

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

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Oklahoma State University's graduate and undergraduate students excel on a daily basis. This biannual newsletter is dedicated to highlighting those students in the College of Arts and Sciences who have demonstrated success in academics and extracurricular activities. Four students from the zoology and botany departments are featured, each with his or her achievement. Each semester's newsletter will feature students from different departments in the College of Arts and Sciences.

## ZOOLOGY STUDENT IS SCHOLARSHIP'S FIRST RECIPIENT

In April, the Oklahoma State University zoology department awarded the Dr. G. Michael Steelman Endowed Scholarship to John P. "Jack" Laurent. Laurent is a senior from Oklahoma City, who is majoring in physiology with a minor in zoology and a pre-med focus. He will graduate with honors from the Honors College in May.

The Dr. G. Michael Steelman Endowed Scholarship is open to juniors and seniors majoring in zoology or physiology with a 3.5 grade point average, according to the zoology department. Its donor, Dr. Steelman, graduated from OSU in 1969 with a degree in zoology and is continuing his medical career in Edmond. His honors include past president of the American Society of Bariatric Physicians and Bariatrician of the Year twice, according to the zoology department. Laurent said he is personally appreciative and honored to receive this prestigious scholarship.

"The faculty and staff in the OSU department of zoology have left an indelible mark on me as a student, a scientist and as a person," Laurent said. "My professors cannot be lauded enough for their patience with students, their knowledge of science and their passion for educating. The diversity of courses offered, as well as the faculty's dedication to students and teaching, makes Oklahoma State University's department of zoology an ideal environment in which to learn and grow."

Laurent has dedicated himself to

excelling in academics with a 4.0 grade point average and excelling in research. He recently completed research at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation working with Swapan Nath, Ph.D., in the Arthritis and Immunology Research Program. There Laurent researched finding a genetic connection between two autoimmune diseases, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Type 1 Diabetes.

When Laurent is not excelling in academics or research, he is helping other OSU students. He has worked as a tutor in chemistry, zoology and biology classes and has served as a Zoology Ambassador since last fall. As an ambassador, Laurent promotes the zoology department to incoming and prospective freshmen, as well as current OSU students.

Laurent has brought great recognition to OSU and the Zoology department through attending an Advanced Honors Program in Cambridge and Oxford, England, in summer 2009, and volunteering at the Stillwater Community Health Center. He also is a member of Phi Kappa Phi honor society and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars.

Laurent is applying to attend medical school after graduation with hopes of becoming an allopathy or osteopathic physician. However, to have his life positively impact his community and to better the lives of those around him stands to be his ultimate goal.



**Zoology senior, Jack Laurent, conducts research in an OSU lab.**

For more information on scholarships or the zoology department, visit the departmental office in 430 Life Sciences West or e-mail Dr. Loren M. Smith, department head and zoology professor, at [loren.smith@okstate.edu](mailto:loren.smith@okstate.edu).

Student Spotlight is published biannually through the College of Arts and Sciences Student Council for OSU alumni, faculty, staff and students. Address all comments to Dr. Amy Martindale at [amy.martindale@okstate.edu](mailto:amy.martindale@okstate.edu).

## BOTANY STUDENT EXCELS SCHOLASTICALLY

The botany department honored one of its students with a \$200 scholarship in the spring. Lydia Meador is a triple major in botany, microbiology/molecular genetics and biochemistry/molecular biology from Broken Arrow.



**Botany student, Lydia Meador, presents research during a poster presentation at OSU.**

"I think scholarships are a great way to reward students for succeeding in and out of the classroom," Meador said. "The Botany Scholarship means a lot to me because the faculty members I work with on a daily basis decided I was deserving of it, other scholarships don't offer that kind of a compliment."

Meador has been heavily involved in OSU's botany department. Since 2008, Meador has worked with her mentor, Dr. Janette Steets, on various research projects. In 2008, Meador was named a Wentz Research Scholar, where she worked with Steets on plant DNA extractions and sequences. This year, Meador was named a Niblack Research Scholar, where she works with Steets and an OSU graduate student on the "interactive effects of herbivory and drought stress for *Arabidopsis lyrata* resistance traits."

Meador has brought great recognition to the OSU botany department through presenting posters at various symposiums and conducting research at North Carolina State University during summer 2009. She will also bring great recognition to her family because she will become the first in her immediate family to graduate from college.

While excelling in academics and research, Meador makes time to participate in campus activities. She is a member of Golden Key International Honor Society, which is literacy-based honor society that accepts the top 15 percent of juniors, seniors and graduate students at OSU. This year she is serving as Golden Key's Vice-president. She is conducting the annual membership drive and induction ceremony. She is also holding offices in Campus Girl Scouts and Stout Residential Hall.

In May 2011, Meador will graduate from OSU with honors from the Honors College. She plans to then pursue a doctorate degree in plant genetics to conduct research in plant biotechnology/genetic engineering.

## ZOOLOGY STUDENT APPRECIATES TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

The Oklahoma State University zoology department recognized Reid Morehouse with the Waters Grant-in-Aid of Research and the Wilhm Graduate Teaching Assistantship, M.S., at its annual banquet in April. Morehouse is completing his masters in zoology at OSU. He plans to continue his education in Stillwater pursuing a Ph.D.

A native of West Lafayette, Ind., Morehouse completed his undergraduate career at Purdue University, majoring in fisheries and aquatic sciences. Growing up, Morehouse said he went hiking, fishing and hunting with his dad, which led to his passion for the outdoors.

When he is not exploring the outdoors, Morehouse can be found teaching OSU students in his three animal biology labs. He said seeing students' excitement when learning new things and advancing in their studies is the most rewarding part of teaching.

As a graduate zoology student, Morehouse has dedicated his thesis to the study of stoichiometrical imbalances

between zebra mussels and algae. He would like to obtain a Ph.D. to do research teaching as a professor in aquatic science. Once established as a professional, Morehouse wants to donate money to OSU to help with future research and student scholarships.

"It is always reassuring to have alumni that are generous enough to give back to the school for educational purposes," Morehouse said.

"Their charity is greatly appreciated by other graduate students and myself."

## LETTER FROM A GRADUATE: ANDREW SHACKETT

To the professors, faculty and staff of Oklahoma State University,

Thank you for your continued support of the young men and women educating at Oklahoma State. I was one of those students. I met with you in your office hours; you helped me before, during and after class. It was my paperwork processed, my file pulled, my transcript checked. It was me in your office during finals week stressing about passing organic chemistry.

Your support provided not only the physical necessities for college education, but also the guidance, leadership training and life lessons that carried much further than any microbiology lecture ever could. Your challenges pushed me to succeed and earn acceptance into medical school.

These challenges not only provided the didactic training necessary for survival through medical school, but also the humor, practical jokes and flexibility to keep me sane throughout.

Once a Poke, always a Poke; beat OU.

ANDREW G. SHACKETT, 2d Lt, USAFR  
University of Oklahoma College of Medicine

Thank you to Mr. Pavlekovich, Lydia Meador and Mrs. Hawkins for providing pictures.

