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Joe Carr

University of Maine

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UMaine Colleges Name Outstanding Students of the Class of 2000

May 11, 2000

Contact: [Joe Carr](#) at (207)581-3571

Business, Public Policy and Health

Karl Martin is the Outstanding Student in the College of Business, Public Policy and Health.

Martin graduated in December with a bachelor's degree in business, with a concentration in management. In January, he entered the six-month management training program for Ames Department Stores. In 1995, the Fairfield native enrolled at UMaine, his father's alma mater.

Martin's interest in business management stems from his summer internship and subsequent management position at an animal and amusement park in southern Maine. At UMaine, he combined his interests in entertainment through parks, and business.

"I enjoy working with people in dynamic, exciting environments where there's a lot going on," Martin says. "Retail also is that kind of dynamic environment, particularly when it comes to staying on top of trends."

Martin attributes his academic success to organization and taking one day at a time, while still planning ahead.

"We have quality professors in marketing, management, finance, and accounting," he says. "They care a lot about what they do and really know how to teach."

Liberal Arts and Sciences

Tasha Smallwood, a double major in psychology and mathematics, is an Outstanding Graduating Student in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Smallwood, who grew up in Houlton and Patten, began her college career at Dartmouth before enrolling at UMaine. She was undecided about her major, and intended to take basic coursework and return to Dartmouth.

Because psychology always interested her, she began taking courses. Her first undergraduate statistics class not only led her to graduate coursework, but inspired her to pursue mathematics.

After that first statistics course, Smallwood asked permission to enroll in one of the most difficult courses in the department. The next semester, she became the first undergraduate to complete the graduate statistics course. Smallwood earned the highest grade in the course, outperforming second-year doctoral students. Last fall, Smallwood was a teaching assistant in an undergraduate statistics course.

"Dr. (Joel) Gold has been my champion," says Smallwood of the professor of psychology and department chair who taught the undergraduate and graduate statistics courses. "He gave me opportunities and respected me for what I can do rather than how old I am."

In his letter of nomination, Gold noted that in his 30 years of teaching statistics, he has never encountered a more brilliant student than Smallwood.

Smallwood has been a research assistant in the physiological psychology lab of Alan Rosenwasser, where she worked on ongoing data analysis projects involving time-series, spectral and waveform analysis of the biological rhythm data.

She has also worked in the laboratory of Alan Cobo-Lewis for more than a year. Her responsibilities include running subjects in experiments, participating in data analysis and contributing to recording results. Smallwood is co-author on a scientific conference presentation, and on two journal articles.

In the department, Smallwood has been involved in recruiting students from her alma mater, the Maine School of Science and Math in Limestone.

Her work off campus includes a part-time retail job at the Bangor Mall, and volunteering as a mentor in the Jump Start program for juvenile offenders at the YMCA in Bangor.

"I like a big university rather than a small college," she says. "There are so many people and opportunities at the University of Maine; it is a good environment for exploring yourself. That's most important to me."

Willow Wetherall is an Outstanding Student in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. She will graduate this month with a bachelor's degree in inter-national affairs/anthropology and women's studies, and a minor in German and an honors concentration.

At Orono High School, Wetherall graduated in the top percentage of her class and was expected to attend a private liberal arts college. Finances kept her close to home.

At UMaine, Wetherall found "a combination of learning opportunities." She not only found academic diversity but the interdisciplinary Women's Studies Program that fostered her commitment to feminist activism. Also at UMaine were three mentors who changed Wetherall's life.

Role models for Wetherall and a number of UMaine students are Associate Professor of Anthropology Cynthia Mahmood, Women's Resource Center Director Sharon Barker and Ann Schonberger, director of the Women in the Curriculum/Women's Studies Program.

"All three take an extraordinary stand for their students and for women," Wetherall says. "From the time I met them, they believed in what I was doing and conveyed that I had a valuable contribution to make. And they opened doors to let that be expressed."

Benchmarks in Wetherall's academic career are many. Four years ago, she founded the Beautiful Project at UMaine, which has become a national model that was replicated last year and this year at other colleges. She also founded The Loop, a women's guide to surviving and thriving at UMaine. She served as the first undergraduate to co-chair the President's Council on Women, and helped reinvigorate the Student Women's Association.

For her honors thesis, Wetherall traveled to the Republic of Cyprus to study how the political, economic, and military policies and practices of the past 25 years have affected women's lives. She received two undergraduate research grants from the Inter-University Committee on Cyprus to study the effects of the Turkish invasion on the lives of Greek Cypriot women. In the summers of 1997 and 1999, Wetherall was in Cyprus interviewing women. Mentoring her through her research was Mahmood.

Throughout her years at UMaine, Wetherall has worked to pay for her education.

"I've had an extraordinary educational experience here. It has been really hard work but absolutely worth it," says Wetherall, who will be in the third graduating class of women's studies students. Wetherall expects her career path to focus on international women's issues and plans to spend her summer preparing for a future documentary film project in Cyprus.

Education and Human Development

Ken Worster has always found the world a remarkable place. He has never ceased to be intrigued by the science of its workings - physics, chemistry and astronomy.

Since his second year at UMaine, the 1996 Woodland High School valedictorian has known exactly what he wants to do. The successful computer engineering student made a professional choice to forego the economic advantages of working in the private sector for the joy of teaching the subjects he is so enthusiastic about.

In making this decision, Worster confronted a major educational and societal challenge - the severe shortage of strong math and science teachers in secondary schools and the growing, grim consequences of this crisis that is jolting Maine and the nation.

The long-term solution, Worster says, must come from personal commitment and choice. "The top math and science students have to love their disciplines to the point that sharing that excitement with children and adolescents outweighs the benefits of working in another profession," says Worster, a National Merit Scholar. "And society must understand that without such teachers, the next generation of scientists simply won't come along."

