Food experts make your world more delicious
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A change for the (much!) better
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Alumni fellow Nathan Smit and wife Becky establish scholarship for distance food science students
Page 10
There are many aspects of my position that I just love! Recently, I had the opportunity to read a number of letters of thank you from learners who received Global Campus scholarships for the upcoming semester. While the scholarship amount is generally less than a thousand dollars, the impact is enormous. Some of the letter writers focus on the transformational nature of their education with comments like, “I live in a rural community and would not be able to continue my education without the online learning opportunity,” and “I have already seen benefits from my graduate degree coursework in the nonprofit organization that I work for.”

Others highlight the role of their education on their family with insights like, “After years of being away from school, losing a loved one, raising children and working 60-plus hours a week, I look forward to showing my kids you can overcome the odds to complete your education,” or “After working on my bachelor’s degree for the last 12 years, I will finally finish this year. Graduating with my degree means I will finally be able to apply for the kind of jobs that will give my children and myself a better quality of life.”

I appreciate that Global Campus is serving single parents, first-generation students, place- and time-bound learners, military-affiliated personnel and their spouses, learners for whom a scholarship lifts them up both personally and professionally. I particularly wanted to note this poignant quote from one of the letters: “More than the financial impact, receiving this scholarship has boosted my morale and affirms the value of my plan to provide needs-based, academically and goal-linked scholarships after establishing myself in my career field.”

In a recent report focusing on online college students (Magda and Aslanian, 2018), scholarships are a strong draw for students. The study showcases that a $500 annual scholarship could sway 39% of students. Our challenge today is that Global Campus scholarships are not renewable annually. What a difference that could make! I would encourage you to consider making a donation to the KSU Foundation to support another Global Campus learner at ksufoundation.org/global-campus/index.html.

Go Worldwide Wildcats!

Karen L. Pedersen, Ph.D.
Dean of Global Campus


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On the cover: Nathan and Becky Smit

LINK announces an exciting change coming soon!
See page 17 for details.
Have you ever taken a bite of food and the flavor was so familiar, you were instantly transported back to a magical moment from childhood? Frank Farello loves to create those moments with chemistry.

“One of my favorite things to do is recreate someone else’s past, to reach someone’s soul through food,” Farello said, his spirited New York accent full of wonder and energy. “I love it when someone takes my flavor and puts it in a beverage and says, ‘This is wonderful! How did you do this?’”

Farello started out in the flavor industry 20 years ago, working in quality control with certified flavor chemists. He was intrigued by what they did.

“I was really inspired by how they can take raw materials — chemicals — and turn them into strawberry or bacon,” he said.

Farello underwent seven years of intensive, on-the-job training and became a certified flavor chemist. Today, he’s a senior flavor chemist and the vice president of research and development with eSense, a company he co-founded. His canvas is the palate; his medium is chemicals. And his art is applying his flavor creations to various foods: alcohol, baked goods, beverages, coffee and tea, spice blends, and nutraceuticals.

“Basically I’m smelling and tasting all day. Sometimes that’s good, sometimes that’s bad,” Farello said with a laugh.

Farello wanted to marry his practical experience as a flavor chemist with an academic foundation in food science. He started looking for master’s degree programs.

“When I came across Kansas State University’s food science program, I was shocked,” he said. “It was everything I wanted and needed. They had so much to offer!”

Although Farello couldn’t find a graduate program near him in New York, the distance between New York and Kansas was nothing through K-State Global Campus.

“With the Global Campus experience, their attention to detail, it’s like I was there. There was always a forum where people could communicate, ask questions, respond. There was critical thinking among my peers. It was very accessible and that open forum worked very well for me,” he said.

Farello was impressed by the timeliness of the course materials, the variety of courses offered and the networking opportunities with his peers.

“As a flavor chemist, it’s more important than ever to know your finished product,” he said. “K-State’s course structure covered everything from sensory and nutritional analysis to regulatory and good manufacturing practices — from bench top to shelf top. In my industry, everything is moving at light speed. K-State was right on point being ahead of the curve.”

