

SPRING 2015

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY ALUMNI MAGAZINE

# UVU magazine

ALSO INSIDE \\\

LIMITLESS DETERMINATION \\\ PG. 40

THE STAGE IS SET \\\ PG. 14

A DREAMER  
AND THE OPEN SKY

PG. 24



# AIRLINES NEED PROFESSIONALS UVU PREPARES THEM

**UVU** School of  
AVIATION  
SCIENCES  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY



“AIRLINES PREFER GRADUATES  
OF FOUR-YEAR AVIATION  
SCHOOLS.”

- AVIATION WEEK

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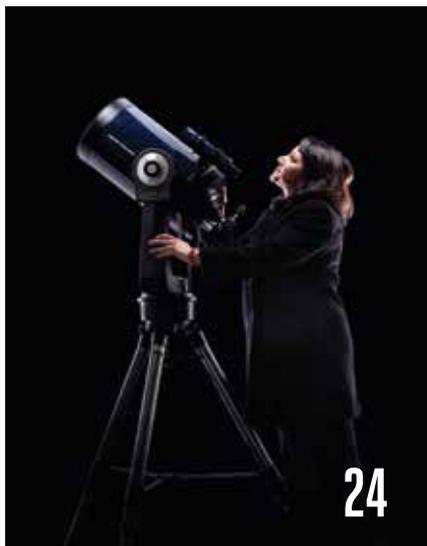
**ON THE COVER: THE OPEN SKY**

Physics alumna Pamela Lara leveraged the innovative thinking she learned at UVU to discover seven variable stars. *Cover photo by Nathaniel Ray Edwards*



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Utah's new Speaker of the House, Greg Hughes, reflects on how his time at UVU has helped him in his political career.
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Chile native and former lawyer Pamela Lara found her passion at UVU — and her place among the stars.
- 40** LIMITLESS DETERMINATION  
First-generation students beat the odds and find success at UVU thanks to the many resources available to them.

## Reaching Our Common Goals

PHOTO BY AUGUST MILLER



As another generation of students joins the ranks of dedicated Utah Valley University alumni working and serving around the globe, I have reflected back on the strong foundational roots of this institution and looked once again to the future that we are working to build together. Like proud alumna Pamela Lara (see “A Dreamer and the Open Sky” on page 24), we are reaching for the stars with our unique dual role within the community as both a

broad point of access to higher education and a top-tier state university.

One of my favorite things about this university is the support students on every level and at every turn receive in pursuit of their educational dreams. Our wide range of trade and technical degrees, bachelor degrees, and high-demand advanced degree programs provide avenues of success for nearly anyone willing to come and apply themselves and work with our first-rate faculty, advisers, mentors, and staff.

Members of the Utah State Legislature, including alumnus Greg Hughes who is now Speaker of the House (see “Passionate about Winning” on page 20), recognize that as a result of this, UVU plays a crucial role within our region and, increasingly, across the whole state. I appreciate the continued support our Legislature has given higher education.

In the past five years, the Legislature has approved several important projects at UVU, including a new Science Building, Classroom Building, and \$21 million in additional, ongoing “acute equity” funding. Among other things, these developments have enabled us to hire and house more than 100 new faculty and staff who are adding even more strength, capacity, and variety to our academic programs.

I am also thrilled that this year the Legislature granted UVU authority to begin the design and planning of a new arts building. With \$15.4 million already donated toward the building (see “Setting the Stage” on page 14), we are eager to continue the momentum for this much-needed facility for the arts.

With all of these pieces coming together, the future of UVU has never looked better. Thank you for all of your efforts to stay connected with and supportive of this thriving institution.

Sincerely,

Matthew S. Holland  
President

## Scholarship Established to Honor Speaker Becky Lockhart

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UVU CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL STUDIES



THE LATE BECKY LOCKHART, A CHAMPION OF UVU, WILL BE REMEMBERED THROUGH THE ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN HER NAME.

The Rebecca D. Lockhart Endowed Scholarship Fund has been established at UVU by the Lockhart family in memory of the late Becky Lockhart, Utah’s first female Speaker of the House who passed away in January from a brain disorder.

“Her memory, her legacy will remain vibrant here,” said President Matthew S. Holland. “We want to always remember Becky Lockhart and what she did for this institution. She made a magnificent difference here.”

The scholarship will be awarded to students studying within UVU’s Center for Constitutional Studies. To contribute, visit [www.donate.supportuvu.org/lockhart](http://www.donate.supportuvu.org/lockhart).

## UVU Raises \$15.4 Million for Performing and Visual Arts Building

Utah Valley University is a step closer to realizing its dream of constructing a performing and visual arts building on campus — \$15.4 million in private donations has been raised for the proposed facility. This is the largest amount of private funding raised for a new facility in the school's history.

“To drive creativity and innovation for industry and commercial purposes, we need the arts to flourish at our institution,” said President Matthew S. Holland.

UVU is the only university in the state without an independent performing arts center. Arts classes have struggled to carve out space in the school's trade and technology building.

The new facility will provide public spaces for art exhibits, and dance, music, and theater performances in addition to essential teaching, learning, and collaborative spaces. UVU is also repurposing and renovating space for a dance complex featuring six large teaching studios.

The Ray & Tye Noorda Foundation has provided the

anchor gift toward the arts facility. The Noorda family is one of UVU's first arts benefactors, and the existing Noorda Theatre is the result of a generous gift from the foundation. Additional funding has been committed from private foundations, Utah County, the UVU Foundation, and hundreds of private donors, including major donations from the Marriott Foundation, Ira Fulton, Scott Anderson, and Kem Gardner.

“Sometimes we forget how crucial the right labs are for those who are seriously studying the arts,” said K. Newell Dayley, dean of the School of the Arts. “These include art studios, rehearsal rooms, media production studios, recital halls, and practice rooms. Without them they will never reach their creative potential and realize the success they seek.”

During the 2015 Legislative Session, UVU was given authority to expend institutional or donated funds for the design and planning of the new arts building.

For more information, see “Setting the Stage” on page 14. To make a contribution, visit [uvu.edu/imagine](http://uvu.edu/imagine).

## Three Honorary Degrees Awarded During 2015 Commencement



PHOTO COURTESY DESERET NEWS FILE PHOTO

UVU will award honorary doctoral degrees April 30 at commencement to former Massachusetts governor and presidential nominee Mitt Romney and community advocate Pamela J. Atkinson, as well as a posthumous honorary doctoral degree to former Utah Speaker of the House Becky Lockhart.

Romney, the 2015 commencement speaker, was CEO of Bain & Company and later co-founded Bain Capital. He stepped into the national spotlight in 1999 when he served as president and CEO of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the 2002 Winter Olympics. From 2003 to 2007, he served as governor of Massachusetts, and in 2012 he won the presidential nomination for the Republican Party.

Atkinson, founding member and former chair of the UVU National Presidential Advisory Board, has spent the past two decades as an advocate for the underprivileged and the homeless. She volunteers for the Volunteers of America Homeless Outreach Team and was instrumental in initiating the Lincoln Family Health Center. She now serves on the state Homeless Coordinating Committee, Envision Utah, the BMW Bank of North America Board, and the Alliance for Unity Board.

Lockhart, who passed away in January from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, became Utah's first female Speaker of the House in 2010. First elected to office in 1998, Lockhart represented District 64 and dedicated her focus to infrastructure reform, health care, technology modernization, and educational excellence. Lockhart was a champion for UVU and was instrumental in helping UVU gain university status, “acute equity,” and the Classroom Building.

## Changes to Men's Basketball Team Leadership



PHOTOS BY AUGUST MILLER & NATHANIEL RAY EDWARDS

MARK POPE (LEFT) WILL REPLACE DICK HUNSAKER (RIGHT) AS THE UVU MEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH.

Calling UVU an “extraordinary place,” NBA veteran and former NCAA national champion Mark Pope expressed his desire to lead UVU to new heights as he begins his tenure as the men’s basketball head coach after four years as an assistant coach at Brigham Young University.

“I’ve played and coached at universities all across the country, and I’ve never seen a place like this,” Pope said. “I am excited to be part of it.”

Pope’s hiring came after previous UVU head coach Dick Hunsaker announced that he would step down when his contract ends in June, after 13 years and nearly 200 wins.

“It has been a privilege to coach so many outstanding young men,” Hunsaker said. “A different style and philosophy will be healthy as Utah Valley University continues to move forward.”

The fall issue of UVU Magazine will feature a profile on Coach Pope.

## UVU Awarded Community Engagement Distinction

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching announced that Utah Valley University has once again received its Community Engagement Classification. The classification is awarded to colleges and universities that apply and are proven to have an institutional focus on community engagement.

“I am proud to be associated with a team of professionals who are dedicated

to engaged learning,” said Brian Birch, director of the Center for the Study of Ethics, who led the University’s application program.

UVU was initially awarded the Carnegie Community Engagement Status in 2008. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is used for a wide range of purposes by academic researchers, institutional personnel, policymakers, and others.

## Forum to Feature Leading Business Professionals

Business leaders will gather May 14 at Utah Valley University for the annual Business & Economic Forum. Now in its fourth year, the forum includes nationally renowned experts and workshops focusing on personal and business development, nonprofit discussions, marketing strategies, and tax and economic updates.

Keynote speakers will include Roger Connors, a New York Times bestselling author, who will discuss the power of personal accountability and its impact on individuals, teams, and organizations; and Larry Gelwix, co-founder of Columbus Travel who also founded the Highland rugby team featured in the 2008 movie “Forever Strong,” will discuss leader-

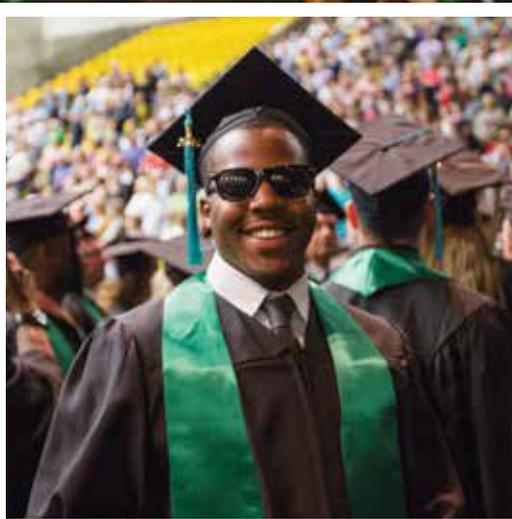
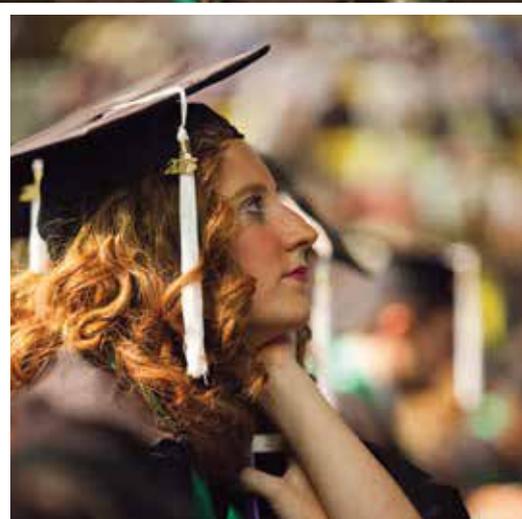


PHOTO BY AUGUST MILLER

ship principles and championship strategies. UVU President Matthew S. Holland will also speak at the forum about UVU’s growing emphasis on partnering with the business community.

