



LETTERS

WINTER 2013

K-State 2025

Student Stephanie Birdsall and alumnus Jim Haymaker — and thousands more — work toward a top 50 K-State

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY
College of Arts & Sciences



K-State 2025

In this issue, you'll learn how College of Arts and Sciences students, faculty, and alumni are working to move the University to its K-State 2025 goal of becoming a top 50 public research university. The plan covers every aspect of the Kansas State identity, including the student experience, faculty and staff, outreach, facilities, and research and creative activities across all majors.

K-State President Kirk Schulz and Dean Peter Dorhout tell us about the strategic, campus-wide initiative and what it means for K-Staters past, present, and future.

What is K-State 2025?

President Schulz: "It's our visionary plan that describes how Kansas State is going to become better in the future. It's one thing to say, 'We want to be bigger, we want to be better,' but I think the key thing about the plan is it's going to have numerical goals that, as we work our way through the next 13 years, people can assess and say, 'Are you making progress?'"

What exactly is a public research university?

President Schulz: "Kansas State has been a public research university for decades. The term 'research university' describes institutions that conduct extensive research on a national or international level. When we first started talking about K-State 2025, Kansas State hadn't regularly used the term 'public research university.' Many of our alumni and friends asked, 'Are you changing my institution?' And we said, 'No, this is just the national set that we compare ourselves to.' We are not changing who we are or our focus on teaching, but we want to make sure that we are improving and looking upwards as we move ahead."

How does research factor into the plan?

Dean Dorhout: "We were created as one of the first land-grant universities, and part of that mission is to do research that impacts the people in our state. We're creating new knowledge; we're adding to our disciplines, and that's going to take a lot of different forms. Research in art is different from research in biology; both are creating something new.

"Research actually generates a stimulating environment here for everybody. It makes faculty more excited. I hope it makes students more excited about participating in the community that we call a university. Most important of all, it makes us a better institution."

How will K-State 2025 research benefit students and alumni?

Dean Dorhout: "It affects future students; it affects the kinds of opportunities they have, but it also impacts the value of the K-State degree. Whatever we can do to build on and improve the reputation of the institution; we build for the future alumni,



KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Arts & Sciences

www.k-state.edu/artsci

Peter Dorhout, Dean
Joseph Aistrup, Associate Dean
Beth Montelone, Associate Dean
Alison Wheatley, Assistant Dean
Sheila Walker, Director of Development,
K-State Foundation
Ryan Kenney, Development Officer,
K-State Foundation

Dean's Office: (785) 532-6900
K-State Foundation Development Office:
(800) 432-1578 or (785) 532-6266

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DAVID MAYES AND MATT BINTER,
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MARKETING PHOTOGRAPHY

but we also build on our past. The value of that degree becomes greater to everyone in the K-State family.”

President Schulz: “It also generates more opportunities for our faculty. When new research opportunities come up, the federal government is going to find the best people it can in the country, and then make a roadmap of where the research ought to go. We need Kansas State sitting at that table. And we do that by having greater recognition of our institution. Bottom line: It’s about opportunity.”

How is the College of Arts and Sciences doing its part?

President Schulz: “The College of Arts and Sciences is the glue that holds campus together. This is really the core, central part of the University that helps teach critical thinking skills, communication skills — the foundation for all of those different professional careers.

“The College of Arts and Sciences was also one of the first out front to publicly say, ‘We think this is where we need to go

as an institution.’ We’re not going to become a top 50 university without the College of Arts and Sciences continuing to elevate itself and its programs.”

How can alumni and friends help K-State achieve its goal?

Dean Dorhout: “A few hundred dollars, a few thousand dollars can go a long way toward helping a student or a faculty member become successful. I give to my *alma maters* because I benefited

from something that someone had given earlier. I received undergraduate research scholarships. I received the opportunity to be a teaching assistant, which ultimately made me excited about becoming a faculty member. I give to reward teaching because of a teacher who turned me around and gave me a chance — everyone has someone who influenced them. Wherever your passion is, whatever causes you to tear up — find a way, even a little way, to remember it.”



*President Schulz and
Dean Dorhout*

For more on K-State 2025, visit
www.k-state.edu/2025.