He graduated with a Master of Science in Food Science in 2017 and he’s already seeing benefits. He credits his time at K-State with helping his company navigate its Safe Quality Food and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point certifications. That regulatory exposure “absolutely helped my career,” he said.

“There aren’t many universities offering a taste of what I do for a living,” Farello said. “The fact that K-State offers anyone from across the country a window into flavor chemistry is special in itself.”

Everybody has to eat, and these Global Campus K-Staters add flavor, convenience and imagination to the foods we enjoy. You’ll recognize some of your favorite brands (Popsicle, anyone?) as you read how these Wildcats make our lives a little more delicious.

FRANK FARELLO

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“There aren’t many universities offering a taste of what I do for a living,” Farello said. “The fact that K-State offers anyone from across the country a window into flavor chemistry is special in itself.”
Orange. Grape. Lemon. Strawberry. Consumers know how these flavors are supposed to taste—but don’t realize how much work goes into creating them.

On top of the extensive research, testing and development that goes into developing a flavor, someone has to make sure that each flavor tastes the way consumers will expect, whether it matches an existing, familiar flavor or is something entirely new.

Juliana Henriques is one of those people. She is the primary contact and leader of research and development for Popsicle at Unilever. “For example, if I’m working for Popsicle on an orange flavor, we might work with a new flavor supplier but we want to match what we currently have,” Henriques said. “I have to make sure I understand the notes of that orange flavor and I have to be able to taste flavors side by side and distinguish the differences between them.”

Henriques started out in food engineering but decided she liked food science better because it deals more with development and formulation. She said her master’s degree in food science from Kansas State University Global Campus, which she earned in 2018, has helped her greatly. “I went into my product development role not really having studied food chemistry or food sensory analysis, and this degree helped me understand more of these areas.”

Henriques says that many Unilever employees rotate among brands every few years so they can get experience with different products. “I like the flexibility I have at my job,” Henriques said. “I have to make sure I understand the notes of that orange flavor and I have to be able to taste flavors side by side and distinguish the differences between them.”

Working the day away in a chocolate factory is a mouth-watering dream for most. But for Heather Arentz, chocolate product development is a sweet reality. Arentz’s love for the food science field was sparked during a summer job after her freshman year at Penn State University when she began working at a Godiva Chocolatier outlet.

Today, she uses her passion as a research scientist at The Hershey Company in Hershey, Pennsylvania. For the last 15 years, she has developed new products for the Hershey brand, such as Hershey’s Popped Snack Mix. “I love using a mixture of science, technical expertise and creativity to create new products,” she said. “It’s fun to see those products displayed on store shelves for people to enjoy.”

Arentz attended Kansas State University Global Campus and earned her master’s degree in food science in May 2018. Pursuing a master’s degree, especially remotely, can be daunting, so Arentz knew she had to find a program that was the perfect fit. Global Campus checked all of the boxes. “I knew my course schedule early on, so I was able to work at my own pace,” Arentz said. “Global Campus allowed me to create a healthy work, school and life balance.”

K-State’s faculty and staff, also impressed Arentz. “All of my professors were very responsive whenever I had questions and made the online learning experience an enjoyable one,” Arentz said. “My advisor, Fadi Aramouni, was incredible and helped me navigate the process.”

Such strong connections inspired her to make a campus trip to Manhattan last fall. While there, Arentz met with current students to talk about their shared love of K-State and the food science field. After completing the master’s program and visiting the university, she is still far from finished with K-State. “I look forward to continuing to build the Hershey-Kansas State University relationship!” Arentz said.
LUKE CHAVEZ

After early-adulthood career explorations (circuit board maker, ski bum, lab tech, “delusions of being a dentist”), Luke Chavez now says, “This is exactly what I want to do with my life.”

“This is being a food scientist, serving as manager of product development in the research and innovation arm of Danone North America, creating new foods and beverages under the Silk and So Delicious brands.

“What we do has elements of both science and art to it. It’s really creative and hands-on,” Chavez said.

Chavez earned his bachelor’s in molecular biology in 2007 from the University of Colorado.