Sponsors include the UVU Foundation, Central Bank, and Hawkins Cloward & Simister. Registration for alumni is \$75. For more information, to view breakout session topics, or to register for the event, visit [uvu.edu/beforum](http://uvu.edu/beforum).

# ***Congratulations Graduates!***



***Welcome to the UVU Alumni Association***

***[uvualumni.org](http://uvualumni.org)***

**UVU**  
ALUMNI

# Dear Graduates,

## What advice do you have for students to make the most of their UVU experience?

Utah Valley University's senior class know a thing or two about what it takes to succeed and enjoy their time at UVU. We asked graduating seniors from across campus to share their best tips with future generations of alumni.

Illustrations by Jennifer Pickering

UVU is a great place to build a professional and personal network. Take advantage of the Career Development Center. The employees there can help you polish up a résumé, prepare for interviews, and much more. Attend job fairs and get to know employers who recruit at UVU. Join a campus club and get involved with student leadership. Get to know your academic adviser and your instructors. They are here to help you. Be involved in your degree program outside of just attending classes. Go to competitions if your degree program offers them. And have fun!

**JESSE BARTSCHI**  
Bachelor of Science in Construction Management  
Montpelier, Idaho

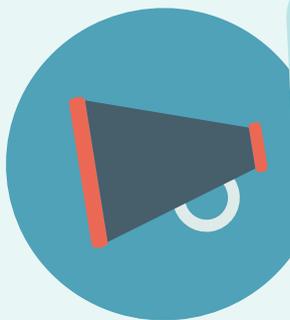


The advice I have seems simple but is actually very crucial. First, set up your course track with your adviser every semester and see your adviser every semester to make sure you are on track. Next, take all deadlines seriously. I missed a deadline by one day and missed out on more than \$12,000 in scholarships. Finally, do homework early. You never know when a car will break down, the flu will catch up to you, or you will need to help a family member. If you have your homework done early, you will have a better chance at succeeding at this crazy college life.

**JON THOMAS**  
Bachelor of Science in Dance Education  
Riverton, Utah

My advice would be to get involved! There are a great deal of clubs, societies, and associations on campus that are looking for members. There are also many departments that encourage student involvement, so take the time to get to know your faculty and the opportunities for student involvement within the different departments. My educational experience at UVU has been enriched by developing working relationships with faculty members. Being actively involved has created many opportunities for me to grow — not only academically but also professionally.

**EMMA CRAGUN**  
Bachelor of Science in History Education  
Luton, England





The best advice I have is to be involved in your education. Take opportunities to get to know your professors. I believe that we get out of our education what we put into it. That being said, find an area of study that interests you and dedicate yourself to it. I also think it is important to learn to work as a team and to find opportunities to help out your classmates; this will greatly enrich your educational experience. When you come to UVU, believe you will be successful. Don't let your own attitude and beliefs about yourself limit your success.

**KORBY HOWELL**

Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science & Outdoor Recreation  
West Haven, Utah

Ask, ask, ask! Ask questions about anything and everything that interests you. I have found the faculty to be passionate about their fields of study, and they are eager to share what they know. When things come up in your classes or in your associations, ask about them. Asking will open doors that you had no idea were there. If a teacher knows what interests you, he or she can bring more of that type of thing to your attention, and you are able to use the tools that UVU provides to a much greater degree.



**SARA RINEHART**

Bachelor of Arts in ASL & Deaf Studies Education  
Whitehall, Penn.



Focus on your goals and what you came here to accomplish. Get involved on campus any way you can. There is something here for everyone between clubs, leadership positions, service opportunities, study abroad, internships, and so much more. Network and interact with your professors and peers. Being engaged and involved on campus has made the biggest difference in my college experience. Take advantage of the many resources that UVU offers to students; they can help improve your college experience. Don't give up if you get discouraged. Keep trying and learning as you go. You can accomplish your goals if you work hard and do your best.

**SANDRA CHAVEZ**

Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management  
Provo, Utah

Be curious and act on it. UVU is filled with opportunities for engagement and education, but they won't just fall in your lap. Find the opportunities and participate. Ask your academic adviser what classes he or she recommends. You may discover a topic that turns into your life's work. Raise your hand in class, ask questions, and let your professors get to know who you are. They may have out-of-class experiences and network opportunities. When you see a display or poster for an event, a speaker, a volunteer opportunity, an athletic game, a club, or even a new item in the bookstore, check it out and ACT! You never know where it will lead. All experience is valuable — especially experience gained at UVU.

**REBEKA M. GRULICH**

Bachelor of Science in University Studies  
Orem, Utah



# Introducing the NEW UVU Alumni Credit Card



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BE A PROUD SUPPORTER OF UVU

# The Numbers of News

*Digital marketing grad Blake McClary puts his data-driven skills to work*

The Internet has changed the news industry dramatically in the last decade. As print subscriptions plummet, news organizations have had to adapt and find ways to market their content online. That means hiring employees skilled in digital analytics, like Utah Valley University alumnus Blake McClary.

“Everything I learned at UVU taught me to be practical,” says McClary, who received a bachelor’s degree in digital marketing in December 2014. “My marketing classes allowed me to work with real clients on their websites and social platforms. That gave me a lot of working knowledge.”

A big part of that knowledge came from serving as the digital director of the UVU Review, an independent student newspaper on campus. McClary led a team of 10 students in designing the newspaper and creating a respon-

sive website design, and he also used his analytic skills to track and increase visitors to the Review website.

“I got involved with the Review because I wanted even more real-world application,” McClary says. “I was in control of a real website with real data, and I had the freedom to take the problems that arose and solve them.”

In addition to his work with the Review and several other companies, including a summer internship with Goldman Sachs, McClary helped a team of UVU marketing and information systems students win second place in the final round of the Adobe Digital Analytics Competition last November, beating more than 50 teams from schools like Stanford, MIT, and Berkeley.

As part of the competition, Adobe gave teams real data from Lenovo, an Adobe client, to analyze for a two-week period and make recommendations. Almost every other team in the competition included MBA students, but UVU’s team members were all undergraduates.

“I think UVU’s underdog spirit was very much a part of the competition,” he says. “It’s really gratifying to earn the respect of people all over because of the education I received at UVU.”

After graduating from UVU, McClary first worked as a web analyst for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where he met and formed relationships with many other UVU alumni. He then received multiple employment offers from private digital marketing firms, but ultimately chose Deseret Digital Media due to his experience at the Review and his love for journalism.

And while his role will mostly involve analyzing news and not reporting it, McClary says he wants to help spread UVU’s story throughout his career.

“I feel like part of my mission in life is to change the public perception of UVU,” McClary says. “I want to show people how valuable UVU is. I wouldn’t have come out the same without it.”

— Layton Shumway





utah valley university  
**BASKETBALL**  
new head coach Mark Pope

WolverineGreen.com #WolverineWay #UVUhoops



# Community Choir Connections

*UVU music education student teams up with a local choir to teach children the techniques of singing*

Julie Jensen, a senior from Springville, Utah, hoped that as a music education and performance major she would someday be teaching young students music theory, helping them learn parts, maybe even conducting a choir. What she didn't realize is that she wouldn't have to wait until after graduating to have those experiences. As a result of Utah Valley University's commitment to engaged learning, those real-life experiences are actually part of her UVU education.

Jensen, along with several other UVU music education students, became involved in the UVU Children's Chorus, which was run in conjunction with the University's music department. (The choir has since transitioned into a community children's choir.) The choir provides vocal training and performance opportunities for 25-30 third- to ninth-grade choral singers.

"The experience was invaluable," says Jensen. "The children spanned a broad age range and came from different music backgrounds. Some had taken music lessons for years; others couldn't even read a note. It was a lot like what we might be facing in real life. We had to figure out a way to teach these diverse groups at the same time. Luckily we were learning those strategies in class, so we could put what we were learning into action."

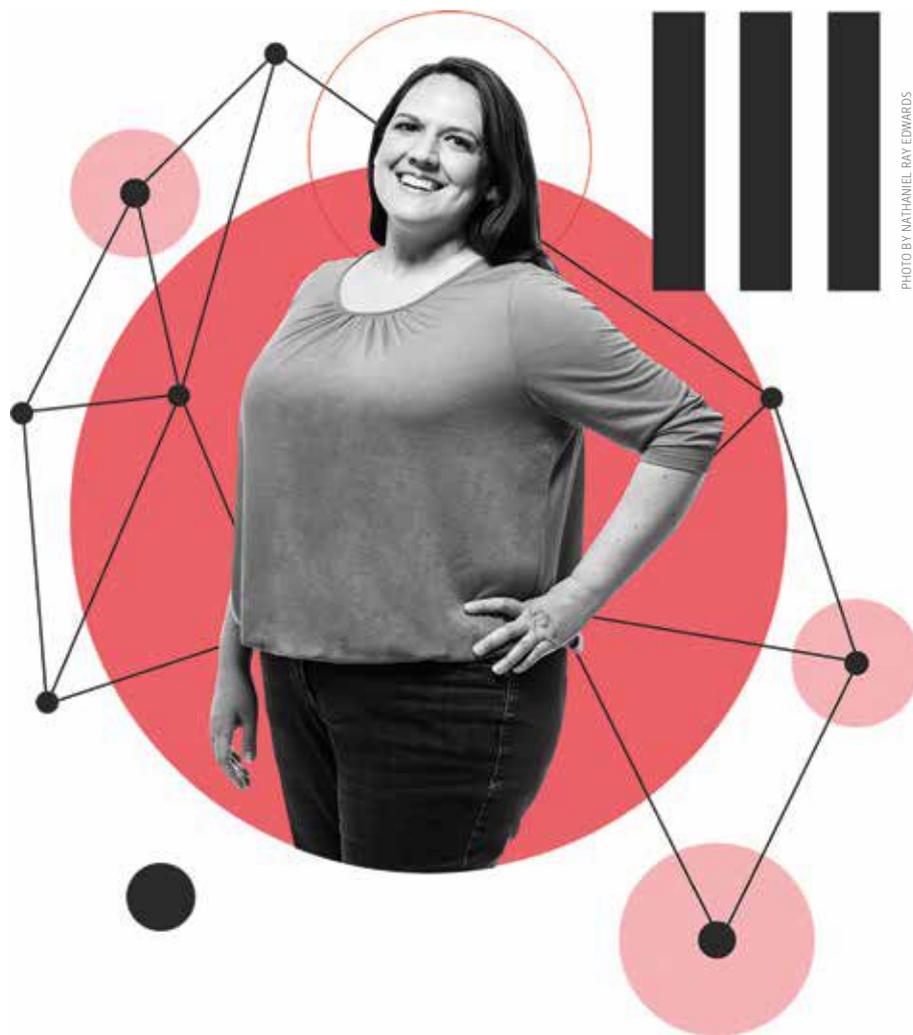


PHOTO BY NATHANIEL RAY EDWARDS

And that wasn't the only advantage Jensen enjoyed. She received feedback from her professor, as well as the two middle-school music teachers who directed the choir. She was able to watch those experienced directors in action, then evaluate how to put the things she'd observed into practice in her own future classroom.

"The whole thing has been such a positive experience," Jensen observes, adding that it is just one of many positive experiences she has had at UVU.