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Manhattan... New York



*Joey Boos
promotes
"Fashionistas"
in the heart of
Times Square.*

Theatre faculty and students premiere a Big Apple production

The lights go down, just before the curtain goes up. The hurried thumping of your heart is the only sound you hear. Thoughts flood your mind, and adrenaline seems to fill every part of you.

It's a familiar sensation to K-State theatre majors — that rush of excitement and nervous energy that hits just before the opening of a show. And for several K-Staters, the summer of 2012 meant taking those feelings to a brand new city and stage. Seven students and six faculty and staff spent a solid month in the theatre center of the world: the *other* Manhattan. There, in New York City, they unveiled the world premiere of "Fashionistas: A Narcissistic Love Story," a modern retelling of the classic story of Echo and Narcissus — set in the world of high fashion.

The group was led by K-State Theatre's Jennifer Vellenga, assistant professor and head of acting and directing. And the production was funded entirely by Kansas State University.

"It is amazing that we pulled it off. It was a lot. We basically created a company from scratch, took that company to New York, and put it up in New York. They built the set here and they drove it to New York," Vellenga said.



*Katie McClellan,
professional actor*



*George Matthews,
technical director*



*Joey Boos,
student actor*

“The students were not sitting in the back of the theater just observing. They were put to work. But they also had a month in New York City, which is life-changing.”

Students of the Theatre

“Fashionistas” is the brainchild of Janet Allard, a playwright and Vellenga’s former university colleague. From the moment Allard recruited her to serve as producer and director, Vellenga was thrilled. Not only was this a great job for her as a professional director, but she knew what an unparalleled experience it would be for her students.

“I think it’s important for students to have some real-world experiences in addition to their classroom studies.

Instead of telling students, “This is what it will be like when you are out of school,” they experience the profession as it exists today. They come back and apply it in the classroom, they inform other students, and it all informs the work happening on the K-State stage.”

With only a few spots available, Vellenga selected students who were motivated and independent, and who could hold their own with professionals. Joey Boos — whom Vellenga calls “a fantastic actor and just a good all-around person” — was one of the students who fit the bill.

“I had the time of my life out there,” said Boos, junior in theatre. “I was able to see so many things, experience so many things, and meet so many different

in political science). Chelsey Eimer, ’12 B.S. theatre, used knowledge from her public relations and marketing classes to promote the show on Facebook and Twitter. Three graduate students also made the trip: Dillon Artzer acted as assistant director, Zach Oehm served as assistant technical director, and Libby Uthoff was the assistant lighting designer.

Rounding out the group on the faculty side were associate professor Kathy Voecks (scene designer), associate professor Dana Pinkston (costume designer), assistant professor Dwight Tolar (the role of Rafael), costume shop supervisor Melissa Salvatore (cutter/draper), and scene shop supervisor George Matthews (technical director).



Assistant professor/actor Dwight Tolar (far left) and student actors Joey Boos (fourth from right), Alex Gaines (second from right), and Eric Brown (far right) take a bow with the rest of the cast.



Jennifer Vellenga (left) with professional actor Katie McClellan.

people — all in the world of theatre, which I love and I want to pursue, especially in a big city like New York. That’s where I want to be one day.”

Along with Boos, participating K-State students included actors Alex Gaines (sophomore in theatre) and Eric Brown (junior

There was even a K-State alumna, Laura Lindsay, working as stage manager.

New York, New York

From July 22 to Aug. 19, the group lived and breathed the production, doing whatever was necessary to pull off 10 professional shows. The students promoted the play in Times Square, and attended two weeks of intense rehearsals. Virtually every part of the production relied on them.

“They understudied the larger parts, and they played smaller parts. They

worked with these professional actors, promoted the show, built the set — just anything we needed them to do. And they were well trained for that, because that's what K-State is really known for: creating a well-rounded theatre student who can tackle all areas."

In addition to acting, Boos's responsibilities included working on costumes and assistant stage managing.

"What I realized during this trip is that it's so different to be sitting in a classroom reading a book about the professional world. Actually being there, you're submersed in it. You have to do it," he said.

"I was learning, but I had a job to do, too. I had to take it seriously."

Going Professional

It was Aug. 8 when the curtain went up for the first time, at The Theater at 30th Street in New York City. The crowd included a handful of theatre students who flew out for the occasion, some recent alumni, and even Boos's father.

