Surviving four or more years of college is hard enough, but some Arizona State University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ students go above and beyond by taking opportunities to further their education. They take advanced courses, study abroad, participate in research – and do it exceptionally.

These students receive the college’s Dean’s medal and are honored at the end of the year by their school or department.

Meet the 2014-2015 College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean’s medalists:

emily fritcke

Dean’s medal: Department of English
Major: English Literature and History
Minor: Arabic Studies
Certificate: Study of Religion and Conflict
Accomplishments: Fritcke currently works for the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict as a marketing and communications assistant. She served two years as a research assistant to Yasmin Saikia studying the impact of the education process on Pakistani youth and is presently an assistant coordinator for an upcoming international conference on political Islam. Fritcke has been active in Arizona politics working on a Congressional campaign in 2012 and serving as campaign manager for a local high school board candidate in 2014. In the summer of 2014, Fritcke completed a program studying Eastern European literature in Romania, under the guidance of Ileana Orlich.
Thesis focus: Explored how governments manipulate history curricula to create their ideal citizenry.
Post-graduation plans: Fritcke plans to attend graduate school and pursue a career that will provide her the opportunity to promote the advancement of international relations and women’s rights.

jenna smith

Dean’s medal: School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies and School of International Letters and Cultures
**Major:** Philosophy, Classics  
**Certificate:** Symbolic Systems  
**Accomplishments:** Smith was one of a group of four undergraduates who presented an evening on "Alan Turing and the Imitation Game," for the community group Spirit of the Senses. She has been a campus campaign coordinator and operations coordinator for Teach For America. Smith has worked in leadership positions for ASU Changemaker Central, the ASU School of International Letters and Culture, and Barrett, The Honors College.  
**Thesis:** Compiled a body of advice that jurors can use regarding reasonable doubt, knowledge vs. belief, and legal proof, when making decisions about a defendant’s guilt or innocence in capital cases.  
**Post-graduation plans:** Her plan is to request a deferral from the University of Pennsylvania School of Law so that she can pursue either a Teach for America opportunity or a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant grant in South Korea.

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**rylan muller**

Dean’s medal: Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry  
**Major:** Biochemistry and Molecular Biosciences and Biotechnology  
**Minor:** Mathematics  
**Accomplishments:** Muller conducted undergraduate research in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of California at Berkeley as an Amgen Scholar. He was a member of the ASU iGEM Synthetic Biology Research Team. Muller has been published in Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology and spoken at conferences like the Center for RNA Systems Biology Annual Meeting.

“He is one of the best and brightest students that will have graduated from our department. Ryan truly epitomizes what the undergraduate experience can be for a student in the new American University,” said Wilson Francisco, associate professor and associate chair in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

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**katherine sheppard**

Dean’s medal: School of Earth and Space Exploration  
**Major:** Earth and Space Exploration  
**Concentration:** Geological Sciences  
**Thesis:** Senior Thesis Research: Experimental Petrology and Igneous Processes Center (EPIC)  
**Post-graduation plans:** Pursuing a doctorate at a university.

“Katherine was hired in our SIMS lab as a student worker, and I really do not think of her as an undergraduate, but as a graduate student who has used her time in the research and classroom arenas to gain and master an amazing breadth of scientific skills and knowledge,” said Rick Hervig, professor, School of Earth and Space Exploration.

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**anika larson**

Dean’s medal: School of Life Sciences  
**Major:** Biological Sciences and Global Studies
Accomplishments: Larson has worked on a project on taking education to prisons, and she leads a team on teaching biology to a group of adult inmate students. Larson also has environmental health research experience with organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and Protection and School Lunch Project. She also participated in many on-campus organizations like the Prison Education Awareness Club and Health and Counseling Student Action Committee.