When he was 24, he moved to California and signed with a job recruiter, who soon told him to get ready for an interview with the NFL.

“I was so excited — man, this is great, the NFL wants to talk to me! The recruiter couldn’t understand why I was so excited about an interview with the National Food Laboratory,” Chavez said with a laugh.

However, that interview led to his first job in food science as a lab tech on a team that formulated new food products.

When he was ready to move back to Colorado in 2012, he joined WhiteWave, which combined with the Danone U.S. dairy business in 2017 to become Danone North America.

And he started moving up the career ladder.

“As I progressed, I knew I wanted to stay in food science, but I needed to get that advanced degree in the field,” Chavez said. “I looked at a lot of programs that people in our research and innovation group had gone through, and three or four of them were doing the Global Campus program. They had great things to say about it.”

Starting the master’s in food science program in 2016, he admits to some trepidation.

“It was challenging but not overwhelming. It was a busy time — our daughter had just been born, and we’d just bought a house;” he said. “But everything worked out fine and my employer was happy to see my initiative.”

His first — and only, so far — trip to Manhattan was to defend his thesis in 2018, in front of a panel of professors he’d only previously met online.

“I got to make that connection with campus, which was really cool,” Chavez said.

MARTHA HUNT

“K-State’s in my blood.”

A self-proclaimed Wildcat at heart, Martha Hunt attended Kansas State University as an undergraduate and knew that’s where she wanted to go to earn a master’s degree, too. The only problem? She had moved to Michigan. Not so much of a problem after all, thanks to K-State Global Campus.

“‘Their online food science program is one of the best,’ she said. ‘I think there’s a lot of value in getting a master’s degree and Global Campus is a great way to accomplish that goal.”

Hunt has been working in research and development in the food industry for nearly seven years with well-known brands like Kellogg’s and Tyson.

“I take projects from an idea to creating recipes through final production, “ she said. “It’s very rewarding to see your products on the shelf at a grocery store.”

Hunt was most impressed by the support she received from faculty and staff.

“To have a support system of teachers and advisors who are willing to reach out, whose goal is to see you graduate — that’s a big deal,” she said.

Getting a master’s degree was a personal goal for Hunt, and she hopes it will give her more opportunities to advance professionally as well.

“Committing to get a masters degree is a lot of work, and it’s worth it in the end,” she said.

Hunt plans to graduate with a Master of Science in Food Science in May 2019.

“Everyone’s got a final goal and everyone works together to accomplish that goal,” she said. “I work with a lot of really great people and there’s a lot of variety in my job.”

Variety was something she appreciated with Global Campus. Her classes included specialized courses in packaging, dietary restrictions like kosher and halal, flavor chemistry, and food safety.

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Although by the end of Nathan’s program the course work arrived via the internet, what didn’t change for him was the time commitment every distance student is very familiar with. “Every night, every weekend was schoolwork. It takes a lot of self-discipline and organization,” Nathan said. “That’s why I came to campus in Manhattan for my graduation. It was a personal accomplishment that I wanted to celebrate.”

Nathan has since worked his way up the ladder at Hormel, earning six promotions since finishing his degree. “The only thing holding me back before my promotions was my lack of education, and I give K-State the credit for making my bachelor’s degree possible.”

The Smits have been in Manhattan twice recently, when Nathan spoke to food science students, met with faculty members, toured the Biosecurity Research Institute and enjoyed some famous Call Hall ice cream. “K-State feels very comfortable to us. People are so friendly and the atmosphere isn’t rushed,” Becky said. “I like old architecture, and I appreciate how K-State has bridged the old with the new and kept up with the world today.”

Both Becky and Nathan gave a shout-out to Melinda Sinn, Global Campus alumni and external relations coordinator, for her stellar alumni relationship-building skills.

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A Change for the (Much!) Better

It’s both thrilling and daunting to consider a big career switch. But these driven K-Staters know life is too short to spend your working hours doing something you don’t love. Get inspired by their stories and learn more about how Kansas State University Global Campus helped them take the leap.