"It was sold out — we had to bring in folding chairs to the front row. We were absolutely packed on opening night. It was crazy," Vellenga said.

"Backstage, everybody was all excited and hyped up, and just so ready," Boos continued. "There's always a big sense of community backstage."

That sense of community was largely due to the group of professional actors Vellenga handpicked for the show. She selected just 10 from the more than 800 who submitted headshots and resumes.

"I had long conversations with each of them before I hired them, saying, 'Part of the mission of this project is to mentor these students. Are you up for the task?' And they all were."

For the students, it was a chance to pick the actors' brains about what it's like to be in theatre professionally.

"We asked them questions about everything from just budgeting and regular life to going on auditions," Boos said.

A K-State Production

From the earliest stages of the yearlong effort, Vellenga's plans received immediate and wholehearted support

University-wide. The production came to life with multiple grants from K-State: a College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Enhancement Program Award, a Provost's Academic Excellence Award, and a University Small Research Grant, as well as private donations through the K-State Foundation. The K-State Theater Guild also helped raise money and spread the word. Vellenga and the K-State Foundation even formed Konza Theatre Company to raise money for new productions like these.

And this is just the sort of project the University is pushing for with its K-State 2025 initiative, which aims to reach the status of a top 50 public research university.

"This is our artistic research; it's the equivalent of research in any other area. And by going out and taking our work out, it does elevate our national profile. And I think that's what the president is looking for with 2025," Vellenga said.

Souvenirs

The group squeezed in a whole lot of living in one month, according to Boos.

"Everybody talks about it — New York, theatre. But actually being there and meeting the people and seeing how things work, how jobs work...it just showed me that it is *possible*. It's not this thing out in another world that I can't accomplish one day."

The show's final performance was on Saturday, Aug. 18. The group returned to the Little Apple around midnight on Sunday, with the fall semester's courses starting the very next morning.

And though the workload was tremendous, and the time in New York was practically a blur for Vellenga, in the end, she knows it was all worth it.

"Joey's dad came up to me on opening night and he said, 'I know this was a lot of work, but all I can tell you is: You changed these kids' lives.' And I thought, 'That's all I need to know.'"

NEW SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE

The arts are in the spotlight at Kansas State University. In June 2012, K-State's performing arts programs were elevated to school status in the new School of Music, Theatre, and Dance.

The Kansas Board of Regents supported the status change, which was linked to a spring 2012 realignment involving two former departments: the Department of Music and the Department of Communication Studies, Theatre, and Dance. Communication Studies is now a separate department.

"Raising the profile of these programs fits the K-State 2025 strategic plan to promote academics, creative endeavor, and scholarship," said Peter Dorhout, College of Arts and Sciences dean.

The new school is home to approximately 500 majors and 50-plus faculty and staff. On top of that, more than 4,000 students University-wide — nearly 20 percent — participate in performing arts classes every year. Together, these students put on 100-plus public performances annually.

Gary Mortenson, professor of music, was named the inaugural director of the school.