“She is often the one working late in the lab, dedicated to getting the job done. When she has taken the work on the road, with posters and presentations, that has proven very successful as well. She stands out in these traditional areas of study and research,” said Jane Maienschein, director, Center for Biology and Society.

lauren crider

**Dean’s medal:** School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences  
**Major:** Mathematics  
**Accomplishments:** Crider has published two papers on applied mathematics topics in proceedings of international conferences and has made numerous research presentations at conferences, workshops, and student research forums. She’s interned at the Air Force Research Laboratory and the MIT Lincoln Laboratory.

“Lauren Crider exemplifies what it means to excel as a CLAS Mathematics student,” said Nancy Childress, associate director, School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences.

christopher luna

**Dean’s medal:** Department of Physics  
**Major:** Physics and Mathematics  
**Accomplishments:** Luna has been published in a number of journals. He’s a peer mentor and helps lower division physic students. He’s also involved with organizations, such as the American Physical Society and American Association for the Advancement of Science.  
**Thesis:** Neural Networks for Predicting Heat Transport in Tokamak Plasmas.

“A striking aspect of his character is his humility. Academically, Christopher stays grounded, with no big-headedness, even though he was top of my class. As a student in my classes, he took it upon himself to mentor some of the other students who were having difficulties. As a result, all of those students ended up doing well in my class. I am positive that Christopher will be a fabulous teacher/mentor.” -Michael Treacy, Professor of Physics

sydney-paige komarnisky

**Dean’s medal:** Department of Psychology  
**Major:** Psychology and Biology  
**Accomplishments:** Komarnisky helped with research in the Kwan Warriors Lab, Las Madres Nuevas Lab, and Adolescent Stress and Emotion Lab. She’s interned at HonorHealth Scottsdale Shea Medical Center and volunteered at Phoenix Children’s Hospital and Hospice of the Valley. She also was involved with the Barrett Mentoring Program for two years and helped freshmen adjust to college life.
Thesis: Momentary Associations Among Negative Affect and Cortisol: Is Alone vs. Not Alone a Moderator? Is Perceived Support a Moderator?

“Paige is an amazingly thoughtful young scholar. As a research assistant in my lab, she was one of those rare undergraduates who actively sought opportunities to acquire deeper understandings of the phenomena we were studying. She was a joy to work with, and set a very high standard for other outstanding students to follow,” said Keith Crnic, Las Madres Nuevas project.

shelly bruno

Dean's medal: American Indian Studies Program
Major: American Indian Studies
Accomplishments: Bruno was involved in a number of organizations while attending ASU. She was involved in the Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund and Save the Wolves Foundation while helping as a troop leader for her son's and daughter's Boy and Girl Scout troops.

“Shelly’s focus on environmental justice and sacred site protection on Indigenous lands are also noted in her work. She is responsible, caring and strives to improve the quality of life for people. She has a bright future and we wish her well,” said John W. Tippeconnic III, director of the American Indian Studies Program.

jakob hansen

Dean's medal: Department of Economics
Major: Economics and Mathematics
Minor: Music Performance
Accomplishments: Hansen contributed to two publications that were in the Journal of Computational and Applied Mathematics and BIT Numerical Mathematics. He also has been awarded the Economics Department’s JP Morgan Chase Scholarship, the Goldwater Scholarship, and National Merit Finalist scholarship. Hansen was an ATR Center Intern, a research assistant at ASU and a participant in the CSUMS Summer Research Program.
Thesis: Downsampling for Parameter Choice in Ill-Posed Deconvolution Problems

ryan mcconnaughy

Dean's medal: Hugh Downs School of Human Communication
Major: Communication, Sociology
Accomplishments: McConnaughy has received numerous academic awards, and is a member of several academic and professional organizations, including the Association of Human Communication, the National Communication Association and Phi Theta Kappa. McConnaughy, a Navy veteran, is a member of the Barrett Veteran Advisory Group, who strive to increase Veteran’s interest in Barrett and recruit more Veteran students. He has also worked with Barrett Association of Transfer Students, to assist incoming students with their transition to ASU. McConnaughy has also volunteered with Arizona Special Olympics.
Thesis: Battlefield to Classroom: Issues Veteran Students face communicating in the classroom
jaylee conlin

**Dean's medal:** School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning  
**Major:** Geography and Computer Science  
**Accomplishments:** I was selected for the NASA Student Airborne Program and spent the summer doing research with NASA. She won the Outstanding Student Paper Award at the American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting in 2014.