Sarah Dunbar

Sarah Dunbar has had a desire to be a teacher for as long as she can remember. But like many people, her professional life went in another direction.

“I have always wanted to be a teacher, and my bachelor’s is in religion,” Dunbar said. “So the career path I had taken wasn’t really one I had set out to take. I just ended up there.”

Since moving to Kansas from Texas in 2016, Dunbar had been working as a case manager, helping low-income families determine their eligibility for government assistance. Although her job was gratifying in some ways, she had been looking for a teaching program for the last five years. When she found out about the online Master of Arts in Teaching, or MAT, program at Kansas State University, she knew it was her chance.

“My husband said, ‘It’s now or never,’ so I took the leap and here I am,” Dunbar said.

Now she’s student teaching at an elementary school in Lebo, Kansas, and set to graduate in May 2019.

“It’s great to be in the classroom after all these years and know that I’ve made it. It’s a great feeling,” Dunbar said.

“I remember when I was 6 or 7, having all my stuffed animals lined up, taking roll,” Dunbar said. “I’ve literally wanted to be a teacher my whole life, and I thought that was a dream I’d missed.”

The journey has been rewarding, but not easy. The MAT program is an intensive one-year program that Dunbar described as “a lot.”

“That’s what it is,” she said. “There were weeks where I would work full time, 40 hours, come home and do another two to three hours of homework every night and then another six hours of homework on Saturday.

“It was intense, but I would tell myself, ‘I can do this, it’s just for a year.’”

Dunbar said K-State prepares students for the difficulty of the program. Communication with faculty and advisors has helped her know what is expected of her. She said that while the online program was slightly intimidating at first, she hasn’t had any problems.

Dunbar said she has K-State to thank for helping her finally reach her career goals.

“It can be really scary to take that leap of faith and to try something new,” Dunbar said. “I’ve had a lot of people tell me, ‘You’re so brave for changing careers and starting over,’ but I’d say that K-State has made it really easy for me to make that transition. All I really had to do was take the first step and apply and they have walked me through every single step since.”

The difficulty of the program is far outweighed by the joy Dunbar feels at achieving her dream.

“When I talk to people and tell them I’m getting my master’s in teaching, it just makes me feel so good to know that I’m doing what I said I was going to do — plus, getting a master’s degree is pretty awesome.”

“A lot of people tell me, ‘You’re so brave for changing careers and starting over,’ but I’d say that K-State has made it really easy for me to make that transition.”
Ray’Shaun Reed has always had a passion for improvement. His strong drive began on the basketball court and has taken him — almost — all the way to a master’s degree.

Reed’s hard work originally landed him a basketball scholarship at a small college in Kansas after graduating from Olathe (Kan.) North High School in 2010. However, becoming a student-athlete was ultimately not what Reed saw for himself.

“I decided to end my career as a basketball player but still wanted to finish my degree,” he said.

At that time, all he knew was that he wanted to help people. Reed completed his bachelor’s degree in human services with thoughts of pursuing social work or counseling. It turned out, however, that a new opportunity presented itself.

“My high school coach reached out to me and asked if I wanted to help coach basketball at Olathe North,” he said.

The idea of coaching appealed to Reed’s highly driven nature, but he needed to be on staff at the high school.

“I accepted a job as a paraprofessional and fell in love with the school environment, coaching and teaching. I really enjoyed it,” he said.

Reed worked one-on-one with students who had learning disabilities or behavioral challenges.

“I started to notice that even the smallest improvements made students feel better about themselves. When they finally got the hang of something, those kids were totally different — they had a new style,” Reed said.

Seeing the light bulb go off in students’ minds flipped the switch for Reed. He wanted to become a full-time teacher.

Reed pursued elementary education and began researching paths to certification. He came across Kansas State University Global Campus and was sold.

“K-State’s program fit my life completely,” he said. “The flexibility of a master’s program online allowed me to continue my daily responsibilities while completing my degree from a computer.”

Reed, who will graduate in May 2019, even earned a Kansas Transitions to Teaching Fellowship. This scholarship is awarded to select K-State students pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching online.