Source: K-State News and Editorial Services

FUND THEATRE PROJECTS

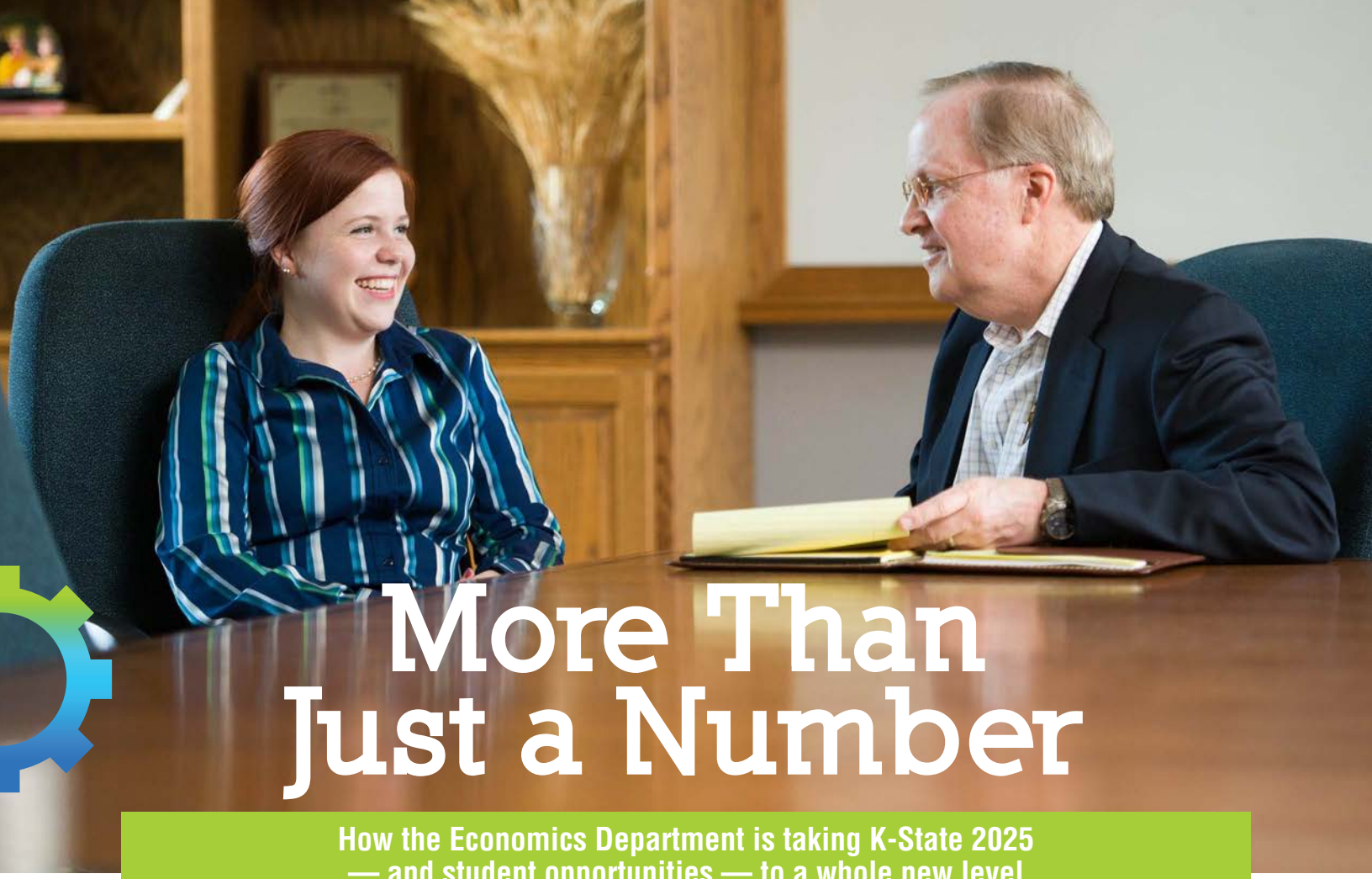


THE NEED:

Konza Theatre Company funding to develop and present new theatre productions — the research equivalent for theatre faculty and students

TO HELP:

Sheila Walker, director of development, sheilaw@found.ksu.edu, 800-432-1578



More Than Just a Number

How the Economics Department is taking K-State 2025 — and student opportunities — to a whole new level

Living in a nation that is slowly recovering from one of the greatest recessions in its history, students in the Economics Department at K-State understand why the intense study of our economy is essential for progress. Those who succeed in such a field are proactive planners, eagerly researching trends and keeping a steady eye on the future in order to become a special breed of fortunetellers.

Perhaps that is why, when it comes to putting the goals of K-State 2025 into action, the Economics Department has already found itself ahead of the curve.

A Department With Direction

For many people, retirement is a chance to slow down, to finally take time for one's self and relax. Jim Haymaker is not one of those people.

Haymaker, who earned a degree in economics from K-State in 1969, recently retired from a long, successful career with Cargill as corporate vice president of strategy and business development. Prior to his retirement, Haymaker contacted Bill Blankenau, head of the

Economics Department, and shared his interest in becoming more involved.


"I'm an example of someone who really enjoyed my education at K-State, and put aspects of it to work in the business world," Haymaker said. "These courses reach out to people and touch them in ways that are life-altering for them."

So when the University began planning for K-State 2025, Blankenau knew just who to call to chair the Advisory Council that would head up the Department's efforts. While at Cargill, Haymaker spearheaded a planning process known as Strategic Intent, which the Department is tailoring to its own initiatives.