Originally planning on studying elementary education, Jensen auditioned for the University's Chamber Choir simply because she loved singing. When she was offered a scholarship, she switched

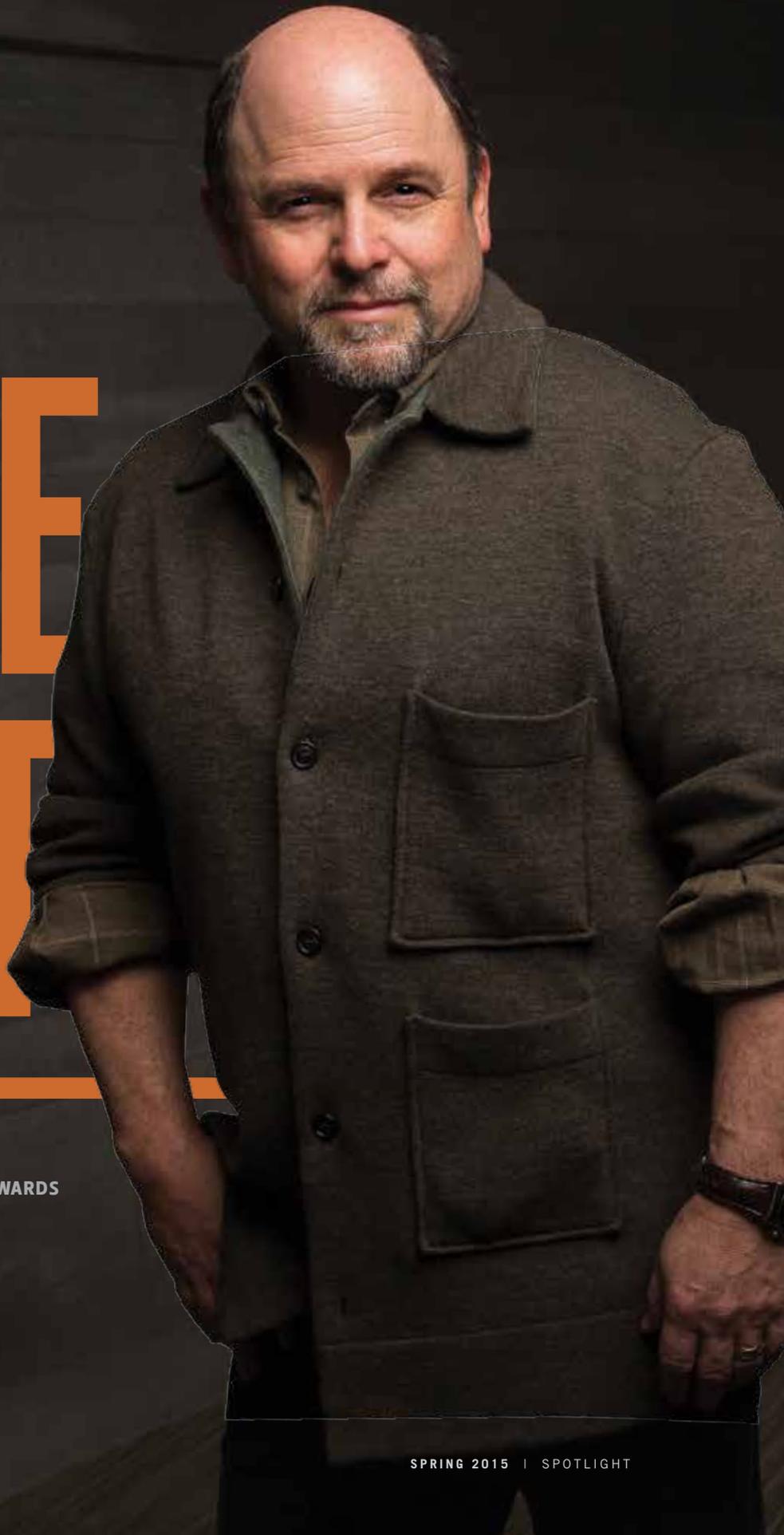
her major to music but left school after only a year to get married. Fast forward a decade: Jensen was divorced with a daughter, wondering what to do with her life. She decided to return to UVU.

"The faculty members here are stellar," she says. "They know my name — they know everybody's name. They learn who students are and take an active part in their education. They want us to succeed, not just as musicians but as people. I feel genuinely cared for. And the other students have been just as supportive; it feels like we're all family."

— Kellene Ricks Adams

# THE STAGE IS SET

BY **LAYTON SHUMWAY**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUGUST MILLER & NATHANIEL RAY EDWARDS**





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*With support from actor Jason Alexander and \$15.4 million in private donations, UVU is ready to make a performing arts building a reality*

**I**N Utah Valley University's State of the University address in February, President Matthew S. Holland highlighted the tremendous growth the University has achieved. But he pointed out that for UVU to continue fulfilling its mission as a serious institution, the school needs something more: a building dedicated to the arts.

"The arts are an essential part of a genuine university education that prepares students for lifelong learning," President Holland says. "An arts facility is a key ingredient in UVU's fully fledged role as a university."

Just a few days earlier, in front of a gathering of media members, donors, and UVU faculty and staff, Holland announced that a historic \$15.4 million in private donations had been raised toward construction of just such a building on UVU's Orem Campus. And Holland and UVU have had a remarkable ally in the fundraising campaign — actor Jason Alexander.

Alexander first visited UVU in 2012 at the request of UVU's School of the Arts, spearheaded by events and productions manager Traci Hainsworth.

"Jason came and taught master classes when I worked at AIA Actors Studio in Los Angeles," she says. "When I came here, I was talking with [UVU School of the Arts Dean] Newell Dayley about wanting to do workshops. He asked me who we should start with, and I told him Jason is the very best."

It didn't take long for Alexander to realize that the programs at UVU had serious potential, and he has since returned to campus on two other occasions to teach students and promote the arts in Utah Valley. On his most recent trip this January, he even brought his son, a budding actor in his own right. Alexander says that it's the spirit of innovation at UVU that keeps him coming back.

"I get to teach at a lot of schools, including universities and conservatories and private acting schools," Alexander says. "And there is a greater willingness at UVU, greater by far than any place I have gone, to think in new ways and embrace collaboration in a way that other departments at other schools feel they can't risk."

During his most recent visit to UVU, Alexander focused on leading a collaborative student project between artistic disciplines, a largely improvisational work telling a story from three different perspectives, with dialogue from actors set to dance and music. The students then performed the project at a donor event that evening, with no additional rehearsal.

It's that sort of engaged, interdisciplinary creativity that Alexander champions, and he says it's something at which UVU excels.

"So many schools say they don't have the time to teach classes that cross disciplines," Alexander says. "And I actually think that's not true. What I talk about is the need to send students out knowing how to be creators and collabora-

tors. And UVU embraces that beyond just a nod of the head but a willingness to take it into action."

As UVU continues to expand its influence in the arts, Alexander says the right tools are needed to meet the community's needs. "There seems to be a hungry audience in this community," he says. "What they don't have are the facilities, the space, the state-of-the-art equipment and tools that the artists can use to create."

Those facilities are sorely needed at UVU, where arts students are educated in repurposed space, in hallways and secondhand spaces adjacent to UVU's auto-body shop and within the technology building.

"Just imagine what our students could learn and accomplish if they had appropriate teaching and performing spaces," Holland says.

*\*Preliminary Artist's Conception*



**"AN ARTS BUILDING HERE SERVES NOT JUST THIS CAMPUS BUT AN EVER-GROWING CONCENTRIC CIRCLE OF COMMUNITY."**

And Alexander points out that such facilities benefit more than just the students currently on campus. He says that there's a potential for engagement with the community to grow exponentially.

"I don't believe in art for art's sake," Alexander says. "You are creating for your community. You're an artist that has set up shop here. And if you want to be in dialogue with your audience, you must understand who your audience is and serve them. So an arts building here serves not just this campus but an ever-growing concentric circle of community. UVU has a really good eye on that."





# 15.4M

DOLLARS RAISED



*Jason Alexander and his son perform for friends of the University.*

So far, the community has rallied behind that cause, with significant donations from hundreds of private donors, including the Marriott Foundation, Ira Fulton, Scott Anderson, Kem Gardner, and an anchor gift from the Ray and Tye Noorda Foundation, for whom UVU’s current black-box theater is named. These donors say they understand the importance of artistic expression to humanity, a belief Alexander is quick to echo.

“It used to be that we gathered as a community in our concert halls and our theaters and our movie theaters,” Alexander says. “But with video on demand and the endless source of Internet entertainment, we’ve lost some of those moments that bind us together. Our sense of humanity is actually going to depend on those opportunities to engage in culture together.”

More than anything, Alexander says he hopes the growth of UVU will help prepare and empower students to be independent creators.

“To be able to say, ‘I want to tell a story, I want to make something from my own experience,’ and be able to bring a community of collaborators in — that’s what we’re working on,” Alexander says. “A university needs to not only teach skills and craft, but it needs to teach artists how to create, how to think as creators. And UVU has proven to me that they don’t just give lip service to that; they actually want to do it. I have nothing but admiration and praise for an institution like that.”

## 4

### DEPARTMENTS WILL BENEFIT FROM THE NEW BUILDING

1. Art & Visual Communications
2. Dance
3. Music
4. Theatrical Arts for Stage & Screen

# Something for Every Body

The new Student Life & Wellness Center has a little something for everyone, no matter what kind of student you are

Illustrations by Ann Chen

## THE GYM FANATIC

- Stays trim and toned using the center's brand-new strength and cardio equipment
- Refuels with nutritious meals and diet tips on Wellness Wednesdays at the Demonstration Kitchen
- Burns off excess energy sprinting around the indoor track or playing a quick game of pick-up basketball
- Rents kayaks and snowshoes from the Outdoor Adventure Center for weekend excursions



## THE LIFE COACH

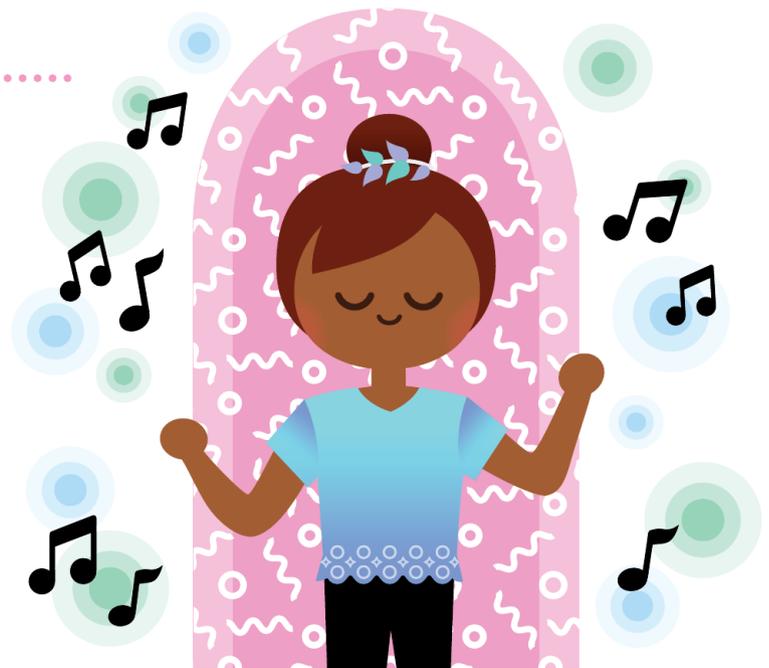
- Promotes interreligious dialogue as a member of the Interfaith Student Council
- Stays spiritually centered by spending time meditating in the Reflection Center
- Focuses on breathing techniques and inner focus with yoga and Pilates classes
- Maintains mental and physical cool with massage therapy



Since its completion in April 2014, the Student Life & Wellness Center has become home for every kind of Wolverine. The center features 170,000 square feet and four stories of fitness areas, a 40-foot indoor climbing wall, six bowling lanes, a reflection center, and health and nutrition resources. No matter how students like to take care of mind, body, and spirit, the center has them covered. *For more information about the center, visit [www.uvu.edu/slwc](http://www.uvu.edu/slwc).*

## THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

- Brings his or her best moves during free daily dance classes
- Never misses the crowds at Friday night bowling and laser tag
- Enjoys racing up the three-story climbing wall and rappelling down at top speed
- Knows every UVUSA officer by name



## THE STARVING STUDENT

- Takes advantage of the Demonstration Kitchen's free waffles and pancakes every Monday and Friday
- Stakes out territory on the Study Steps for reading, napping, and pouncing on free samples
- Challenges friends to daily table tennis and video game matches — loser buys Farr's Fresh ice cream

# Let Passionate

ABOUT

# WINNING

*by Kellene Ricks Adams  
photography by August Miller*

ALUMNUS GREG HUGHES DOESN'T LIKE TO LOSE. AS A BOXER, PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN WORKER, BUSINESSMAN, AND NOW AS UTAH SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, HE SETS HIS SIGHTS ON COMING OUT ON TOP.