Reed’s hard work, along with support from his professors, will earn him the ability to teach full time. His gratitude was evident when he explained the difference a master’s degree will have on his life.

“Wow,” he said, “there are so many things I could say. Being able to receive my master’s degree and teach students, knowing that I was able to earn this, lets me know that I can overcome any challenge.”

Mee-Kyung Oh

“I don’t know if my career change path is interesting enough!”

It’s no wonder. Mee-Kyung Oh moved to the United States from Korea and later from Atlanta to Manhattan, Kansas. She’s no stranger to big changes. So, switching from teaching at a Montessori school to teaching at a public school didn’t seem like a big deal to her. But she found there were some big differences after all.

“I feel like I switched from working at a small local company to a large global company,” Oh said. “What I have to teach is the same, but how I need to teach is different. It’s a totally different approach. To learn that was challenging.”

Oh made the switch when her family relocated to Manhattan from Atlanta and she found there were no Montessori schools in the area. She worked as a paraeducator but wanted to get credentialed to teach. She had an undergraduate degree, plus 10 years of experience teaching at Montessori and two working as a paraeducator. She didn’t want to sign on to a four-year program to be able to earn her certification.

That’s where Kansas State University and K-State Global Campus came in. Oh researched her options and, even though she lived in Manhattan, she found K-State’s unique online program was the best fit for her.

“It was the only program I was able to find that offered a master’s degree in one year and qualified you to take the Kansas teaching certification exam at the end,” Oh said.

Despite not being together in person, Oh felt connected to her professors — “very helpful” — and fellow classmates — “really motivated.” She earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from Global Campus and now works as a kindergarten teacher at Bergman Elementary School.

“It definitely recommend this program. It’s very intensive and fast-paced,” Oh said, adding she’s happy she made the switch. She hopes to add a credential to teach English as a second language.

“Being able to receive my master’s degree and teach students, knowing that I was able to earn this, lets me know that I can overcome any challenge.”
Rob Jones

Transitioning from a career in emergency medical services to financial planning might seem like a big switch, but Rob Jones doesn’t see it that way. Both professions are focused on helping people in a high-impact environment.

“I went from having people’s physical life in my hands to having their financial life in my hands — from saving lives to saving dreams,” he said.

Jones worked in emergency medicine for 30 years, first as a medical officer with the U.S. Army, then as a paramedic.

“It’s hard to believe that taking care of people in emergency situations would become routine, but I was ready for a new challenge,” he said.

Jones was interested in personal finance and had a master’s degree in adult education and a bachelor’s degree in behavioral science. Helping people navigate the behaviors that impact their finances was a perfect blend of his skills and interests. All he had to do was find a program that would fit his needs.

“I did a lot of research and found Kansas State University had one of the top graduate-level financial planning programs in the country. It’s well-known for integrating the fields of behavioral finance and financial planning,” he said.

The high quality of the faculty and robust online interactions with fellow students were key to the program’s success for Jones.

“We had online chat sessions with the instructors every week. That made a huge difference,” Jones said. “You develop professional contacts throughout the country. As a working adult and someone who is a nontraditional student — at 50, I was getting my second master’s degree — I was really pleased with everything they did at K-State.”

Jones believes great financial planners have a gift for teaching. Having earned his Master of Science in Family Financial Planning, he now splits his time working as a certified financial planner at Hutchins & Haake LLC in Overland Park, Kansas, and teaching.

“This field allows me the best of both worlds: financial planning and adult education,” he said.
CRYSTAL BASHFORD, current student in the early childhood education master’s program, received the Continued Excellence Award from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences at the group’s 2018 national meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Bashford works as an extension agent for Morton County in Elkhart, Kansas, and has implemented several programs aimed at youth in the area.

JENNIFER RABUNG, 2018 graduate with a bachelor’s in dietetics from Mechanicsville, Virginia, received an outstanding senior award in leadership from the K-State College of Human Ecology in fall 2018. The Leadership Award is given to a graduating senior who has exhibited excellence in leadership, as well as contributed to campus, college, program and/or professional organizations.