This fall, Worster begins his job as a math and science teacher at Penquis Valley High School, where he did his student teaching. Worster grew up in Princeton, Maine, absorbing encyclopedias and textbooks. Encouraged by his parents to learn more about whatever interested him, he became and remains an avid researcher.

As a UMaine student, he produced and presented productions at Jordan Planetarium. He was joined on the job by a young woman he had met during his first semester and married a year and a half later. Jenny Mowdy Worster, who is graduating with a degree in elementary education, complemented Worster's production work by analyzing 10 Planetarium shows for alignment with the Maine Learning Results and creating a packet of lesson plans that allows teachers to work on the unit with students before and after attending the show.

Worster also will leave a valuable instructional resource for teachers. His senior project is a textbook on computer programming and software freely available on the Internet.

Engineering

Przemek Jamroz describes his pursuit of education as an "unquenched need to explore and expand my horizons."

"Every step of my academic career, beginning with elementary school through the undergraduate college experience, has been an opportunity to learn," he says. "This scientific curiosity also extends to my non-engineering passions, such as art, history and sports."

The mechanical engineering major is the Outstanding Graduating Student and the Outstanding International Student in the College of Engineering. The native of Opole, Poland, is one of 50 students nationwide to recently receive a Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship for graduate school.

Jamroz has been accepted into engineering graduate schools across the country, including UMaine, Stanford, UMass and MIT.

In high school in Poland, a teacher from Maine and Jamroz's friends talked of the excellent reputation of UMaine's College of Engineering. A tuition waiver allowed him to afford an education in the United States. He enrolled in 1996.

"I enjoy new discoveries and places, whether it's a different state or the next town," says Jamroz. "Every time I see something interesting, I write to my mother and sister about it."

Jamroz's father was an engineer. He died 13 years ago.

Jamroz was undecided about his engineering field when he enrolled at UMaine. While he has broad interests, his passion for vehicles and "things that move" led him to mechanical engineering.

"It is an academically strong program," he says. "It is really focused and the requirements are high, and the faculty are very accessible, knowledgeable and interested in the research they do. I found good research opportunities even at the undergraduate level - everything a university should offer was here."

Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering Michael Boyle mentored Jamroz. By his senior year, Jamroz was doing research in thermosciences and energy systems with Boyle. In particular, Jamroz has been involved in two studies of heat transfer measurement and cavitation.

In his three co-ops, Jamroz worked at Meade Paper, first as a maintenance engineer and then as a reliability engineer.

With the exception of the first and last semesters, Jamroz took no less than 18 credits. "For me, doing well academically is more than just a GPA," he says. "I really care about the learning experience." In keeping with that philosophy, Jamroz asked permission to take a 600-level course in engineering analysis.

Jamroz also studies history and art. The old history books he pores over and the maps he draws dovetail into engineering because "technology makes humanity grow, and without humans, technology would not exist."

In painting and drawing landscapes and portraits, Jamroz finds that his art intersects with his technical drawings.

Jamroz attributes his thirst for knowledge to his mother, Barbara, who taught him "a passion for seeing and trying new things." Barbara Jamroz will be in Maine to see her son receive his degree.

Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture

Farming in Maine has been in Mary Castonguay's family for three generations. When she leaves UMaine, she will return to Livermore with a background in agribusiness to ensure the future of the family farm for generations.

Castonguay is the Outstanding Graduating Student in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture. In the Department of Resource Economics and Policy, she is a senior in the Resource and Agribusiness Management Program.

Castonguay's father grew up on a dairy farm. When he was 11, his father died and the farm had to be sold. The family didn't return to farming until Castonguay was almost 9.

"We knew when my two older brothers got heifers to raise as 4-H projects that we would soon be farming," says Castonguay. "It is a wonderful lifestyle to grow up in. It teaches you so many values that you might not get elsewhere. It taught me what hard work is." At UMaine, Castonguay found an academic discipline that combined her interest in agriculture and desire to know more about business. In agribusiness management, her focus has been on economics and public policy, problem solving and projecting.

"When the price of milk is low and feed high, dairy farming today is a balancing act," she says. "I'd like to raise the odds more in our favor, and cost management is the best way to do that."

In her sophomore year, Castonguay became involved at the Witter Teaching and Research Farm, home of the University of Maine Agriculture and Dairy Cooperative of Organized Working Students (UMAD COWS). With its many UMaine students and faculty who share a commitment to agriculture, Witter became Castonguay's family farm away from home.

"My life just wasn't the same without having daily chores to do," she says. "In my sophomore year, I started milking again, which means getting up at 3 a.m. Whether I'm milking or not, I'm at the farm every day."

In addition to gaining broader farm management experience at Witter, Castonguay became involved in the UMaine Equine Program. This semester, she took an equine internship.

Castonguay has been president of the Maine Animal Club for two years. She served as the 1998 chair of the Northeast Student Affiliate conference. This year at the NESAC conference, Castonguay was named the Outstanding Senior, beating out students from UNH, UVM, UConn, Penn State, and other colleges from the Northeast.

Castonguay was also president and vice president of the Agricultural and Resource Economics Club. Castonguay has been a student ambassador for the college and the department, and the organizer of the new collegiate chapter of FFA.

Her many academic honors include Edward M. Holmes Scholarships, a Margaret Chase Smith Internship with the Maine Department of Agriculture, a Farm Credit Fellowship and membership in All Maine Women.

In the coming year, Castonguay will complete an MBA. She will then return to join her brother, Peter, in running the family farm. "Dad is really excited because somebody else will be following in his footsteps on the farm," says Castonguay. "Mom's also excited because I get to take over the books."