**F**resh off an LDS mission to Australia and wondering what to do next, Greg Hughes took only a few days to decide to leave his hometown of Pittsburgh, Penn., and head to Utah to live with some friends in the “Pittsburgh House.” And upon arrival, the decision to attend Utah Valley University came easily.

Hughes feels that way despite the fact that he experienced a cruel defeat early on at the University – one that continues to sting, even today.

“I loved the school immediately and was absorbed into the college lifestyle,” says Hughes, who attended the institution from 1991 to 1994 and studied general education. “One day they had an arm wrestling tournament, and I competed. As a former boxer, I was pretty strong, and I beat everyone, making it to the finals. The guy who I wrestled in the finals was a guy I had beaten previously, so I wasn’t too worried. It was two out of three, so I knew he’d have to beat me twice.”

Hughes let his guard down – and lost the first round. “I let it go,” he says, “knowing I’d beat him the second round.” But he didn’t. The two wrestled for what “seemed like forever” before Hughes finally lost. “I’m still not over it,” he observes, only half in jest. “It still bothers me that I lost – I hate to lose.”

Luckily for Hughes, he hasn’t lost often, and among his most recent victories is his election as Utah Speaker of the House last November. The 2015 Utah Legislature wrapped up in March, and Hughes found his first session as Speaker to be extremely busy – and enlightening.



“It was busier than I had ever imagined,” he admits. “There’s a lot of responsibility, and you feel it right away. But this is what I want to be doing right now, so it’s all good.”



"I USED TO READ A LOT OF COMIC BOOKS, AND IF YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT, BEING INVOLVED IN POLITICS IS KIND OF LIKE BEING A PRETEND SUPERHERO."



Hughes’ political experience began early; right after high school he worked on the Bush/Quayle presidential campaign, even serving on the inaugural ball committee after Bush won.

“I was interested in policy,” he explains. “This was back in ’88, before computers. They had cabinets full of policy files in the office, and after everyone left for the day, I’d sit there and go through those files and contrast my view of the world with campaign issues.”



That experience has come in handy numerous times, including during his stint as editorial editor at the UVU Review, when he wrote a weekly column titled “The World According to Greg.”

“I’ve always had opinions,” Hughes observes. “There’s not a topic I don’t have an opinion about, so writing that column was definitely fun — a highlight of my time at UVU.”

Hughes’ involvement in politics continued after he left UVU, when he worked on several campaigns before deciding to run for a House seat in 2002.

“I had gotten married in 1994 and moved to Draper,” says Hughes. (He and his wife, Krista, now have three



children: Sophie, Holden, and Reagan.)  
“When the redistricting occurred, I ran for the House seat for District 51. I had spent a lot of time campaigning for candidates in larger races with lots of delegates, and the idea that a race had only 100 delegates seemed like child’s play. I knew I wanted to get more involved, so that seemed like the right time.”

Hughes discussed it with Gary Nordhoff, his business partner (the two had started a construction and property management company a decade earlier), who agreed to carry the bulk of the business during the 45-day legislative session, and Hughes threw his hat into the ring, winning by a slim margin. He’s been heavily involved in state politics ever since.

“I used to read a lot of comic books, and if you’re doing it right, being involved in politics is kind of like being a pretend superhero,” Hughes says. “You weigh in and can be involved in shaping an outcome that touches not only you and your family but also the constituents you represent and even the whole state. It’s incredibly fulfilling and a role I take very seriously.”

One of the things he has enjoyed the most in the past few years is watching — and being involved in — the amazing growth his alma mater has experienced.

“All kinds of things are happening at UVU,” notes Hughes. “A part of me is just a little jealous that I’m missing these things. I’m extremely proud of the University and its administration and their vision for the future. UVU wouldn’t be where it is today if they weren’t doing things the right way.”



## PRODUCING NOT COMPLAINING

Another prominent alumnus and leader in the Utah Legislature is House Majority Whip Francis Gibson, who also attended UVU (then UVCC) in 1991–1992. “I remember my biology teacher, Mr. Harris,” he says. “He took biology really seriously and didn’t even teach from a textbook. He made biology come alive for me. I enjoyed the class sizes at UVU, and I felt like I could really have a relationship with my professors — that they cared about me and would do all they could to help me succeed.”

After earning general education credits at UVU, Gibson earned a bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University and a master’s degree in clinical work and counseling from the University of Houston. He currently works in health administration and has learned a lot about politics since his first term in January 2009.

“For the past three years I have chaired the Education Standing Committee,” he says. “Most recently, we’re focused on getting more technology into the classroom. Everything we do today is tech driven — even if you’re a plumber, landscape architect, whatever. It’s been eye opening to see the different needs and to be involved in trying to make sure educators have the ability to succeed where and how they see fit.”

Gibson is involved in politics because, as his mother taught him, “there are two types of people: consumers and producers. The producers produce and the consumers usually complain about what was produced. Instead of complaining, I want to get in and do something that makes a difference. In politics, we have the opportunity to do that.”

BY  
KAITLYN MAHONEY

\* \* \* \* \*

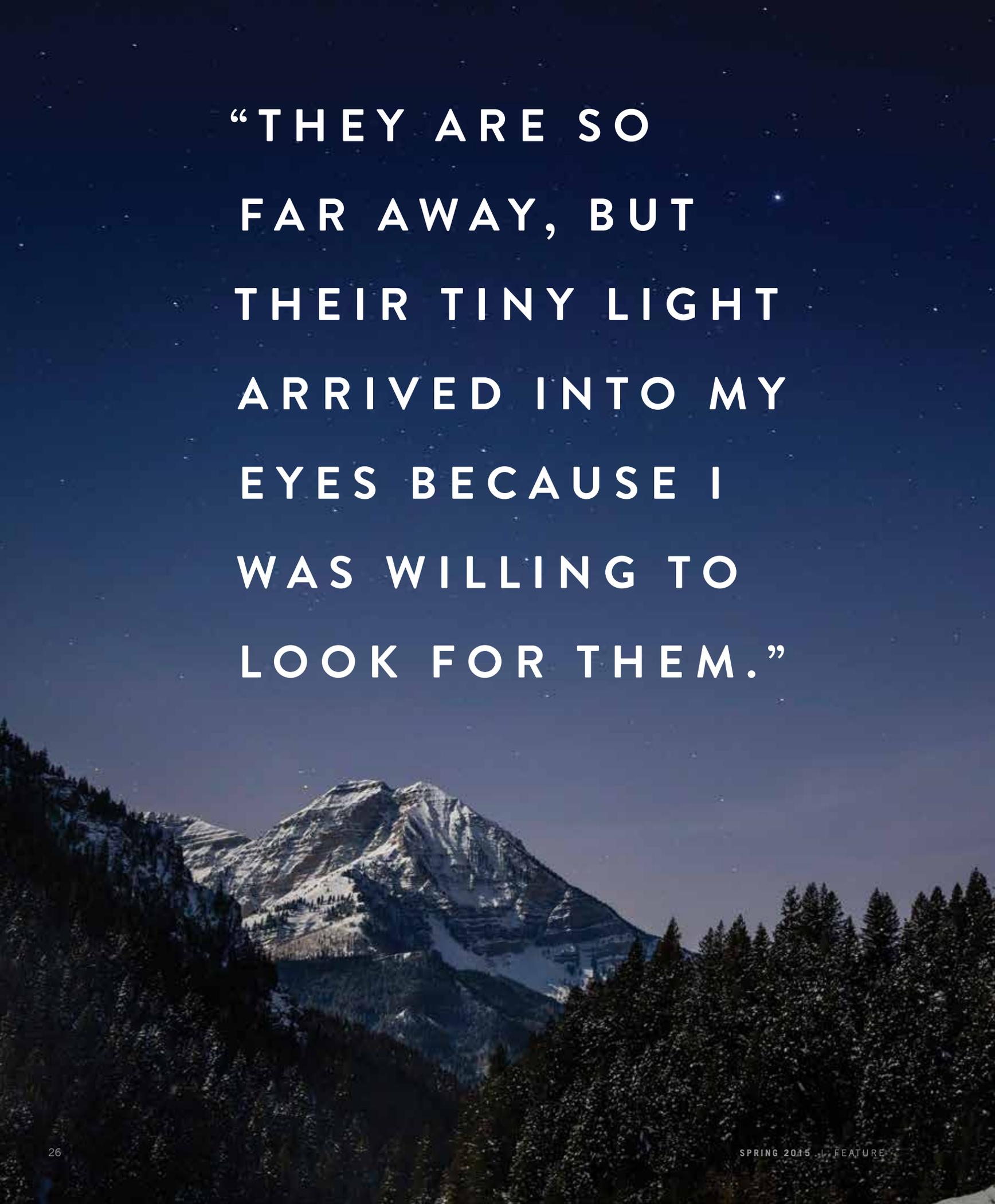
A  
*DREAMER*  
& THE  
*OPEN SKY*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
NATHANIEL RAY EDWARDS

Physics alumna Pamela Lara explores the infinite cosmos and with persistence discovers seven variable stars.

Pamela Lara '14 is many things — she went to law school and theater school and became an accountant in her native Chile before deciding to study at Utah Valley University — but she is not a natural-born physicist.





“THEY ARE SO  
FAR AWAY, BUT  
THEIR TINY LIGHT  
ARRIVED INTO MY  
EYES BECAUSE I  
WAS WILLING TO  
LOOK FOR THEM.”

“It would take my classmates maybe five hours to do their homework; it took me 10,” she admits. “I had to work very hard, but my parents always told me to fight and to be willing to do the work to get what I want. What I want is not necessarily what comes easy to me.”

While physics may not have come easily to the recent graduate, her penchant for hard work has led to some spectacular discoveries.

## NO LIMITS

When talking with Lara, it’s common to hear her effortlessly use such terms as “binary stars,” “high-energy particle fields,” and “light curves,” but the word “limitation” is missing from her personal vocabulary.

“I want to learn everything,” she says, “and I feel like in every other field I was limited by my own humanity, my own prejudice.”

While she enjoyed the theory of law that she learned in school, she was frustrated by the practice of law, being constrained by her own conceptions and others’ actions – or inaction. It was that sense of limitation that led her to leave her life as a lawyer in Chile and pursue something new.

Lara came to UVU as a secondary math education major but discovered her passion for astrophysics when she took an introductory astronomy class.

“With astronomy, it’s just you and the open sky. There are no laws beyond physics’ laws of nature,” she says enthusiastically. “There’s nothing else to limit you. You can do as much as you want with the open sky.”