“We went with Jaylee Conlin because of the rigor of her programs of study plus two other qualities. She was selected for the prestigious NASA Student Airborne Program, spending the summer doing research with NASA involving flight work, and as product of this research won the Outstanding Student Paper Award in the December meeting of the AGU (American Geophysical Union). There were several winners, but the competition is national and Colin was up against students from elite institutions across the country,” said Billie L. Turner, Gilbert F. White Professor of Environment and Society, School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning.

hannah mctae

**Dean's medal:** School of Human Evolution and Social Change  
**Major:** Global Health and Pre Medicine  
**Minor:** Spanish  
**Accomplishments:** McAtee has been recognized in a variety of different scholar programs, such as the Tillman Scholar, Barrett-Mayo Premedical Scholar and Grady and Kathryn Gammage Memorial Scholar. She’s interned twice for World Food Prize in India and Washington, D.C. as well as volunteering at Make-A-Wish and Trinity Hospital.

“Since her first days in our lab, Hannah has indicated that her career goal is to be a medical doctor and unlike many students, she truly understands the commitment she is making in this regard. Next year, Hannah will be moving on to medical school at one of the four institutions to which she was accepted. I am confident that Hannah will find success in all her future endeavors,” said Anika Hutchinson, academic success specialist, School of Human Evolution and Social Change.

alyssa timms

**Dean’s medal:** School of Politics and Global Studies  
**Major:** Political Science  
**Minor:** Military Leadership  
**Certificate:** Political Entrepreneurship  
**Accomplishments:** Timms is a Reserve Officer Training Corps member. She interned in Washington, D.C. for a member of Congress while enrolled in the McCain Institute. She also was a part of the Junior Fellows program in the School of Politics and Global Studies.

“To my knowledge, we have not recognized her [enough] as the outstanding student that she is. Whether she follows a military career or a career in governmental service, she is well prepared and has the drive and determination to succeed and make us proud,” said Richard Herrera, associate director, School of Politics and Global Studies.
Abbey Pellino

**Dean's medal:** T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics  
**Major:** Sociology and Global Studies  
**Certificate:** Religion and Conflict and International Studies  
**Accomplishments:** Pellino is an undergraduate research fellow with the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict. She had the opportunity to work on the Kakehashi Project in Japan where she exchanged ideas with local business owners, students and government officials. She also participated in a Semester at Sea and she was an American Rotaract Representative in the Ukraine in 2012.

“It was always a pleasure to work with her and to share ideas about her future career path. She has a positive and outgoing personality, and she is eager to continue her education in global affairs. She is a shining example of one of our many outstanding students in the Sanford School,” said Lois Laynor Goldblatt, academic success coordinator.

Samantha Sidoti

**Dean's medal:** School of Social Transformation  
**Major:** Women & Gender Studies and Human Communication  
**Accomplishments:** Sidoti has helped freshmen through their college experience as an ASU Community Assistant, Senior Community Mentor and First Year Success Coach. She worked with the Purple Ribbon Council, a nonprofit focused on preventing teen dating violence.  
**Post-graduation plans:** She will spend the next two years as a corps member of Teach For America.

Tate Desper

**Dean's medal:** School of Transborder Studies  
**Major:** Transborder Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies and Spanish Linguistics  
**Accomplishments:** Tate has helped with research at Brown University’s Department of Anthropology and the Wells Fargo Fellowship’s Latino Undergraduate Research Collaborative. She is a recipient of the Wells Fargo Transborder Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies Research Scholarship.  
**Thesis:** Rivera & Livramento: Linguistic Identity on the Uruguay-Brazil Border

“There is no doubt that Tate is an exceptional student, who will continue to be successful in her future endeavors,” said Edward Escobar, acting director and associate professor, School of Transborder Studies.

Written by Alicia Canales

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