the experience has had a significant impact on their leadership abilities. Leadership growth can be measured in many different ways, and more than a third of the group has experienced promotions, selection to lead high-profile initiatives, election to university-wide leadership posts and other recognitions.

FSLI is a program of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. It was created with



Leslie Edgar (left) and George Wardlow (right) display their awards after completing the two-year Food Systems Leadership Institute program. Bumpers Interim Dean Lona Robertson (center) is an FSLI Fellow.

financial support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and is operated in a partnership between North Carolina State University, Ohio State University and California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

In addition to Edgar and Wardlow, Wayne Mackey, professor and head of the Department of Horticulture, is participating in the 2016-18 program.

Mark your calendars! 2018 Important Dates:

February 5 - Scholarship Deadline

April 6-7 - AECT Lawnmower Tune Up

April 23-25 - Arkansas FFA Convention

March 10-11 - FFA Livestock Show Fundraiser

March 31 - Razorback Leadership Academy

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