She quickly changed her major to physics, which is the foundation of astrophysics and which she believes will allow her more career options than an astronomy degree. She took her first physics class when she was in her 30s and was immediately attracted to the limitless possibilities of the field, the ability to suspend her earthbound nature for a time and explore the infinite cosmos.

“I found my passion at UVU,” she says. “I’m grateful that I know what it is to have a passion for what you do. Not just liking what you do, but having a passion for it. The first time I took an astronomy class, my passion was right there.”

## MAKING IT IN STEM

Once she had discovered her passion for physics, Lara worked her way steadily through the program, where she refused to allow setbacks or complications derail her plans or lessen her zeal for learning.

“I was older than 95 percent of my class, I’m a female, and English is not my first language,” she explains. “I had a lot working against me, but because of my desire to know I overcame all of those things.”

UVU encouraged Lara’s desire to learn, and she considers the University’s openness and freedom for expression and exploration as one of the main reasons she was able to succeed. But she says the biggest source of support by far was the faculty.

“I love that there is an openness to our professors, who are so willing to work with you and support you,” she says. “I was lucky enough to be in their classes

and learn from them and with them. They are such an inspiration.”

While the faculty was supportive and the classes encouraged creative thinking, one source of frustration for Lara was the dearth of other women within the program. As she moved her way up through the higher-level physics classes, the number of females steadily declined, until Lara was the only female left in many of her classes.

She enjoyed working with and learning from her male classmates and professors, but she hopes to encourage other women to pursue degrees and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics so they can share their strengths and viewpoints with the scientific community and the world.

“I often looked at problems in class with a different perspective because I am a woman. The physics was the same but the connection to daily life wasn’t,” she says. “I think there are a lot of strengths that women can bring, strengths that maybe men don’t recognize as strengths because they have not yet had the opportunity to work with women in the field. Women don’t need to mimic the way that men do things in order to succeed. We should be ourselves and bring our unique strengths and perspectives to the field.”

One of her many future career goals includes returning to UVU to teach, so female students will have a female mentor to look up to, and male students and professors will have the opportunity to work with more women professionally in the field.



“WITH ASTRONOMY,  
IT’S JUST YOU AND  
THE OPEN SKY.  
THERE ARE NO LAWS  
BEYOND PHYSICS’  
LAWS OF NATURE.”

## SEVEN STARS

Passion and perspective weren’t the only things Lara discovered when she decided to attend UVU.

In 2012, she applied for a National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergrads with Brigham Young University’s astronomy program. She and several other undergrads — from BYU and other universities around the country — worked with BYU professors Denise Stephens and Michael Joner, looking for exoplanets orbiting stars in our corner of the universe.

The entire research team was looking at one star in particular, but Lara was fascinated by the sheer number of stars, the thousands of little bright dots, that she could see though they were invisible to the

naked eye. And she was determined to find out as much about them as possible.

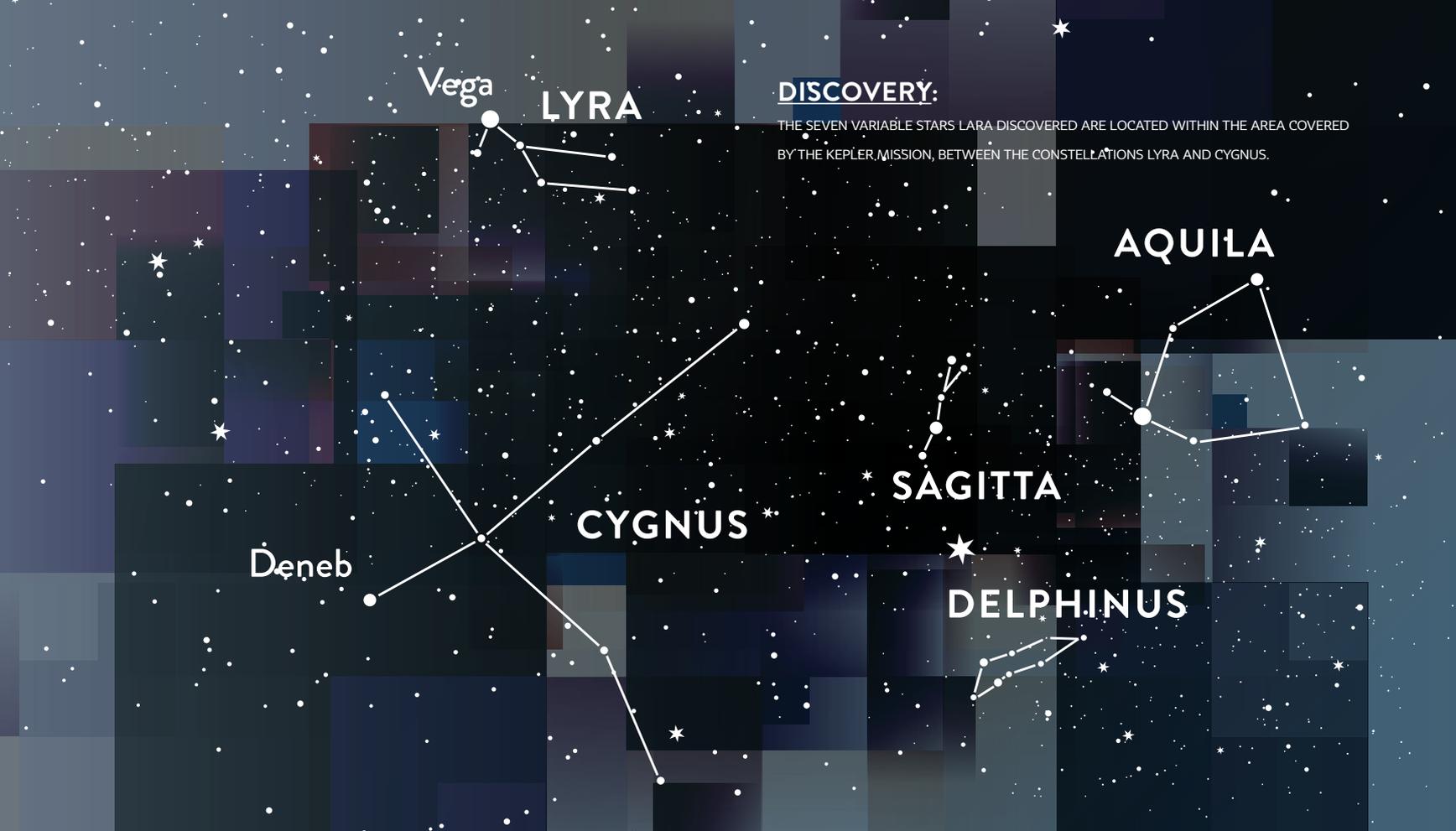
While she was doing research with the team, she focused on the same star as everyone else. But after hours, she returned and gave the other stars their due, analyzing how their brightness changed over time — and found one with an interesting light curve, just a month into her REU.

That interesting light curve, periodic fluctuations in the star’s luminosity, meant Lara had discovered a variable star. She was thrilled with her discovery, but her adviser told her not to get too excited; the General Catalogue of Variable Stars has identified more than 100,000 variable stars within our own Galaxy alone (a rather large number until you consider that there are approximately

400 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy), and it wasn’t likely Lara would find any more.

But Lara didn’t let that discourage her. She persisted, and that summer she found another variable star while doing her independent after-hours research. And the summer after that, she applied for a second term with the REU at BYU and found an additional five variable stars.

“I don’t think there was anything particular about me,” she says about her discoveries. “Just my willingness to look where others were not looking. That was something I learned at UVU, to look outside the box. My UVU professors supported me and answered my questions throughout it all because they understood the importance of the research I was doing.”



## WILLING TO LOOK

Discovering the existence of the seven variable stars was just the beginning for Lara's research, which she also used as the basis of her senior research paper at UVU.

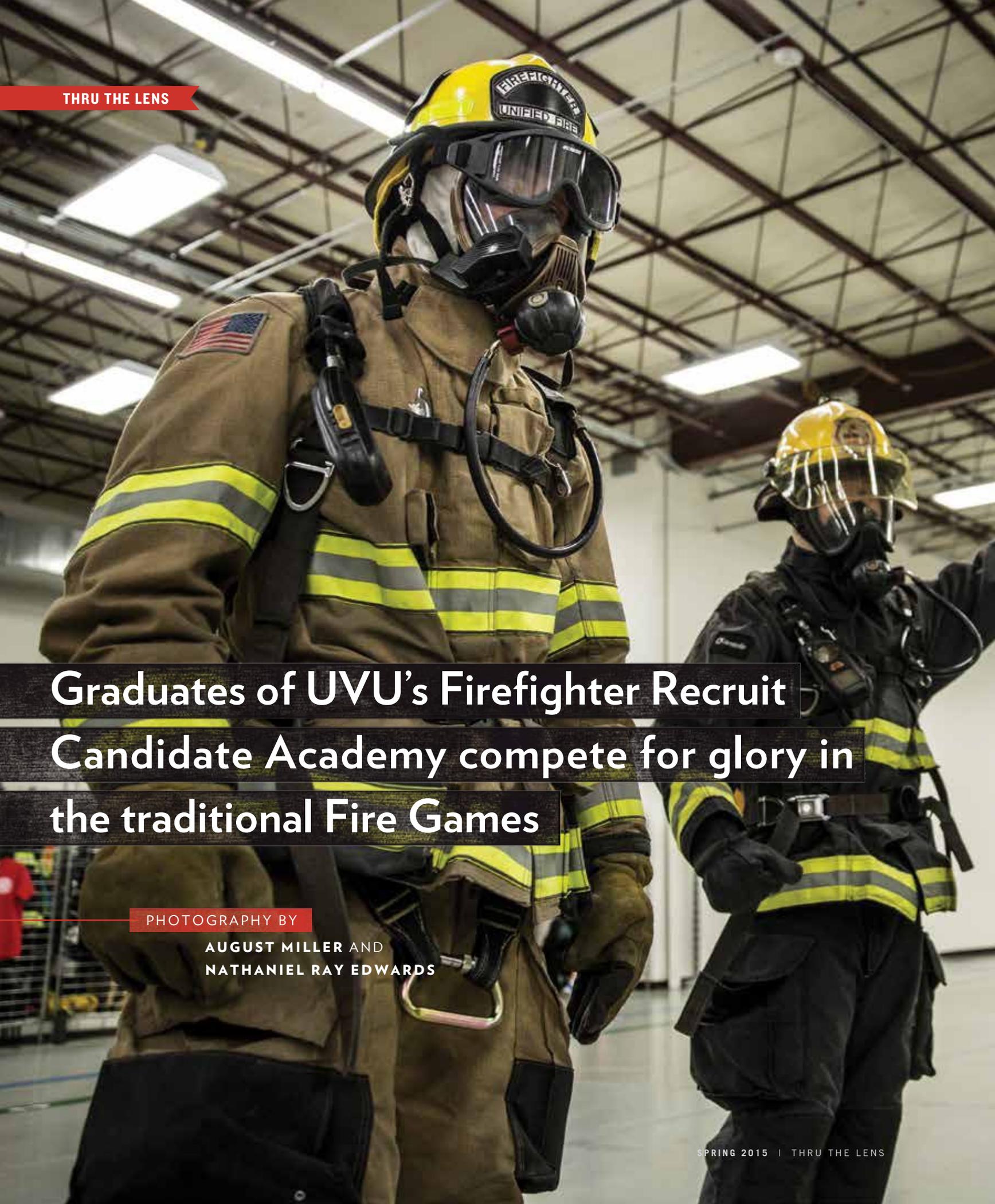
"When I discovered my stars, I thought my professors and I would write a paper about it the next month," she says. "But I'm still sort of in diapers when it comes to my stars. There is still so much I have to learn and calculate before I can write a paper," which means plenty more nights at the observatory collecting more data on the stars' characteristics and changes in luminosity before she can definitely write about her stars and share her findings with the larger scientific community.