ALLAN SICAT, Global Campus’ first alumni fellow in 2011, has joined PureForge, a leader in the innovation and commercialization of high-performance vehicle brakes as its chief operating officer. Sicat previously worked as president and owner of Carousel Designs and is a 2003 graduate of the online Master of Engineering Management program at K-State.

KAITLYN CHERRY, 2018 graduate with a bachelor’s in human development and family science with a minor in conflict analysis and trauma studies, gave a presentation to Global Campus and other K-State staff in October, “Living Life by the Seat of My Pants.” Cherry lost her vision at age 9 due to glaucoma and a genetic eye condition called Axenfeld-Rieger syndrome. Having completed her bachelor’s degree, Cherry plans to return to school and pursue a master’s in couples and family therapy from K-State.

TYRELL FICKENSCHER, a 2012 graduate from K-State’s Master of Agribusiness program, was selected for the Nebraska Farm Bureau’s 2019 Leadership Academy, a year-long program designed to cultivate the talents and strengths of Farm Bureau members and connect their passion for agriculture to opportunities of service within the organization. Fickenscher and his wife started Upward Ag Systems, which aims to help farmers adopt technology focusing on irrigation management and data analysis.

DEREK LAWSON, 2018 graduate with a doctorate in personal financial planning, co-authored a paper that won Best Theoretical Research Paper at the 2017 Financial Planning Association’s annual conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

MIRANDA REITER, doctoral student in personal financial planning, was among four Certified Financial Planners to be awarded the Financial Planning Association Diversity Scholarship. Recipients of the merit-based award are professionals who are working to encourage diversity in the financial planning profession, serving diverse communities with financial planning and increasing the professional opportunities for diverse communities within the industry. Reiter is a financial advisor with USAA, based in Tampa, Florida, and is an active volunteer within her community, working to provide financial education for the elderly, women and girls, college students, African-Americans, military communities and more.

AMANDA FREY, a 2017 graduate with a master’s in family studies and human services with an emphasis in youth development, was honored with a LIFE award from WPLG-TV Local 10 Miami/Fort Lauderdale for her work in education. Frey received the award specifically for her work with Take Stock in Children of Broward County. In her role as executive director, she created an innovative curriculum and implemented the program, raising high school graduate rates from 89% to 100% and an increase in college enrollment from 69% to 96%.

SARA TRATTLES, spring 2019 graduate from K-State’s Master of Agribusiness program, received a scholarship from the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for her final semester. The scholarships are presented by the Michigan Vegetable Council and the Michigan State Horticultural Society and are made possible by sponsorships from several industry publications. Trattles works for GreenStone Farm Credit Services as well as farms with her husband in southern Michigan.

EDITOR’S NOTE: When we launched Link magazine in the spring of 2015, we did so to build and maintain relationships with our K-State Global Campus alumni. Getting to hear your stories and share them with others who have gone through similar experiences has helped shape our mission and strengthen our resolve to deliver the highest-quality online education anywhere.

But we know there are stories we’re missing. We want to give each of you the opportunity to share with us what you’re doing. We want to know what having a degree through Global Campus has meant to each of you.

Maybe it’s a career milestone such as a promotion, or perhaps you’ve embarked on an entirely new professional path. Or maybe it’s a personal milestone, like a marriage or a new child. If you’re willing to share, we want to hear it!

Tell Melinda your K-State story! globalalumni@k-state.edu or 785-532-2515
Global Campus
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
1615 Anderson Avenue
Manhattan, KS 66502

GLOBAL CAMPUS STATISTICS

Total students enrolled through Global Campus
12,751

Completed degrees
TOTAL
644
UNDERGRADUATE
172
GRADUATE
465
PH.D
7

Scholarships
AWARDED
169
UNMET NEED
236

New degree programs
4
- Adult Learning and Leadership Ed.D and Ph.D.
- Curriculum and Instruction Ed.D.
- Master of Music
- Personal Financial Planning bachelor's

Link joins thousands of students, alumni and supporters of distance education who want to learn online, grow professionally and connect globally through Kansas State University.