Once she can offer substantial evidence of the color, temperature, type, mass, and other characteristics of her stars, she hopes to write an article about them and submit it to the American Association of Variable Star Observers, which can then recommend that her stars be included in the General Catalogue of Variable Stars. The AAVSO will assign her stars a series of numbers that indicate the specific type of variable they are, the constellation they belong to, and the astronomical year of discovery, but Lara will always refer to the first one she discovered as "My Pretty."

"My Pretty" and her other stars aren't visible at night from our vantage point during the winter, so her research is on hold until the summer. But that isn't stopping her from keeping busy

in the meantime. Since she graduated with a bachelor's degree in physics in December, she has been continuing her research with Joner at BYU as an independent researcher and a teaching assistant. Lara eventually plans to attend graduate school at BYU and become an astrophysicist, after which she hopes to return to Chile to conduct postdoctoral research at one of the preeminent international observatories there before returning to UVU to teach astronomy.

"I am completely overwhelmed about my stars," Lara admits, "and the fact that I am the first one that saw them. They are so far away, but their tiny light arrived into my eyes because I was willing to look for them."

A photograph of two firefighters in full gear standing in a gymnasium. The firefighter in the foreground is wearing a brown jacket with yellow reflective stripes and a yellow helmet with a black face mask. The firefighter in the background is wearing a black jacket with yellow reflective stripes and a yellow helmet with a clear face shield. The background shows a large indoor space with a metal ceiling and fluorescent lights.

# Graduates of UVU's Firefighter Recruit Candidate Academy compete for glory in the traditional Fire Games

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

AUGUST MILLER AND  
NATHANIEL RAY EDWARDS



THE

HEAT

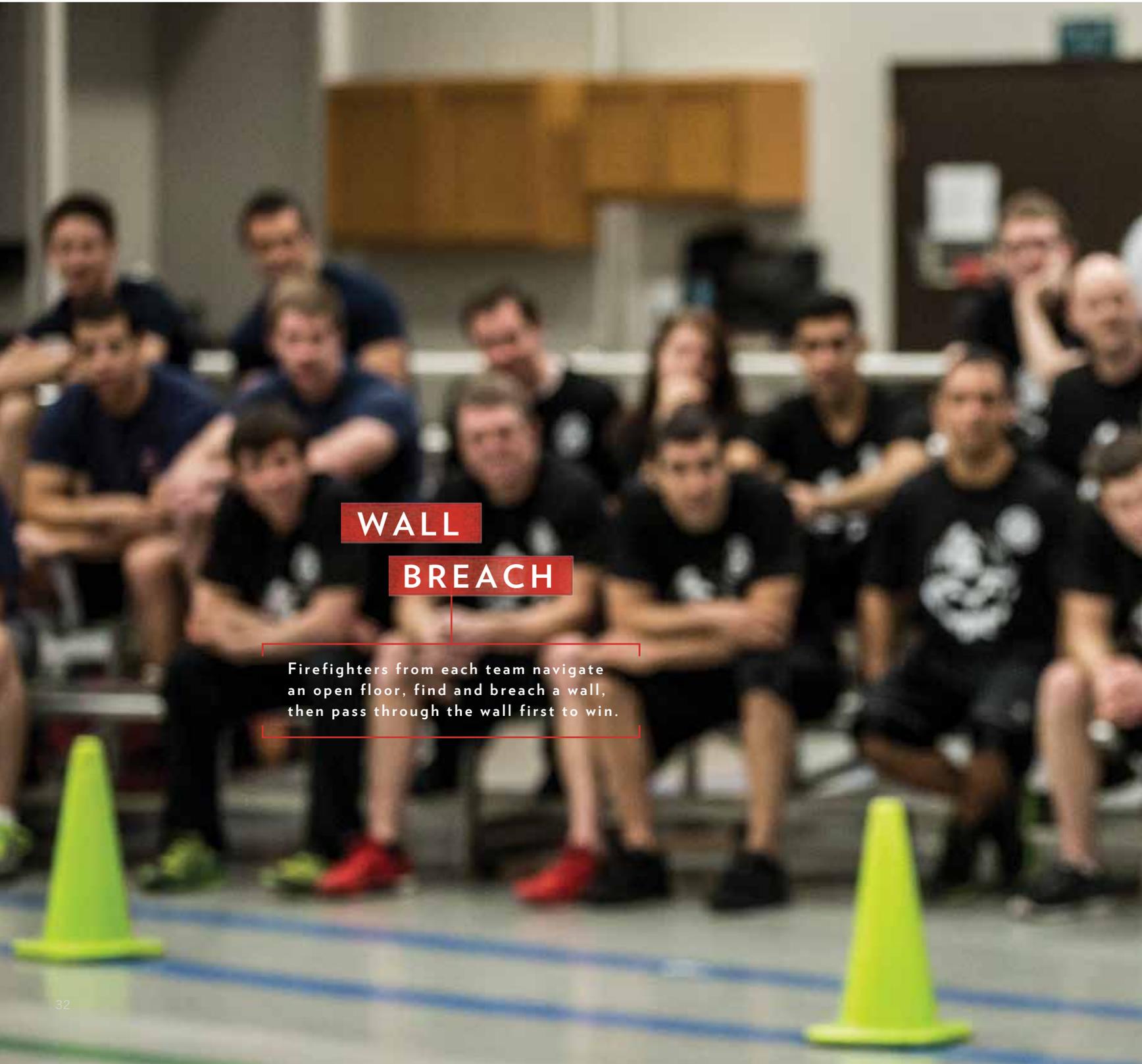
IS ON. 

TURNOUT

DRILL

Three members of each team race to properly dress in full firefighter protective gear and self-contained breathing apparatus.

**P**ulling fire engines full of water, chopping beams in half, and breaching sheetrock walls are only a few of the activities in Utah Valley University's Firefighter Recruit Candidate Academy's time-honored Fire Games, where academy graduates compete



**WALL**

**BREACH**

Firefighters from each team navigate an open floor, find and breach a wall, then pass through the wall first to win.

against a team of RCA alumni. This year, the 13-member graduate team played with heart and energy but lost to the alumni team in the afternoon competition that precedes the evening's graduation ceremony.



## A CLOSER LOOK

Referee Chris Lindquist of UVU's emergency services department and Jake Dennison, founder of the Fire Games, examine a piece of equipment.

In addition to pulling engines and tires and welding axes and hammers, competitors in the Fire Games arm wrestle, conduct self-rescues and turnout drills, and do pull-ups, all in the name of fun – and competition. No trophies are awarded, but the winning team's name is engraved on a plaque that hangs on an academy wall, which seems to be motivation enough.



## APPARATUS

## PULL

A five-person team demonstrates strength and unity as they sprint to the finish line pulling a fully loaded fire engine.



ALUMNI NEWS

## 2015 Outstanding Educators

Each year, one faculty member from each of Utah Valley University's eight schools and colleges is presented with an Outstanding Educator Award. Students nominate and vote on the winners.

photography by Jay Drowns

### Ann Sharp

*assistant professor of elementary education*

Learning to read is the most important thing any of us will ever learn to do. If we can't read, it severely limits our opportunities in life and our lifestyles. From this viewpoint, learning to read is lifesaving. My goal is to have my students acquire the required knowledge and pedagogy that will enable them to save lives.

**Student testimonial:** "I have never met a college professor who works harder than Professor Sharp. She puts her whole heart into her job. Her class was very difficult, but I learned more from her than any other class."

### Joel Helquist

*associate professor of accounting*

At the end of the day, I truly believe the following quote by William Butler Yeats: "Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire." I realize that the students will remember very little of the actual detailed content of the classroom years from now. Hopefully, however, they will catch a vision of the importance of an education and always learning. I hope to motivate the students to find material they are passionate about in order to kick-start their lifelong learning process.

**Student testimonial:** "Professor Helquist cares more about our learning than our grades and it shows in the way he teaches."

### Lisa Lambert

*associate professor of student leadership & success studies*

My overarching goal as a teacher is to create a community of learners who respect one another and where effective teaching and engaged learning can occur. I believe that the majority of my students know the things that matter most about teaching and learning are never sacrificed for the things that matter least.

**Student testimonial:** "Professor Lambert is the most amazing professor ever! She connects with and advocates for all students."



## Kenneth Crook

*associate professor of criminal justice/law enforcement*

Watching students “get it” is my favorite part of teaching — when students understand how the course material applies to the world they live in or when they realize that something they have just learned helps them resolve a real-life issue. When their faces light up and you know they are right with you — that is my favorite part.

**Student testimonial:** “Professor Crook is a great instructor who not only teaches us about the subject material but teaches us how to reach our potential and actually challenges us to do so.”

## Curtis Welborn

*associate professor of computer science*

I’m proud of our computer science alumni and how strongly they feel about what we are doing. When alumni want to come back to school and tell current students how well their education prepared them for the future, you know you’re doing something right. I’m extremely humbled that my students have made it possible for me to win this award, but more important than winning it today, I hope they will still feel I’m deserving of it when they look back on their education.

**Student testimonial:** “Professor Welborn expected a lot from me, then gave me everything I needed to succeed.”

## Bret Boyer

*associate professor of exercise science*

My personal mission is to “surpass self, empower others, and make a difference.” This recognition from the students communicates to me that to some degree or another, I have played a part in empowering them and making a difference in their personal, lifelong pursuit for excellence. I am extremely grateful to have been a part of it.

**Student testimonial:** “Professor Boyer puts his whole heart into our academic and career success. It isn’t about passing tests for him. He is about excelling in life and being a responsible, good person.”



## Sue Parkinson

*associate professor of art & visual communications*

My goal is to help each student become an A or a B student. I think grades and evaluations are there to help me identify which students I need to help more. When I interact with students, I focus on what they're doing right as well as what they can improve. Magic happens when you help students to have successful experiences.

**Student testimonial:** "Professor Parkinson was, hands down, the best professor I've ever had. She puts every effort into each student's progress and genuinely cares for each student."

## Wayne Hanewicz

*professor of integrated studies*

In the classroom I work to instill and nourish a desire in my students to continue learning after class and throughout their lives. I also focus on assisting students to find personal meaning in the subject matter that we study, as well as building confidence in the abilities of my students to explore their own motivations, fears, and values.

**Student testimonial:** "Professor Hanewicz is a born educator, determined to impact the lives of each and every student in his charge."

## Educational Pioneers



First-generation college students are modern-day pioneers who often overcome many challenges and doubts to attend school. They hold a soft place in my heart because I witnessed one of these journeys firsthand growing up.

I was five years old when my parents explained to me that my mother was going to start nursing school and that I would need to be more responsible and independent. Barely in school myself, I under-

stood that something important and life-changing was taking place in our family.

From an early age, my mom had dreamed of going to school, but growing up in a small town in a poor family, she had little encouragement or support from home. Married at 17 and a mother by 19, the barriers seemed insurmountable. Luckily, my father supported her dream completely and was willing to make any sacrifice to help her achieve her goal.

With two small children, my mom enrolled at Utah Technical College to earn her licensed practical nurse certificate. As soon as she was certified as a nurse, she started working nights so she could go to BYU during the day to become a registered nurse. My mom's journey through school defined my childhood as she wrote papers, studied for tests, practiced taking pulses and blood pressure readings, and even gave injections to willing subjects.

Mom's graduations were family accomplishments as we all contributed in some way, even if it was just being quiet so she could catch a few hours of sleep.

My mother's journey taught me that no goal is impossible. She described her first day

of class as one of the scariest days of her life. Many years later I understood exactly what she meant when I followed her example and pursued my own education as a nontraditional student, often with children in tow.

At age five, I knew that life would be different for us, but I never could have comprehended the far-reaching influence Mom's dream and courage would have for me, my siblings, and my children.

I hope that her example will serve as an inspiration to all of the first-generation students at UVU. Your courage and sacrifice will set a standard for generations to come.

Jeri Allphin  
Senior Director  
Alumni Relations & Annual Giving



# *UVU Alumni Awards 2015*

## — CALL FOR ALUMNI AWARDS —

Nominate a student, graduate, faculty member, staff member, or volunteer who has advanced the University's goals and mission and played an integral role in UVU's continuing success.

[uvualumni.org/awards](http://uvualumni.org/awards)

### Last year's winners:

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Barbara Barrington Jones:  
*Distinguished Service*



KD Taylor: *Wilson Sorensen*  
*Lifetime Achievement*



Zach Trujillo:  
*Distinguished Student Service*



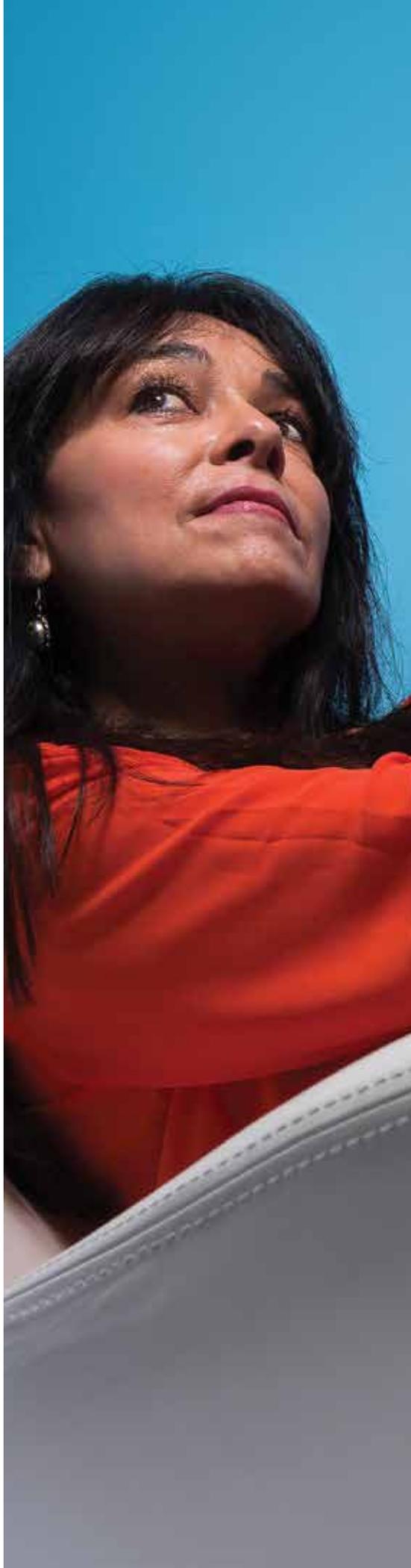
JoAnn Losee:  
*Legacy*



TJ Fund:  
*Pinnacle*



Clinton Pulver:  
*Young Alumni*





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*Three First-generation Seniors share their stories of beating the odds to earn their college degrees at UVU*

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BY **MELINDA R. COLTON**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUGUST MILLER**

**T**he odds are against them. And yet, first-generation students at Utah Valley University are proving they can overcome the barriers that often limit access to college. Three seniors are reminders to other students that there is a limitless capacity within everyone to reach goals that can change lives.

Theirs are stories of gangs and drugs, multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet, and learning English as a second language. Children in the United States whose parents did not complete college have only a 5-percent chance of earning a college degree, according to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development. The percentage is five times higher in other countries. But what some might consider almost insurmountable odds for these students have only made them more determined to earn their college degrees.

"ASK QUESTIONS. IF you don't ask the answer will always be NO. A Lot of First-generation students have Pride and want to Succeed at College on their own. But it's OK to let people help you."



# TIA NERO

## ASK FOR HELP

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Raised by her mother and stepfather, Tia Nero grew up in South Central Los Angeles. Her stepfather was in a gang, and her family moved virtually every year until she was in seventh grade. The following year, her mother divorced and moved Nero and her younger brother to Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

Despite these circumstances, Nero was encouraged to go to college as she was growing up. “Any grade below a C was not acceptable. My parents made sure we did our homework even though they didn’t know how to help us with it.”

Nero knew she wanted to go to college — she took campus tours of UCLA and USC in high school — but thought a four-year university was out of her reach. “It was magical just being there. I could picture myself going to school, but I knew the price of going to either of those schools was way out of my league.” And after witnessing her mother struggle with debt, she decided she didn’t want to take out a loan or get a credit card.

After high school, Nero attended Chaffey Community College in Rancho Cucamonga and took a lot of electives trying to figure out what she wanted to do. She had an interest in photography but quickly discovered she couldn’t afford the materials and equipment required for the class, let alone a camera.

One afternoon she and mother went out for lunch and saw two young men signing at a nearby table. “I thought, ‘I want to learn how to do that,’” she says, “but my mom said no. She said I needed to learn Spanish.”

After struggling through Spanish, Nero decided to sign up for a sign language course anyway. “It came naturally to me. I

aced every class I took. I became involved with programs within the deaf community and knew that’s what I wanted to do,” she says. “I love the culture, the language, and the people.”

About the same time, she joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “Once I was baptized, my mother asked me to leave home. I lived with a family in my LDS ward who became my adopted family.” A year later she served an English-speaking mission in Utah — Salt Lake City Central, which is when she first learned about UVU.

Nero came to UVU for the American Sign Language program. “I remember when I got my acceptance letter from UVU. It was a huge moment for me when I realized I got into a four-year university and I could actually get my degree.”

That excitement was soon followed by worries about how she was going to afford going back to college. Despite her reluctance about going into debt, she took out a student loan and applied for scholarships and part-time jobs. “Everything fell into place,” she says.

She was hired for a brand-new position at the University this fall as a retention mentor working with first-generation students. “I have learned there are a ton of resources on campus all aimed at helping students succeed. And I get to help other students learn how to find those things that will help them be successful at UVU.”

The 24-year-old, who will graduate this summer, is considering graduate school and wants to learn sign language in different languages. She eventually wants to become an interpreter for the LDS Church.

## Resources for First-Generation Students

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### ESL:

[uvu.edu/esl](http://uvu.edu/esl)

### First Year Experience:

[uvu.edu/firstyear](http://uvu.edu/firstyear)

### Student Success & Retention:

[uvu.edu/retention](http://uvu.edu/retention)

### Summer Bridge Program:

[uvu.edu/bridge](http://uvu.edu/bridge)

### TRIO Upward Bound:

[uvu.edu/trio/ub](http://uvu.edu/trio/ub)

### TRIO Educational Talent Search:

[uvu.edu/trio/ets](http://uvu.edu/trio/ets)

### TRIO Student Support Services:

[uvu.edu/trio/ssss](http://uvu.edu/trio/ssss)

### Turning Point:

[uvu.edu/turningpoint](http://uvu.edu/turningpoint)

### Veterans Services:

[uvu.edu/veterans](http://uvu.edu/veterans)

### Women’s Success Center:

[uvu.edu/wsc](http://uvu.edu/wsc)

# RUSSANN JOHNSON

## INVEST IN YOURSELF

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Russann Johnson's mother was raised in a convent in San Francisco, and her father was a Marine. They met and married young, going straight to work; college was never an option.

"My mother would always say 'you can't invest in yourself enough.' I am the first in my family to attend college. I may well be the only college graduate in my lineage dating back to the Civil War," she says.

A single mother, Johnson moved to Hawaii at age 26 and worked two or three part-time jobs at a time to provide for her son. After spending 19 years there, her son wanted to move to Utah where his girlfriend was attending college.

"I couldn't move back to the Bay Area because it was too expensive," she says. "My son encouraged me to come to Utah."

She discovered UVU's Turning Point program and enrolled in a self-improvement class. She received encouragement from the mentors there to take a few more noncredit classes. Now at age 52 she has already earned an associate degree in technology and computing from UVU and is in the final phase of earning a bachelor's degree in digital media with an emphasis in web technology.

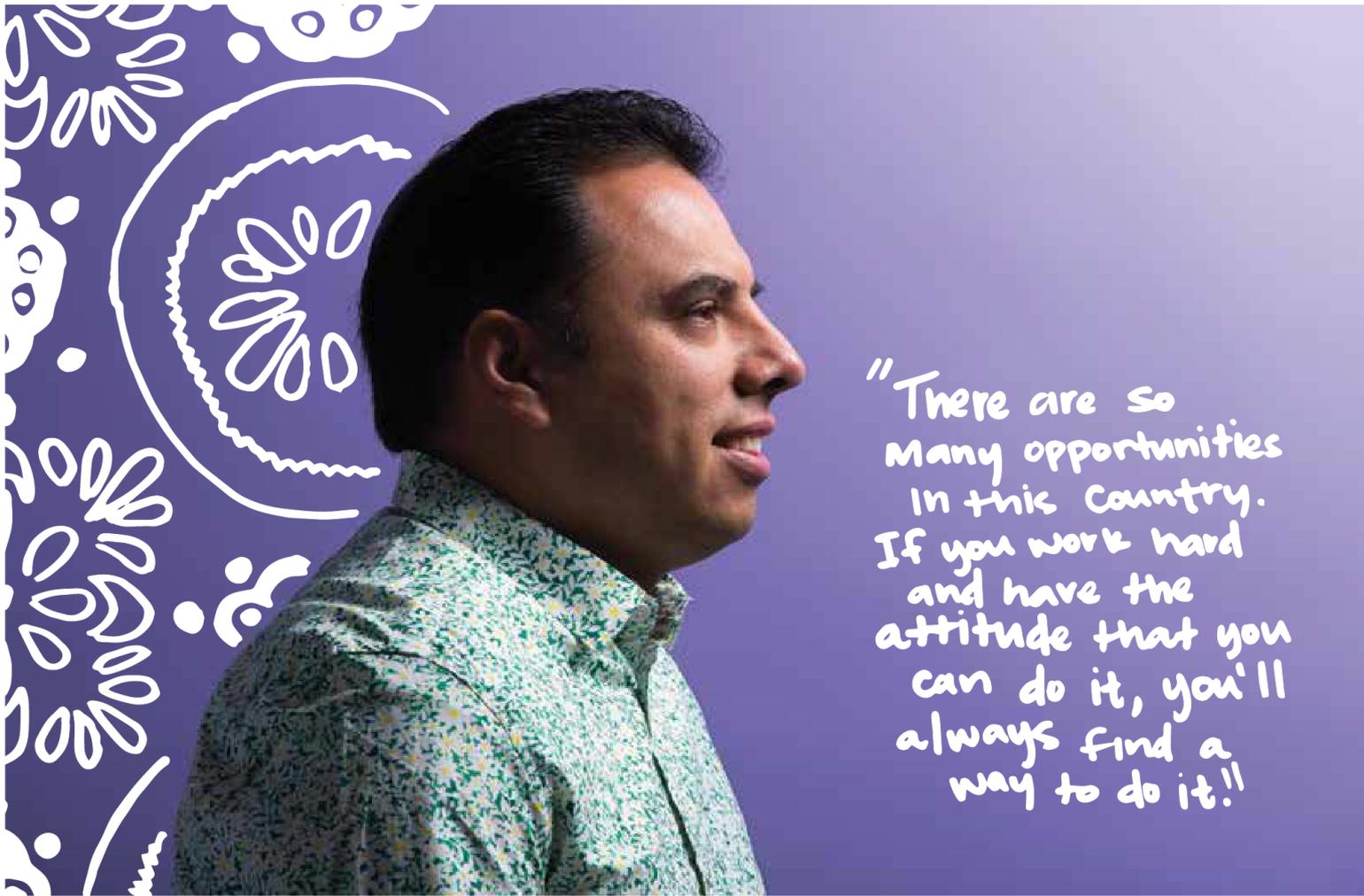
"I never thought I'd have the opportunity to attend a university and earn a degree, especially at my age. It's humbling and extremely empowering."

Johnson wants to use her degree to simply make the world a better place. "It's not about making oodles of money," she says. "It's about laying my head on my pillow at night knowing I've contributed to something to make the world a better place."

The honor student raves about the numerous resources UVU offers to help first-generation students. "Seek help. Seek the wonderful assistance available at UVU."

"Living a life without exploring yourself is not a life at all. Investigate yourself. Be a friend to yourself and guide yourself. Give yourself a chance."





"There are so many opportunities in this country. If you work hard and have the attitude that you can do it, you'll always find a way to do it!!"

## JUAN CARLOS FUENTES GARCIA KNOWLEDGE MEANS FREEDOM

Juan Carlos Fuentes Garcia's father wanted to be a physician but ended up working in the financial profession in order to support his five sons. Since he couldn't attend college, his dream was that all his sons would attend.

As the oldest son, Fuentes studied accounting at a college in Mexico City where he was born and raised. "My goal was to finish college at 25 and get married at 27," he says, "but things don't always work out like you plan."

After a few years of college, he didn't have the money to pay tuition, so he went to work for the international accounting firm Deloitte & Touche. A few years later he and his family started their own business growing tomatoes. "The business was

really good at first, but by our fourth year, the economy and weather were bad so we closed down."

One of his brothers decided to leave the country and asked Fuentes to help drive his family's belongings to Utah. "I thought I'd stay a month or so and help them, and I've been here ever since."

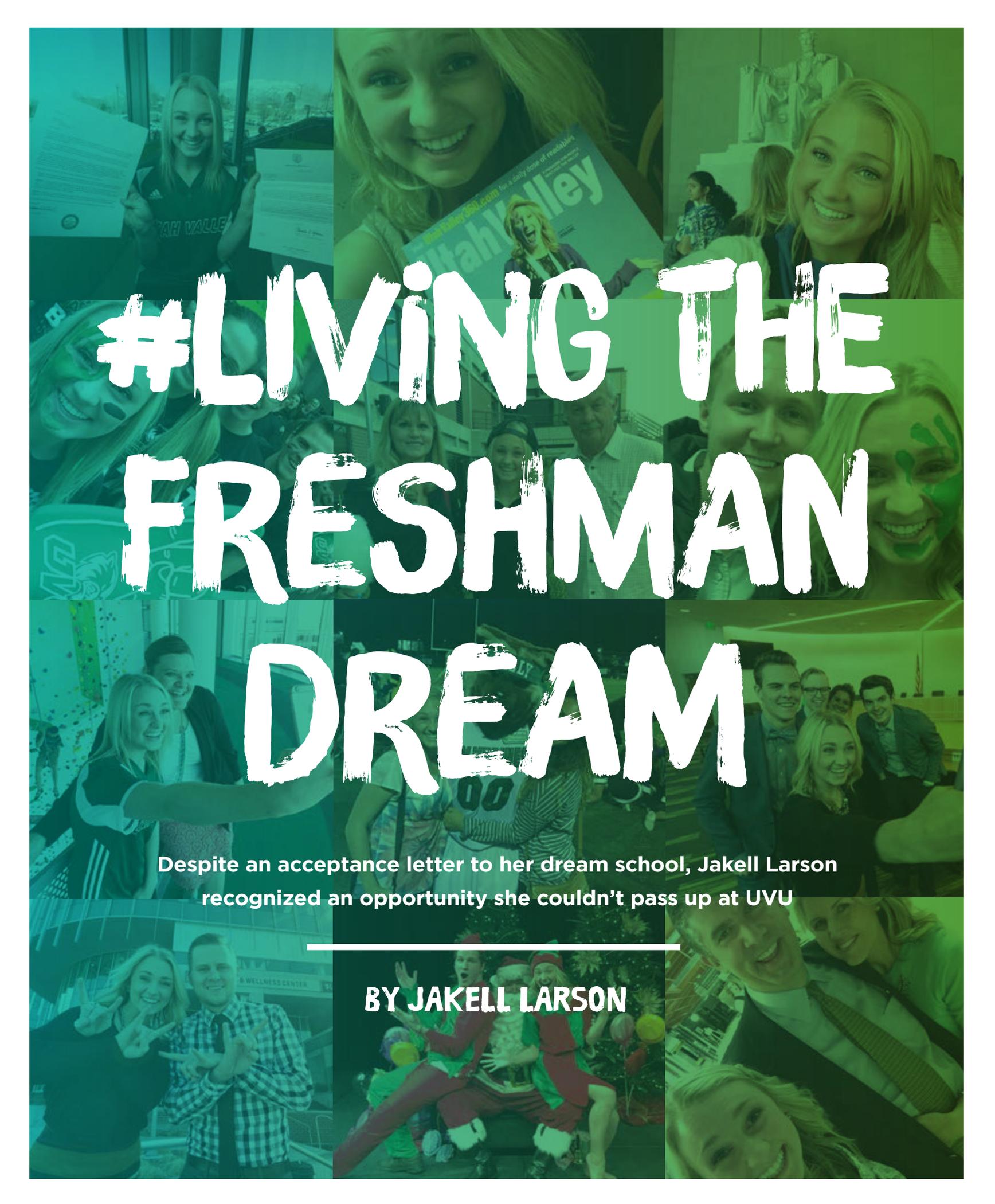
While in Utah, he sought the advice of a mentor who encouraged Fuentes to stay in Utah and learn English. Fuentes' first experience with UVU was with the ESL program. "Once I learned English I felt like that wasn't enough. I knew I needed to finish college."

Since 2008, the graduating international business major has been working in UVU's ESL department and working on his

degree. He has paid for his tuition thanks to his job on campus, multiple scholarships, and loans. "I have had so many opportunities," Fuentes says. "My knowledge and education will not only help me earn a better income, it gives me freedom."

During his time at UVU he has learned the value of helping others find their way. "A lot of young people don't want to go to college. I try to tell them how important it is and direct them down the right path."

"It has been difficult to return to college, especially because I'm older," he says. "But I've learned that if you work hard and have the attitude that you can do it, you'll always find a way to do it."



# #LIVING THE FRESHMAN DREAM

Despite an acceptance letter to her dream school, Jakell Larson recognized an opportunity she couldn't pass up at UVU

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BY JAKELL LARSON

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

Jakell Larson is a freshman studying political science. She was accepted to Georgetown University but chose UVU for its leadership opportunities and the chance to be involved. She was recently elected UVUSA vice president of student activities.

**#UVUfreshman**

Share your UVU freshman experiences by tagging your photos with #UVUfreshman, and let others know about the great things happening at UVU.

Looking back, it was the best decision I ever made. It was fall, my senior year of high school, and I was up late, staring at my computer screen, completely at a loss as to what I was supposed to do. In front of me was my first of many college application essays. I obsessed over that essay for weeks and, after long discussions and many editing sessions, ended up completely scrapping it and re-writing it three separate times before finally hitting the “submit” button. Four short weeks later, I received my acceptance letter to Georgetown University, my dream school, to study political science. At the time, I didn’t realize how big of an impact that letter would have on my life.

I felt like that acceptance letter was a sign that I was supposed to move 2,000 miles away, that this was my shot at turning my passion into something of importance — and this thought terrified me. I had made up my mind that I was going to go — it was my dream school; I had to go! — but I also thought it would be smart to have a backup school. When my parents suggested Utah Valley University, I was not particularly excited. I hadn’t even thought about going to UVU, let alone applying. I wasn’t going to turn down my dream school for an

open-enrollment university 15 minutes from my hometown. But my parents mentioned it a few more times, so I decided a tour wouldn’t hurt. I called my aunt who works at UVU, and she told me her supervisor at the time, Alexis Palmer, would love to show me around campus.

The tour had a much bigger impact on me than I expected. Alexis, now the dean of students, seemed to know just about everyone. As we were walking I got to meet influential people such as the newly elected student body president, Tyler Brklacich, also a political science major. He went out of his way to assure me that if I had any questions about

of the pride she had in her school.

These people were the type of students I knew I wanted to be. They were friendly and caring to me, a prospective student they didn’t even know. After this experience, I applied to UVU and was subsequently torn between two incredible universities. I wish I could say that giving up my dream of living in D.C. was simple, but it wasn’t. I am passionate about government and want to end up working in D.C. one day, but my decision ultimately came down to one thing: UVU provides ways to help invested students excel on every level because the University community cares about students in a different way than any other campus. And that was one opportunity I couldn’t pass up.

UVU is unique because of the way it accepts every student and helps each of us progress on an individual basis. The opportunities at UVU are endless. My freshman year I have planned multiple events, listened to incredible speakers, helped with community service projects, gotten to know people on campus on a personal basis, learned how the University is run, joined different clubs, voted on campus policy, attended leadership conferences, studied political science from inspiring professors, made amazing friends, and witnessed the first Division-I men’s soccer season. I am living the freshman dream — all thanks to UVU.

**"THESE WERE THE TYPE OF STUDENTS I KNEW I WANTED TO BE."**

student government or my degree I could come talk to him. I also talked to Kiahna Campbell, the UVUSA vice president of student activities, and she told me about various programs to look into for scholarships and different ways to get involved. It was like she was setting me up for the perfect college experience because she cared about me as a person. She was selling me on UVU without even realizing it — just because

**PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT:**

**COLUMN 1:** HOLDING ACCEPTANCE LETTERS TO GEORGETOWN & UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY | WITH HER SIGNATURE FACE PAINT AT A UVU MEN'S BASKETBALL GAME | POSING FOR A SELFIE WITH DEAN OF STUDENTS ALEXIS PALMER | WITH UVUSA 2014-2015 STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT TYLER BRKLACICH **COLUMN 2:** SHOWING OFF THE COVER OF UTAH VALLEY MAGAZINE, WHERE SHE WAS FEATURED AS ONE OF 40 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT

COULD CHANGE THE WORLD | WITH HER PARENTS AT FRESHMAN CONVOCATION | HUGGING WILLY | VOLUNTEERING AT THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT CHRISTMAS EVENT FOR CHILDREN **COLUMN 3:** AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C. | WITH STUDENT ALUMNI PRESIDENT ZACH DEARING | WITH THE RECENTLY ELECTED UVUSA PRESIDENCY | WITH PRESIDENT HOLLAND AND PAIGE HOLLAND ON UVU CAMPUS

**UVU**  
ALUMNI

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SEPTEMBER 21-26



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**UVU**  
ALUMNI

# Frames for Your UVU Diploma





**I am UVU**

*ADAM TERRY.* Proprietor of Waffle Love. B.S. Business Management, class of 2009.

"Learning from professors at UVU who were passionate about what they were teaching and who treated me as an individual inspired me to share my passion as an entrepreneur and my love for these excellent waffles!"

Share your story at [uvualumni.org](http://uvualumni.org)