Aside from its involvement with Strategic Intent, the Advisory Council currently has two main goals. The first is to seek out student mentorship opportunities that will provide a smoother and more informed transition to the workplace.

The second is centered on giving greater access to an economics degree by reaching ambitious funding goals for scholarships. Before the Advisory Council was established, the Department had only four scholarships available, which



A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue short-sleeved button-down shirt, sitting at a desk and using a computer mouse. A man with a beard and balding head, wearing a dark blazer over a light blue striped shirt, stands behind her, pointing at a computer monitor. The background shows a laboratory or office environment with shelves and other computer equipment. A teal banner with white diagonal stripes is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text.

Conquering Cancer

*Pamela Maynez with her
mentor, Professor Stefan
Bossmann.*

CHEMISTRY STUDENTS USE RESEARCH AWARDS TO DISCOVER NEW POSSIBILITIES

Angela Grommet spends her spare time reading novels by the Bronte sisters. For Pamela Maynez, baking desserts for her friends — especially her favorite treat, *flan* — brings her joy. Stefan Bossmann, Ph.D., is a musical man, once aspiring to be a composer. And Christer Aakeröy, Ph.D., considers the kitchen to be his laboratory.

What do these four seemingly ordinary people have in common? Every day, these students and faculty members work side by side in the chemistry labs at Kansas State, asking questions and exploring new ideas that lead to exciting discoveries — particularly in the realm of cancer research.

Research With Purpose

Pamela Maynez, a first-generation college student, had never even taken a chemistry course when she began her freshman year at Dodge City Community College. By the time she transferred to K-State for her junior year, she was pairing up with Stefan Bossmann, professor of chemistry, to work on research that would win her the first of two Cancer Research Awards from the Johnson Center for Basic Cancer Research.

“This was my first time in research — I didn’t know anything about it,” Maynez said. “He opened the door for me. He

supports me, and he definitely believes in me.”

For both Bossmann and Maynez, the pathway to cancer research was a natural one. Both had watched family members battle cancer, and wanted to put their efforts toward a cure.

“My father passed away from lung cancer, and my wife is a melanoma survivor, so cancer hit home really hard,” Bossmann said. “I’ve always had an academic interest in doing something that is potentially worthwhile. When you do something against cancer, you cannot dangle your feet in the water. You have to jump right in and really try to make an impact.”

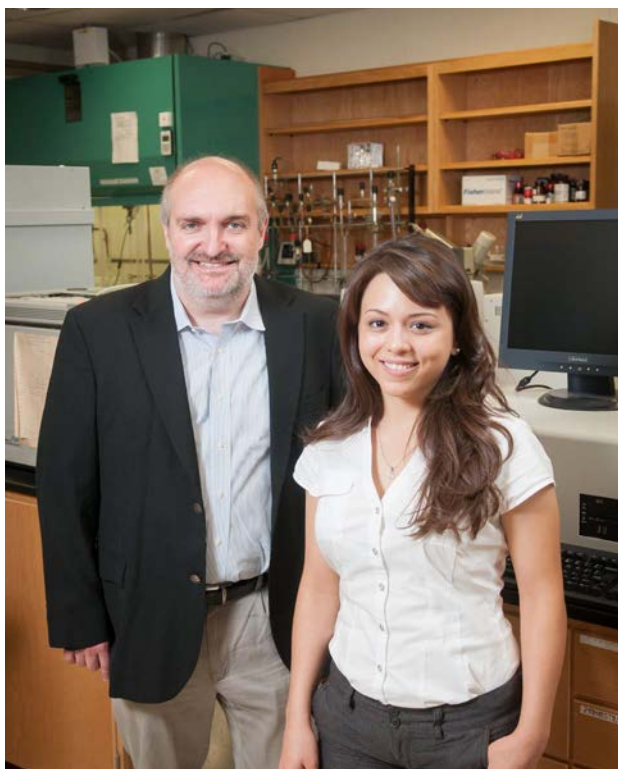
Bossmann and Maynez, in collaboration with Deryl Troyer, professor of anatomy and physiology, have been researching ways to detect cancer-related enzymes in small blood samples, a comparatively less invasive method that has the potential to detect cancer at an earlier stage. So far, this research has been tested on breast, lung, pancreatic, lymphoma, and melanoma cancers. In August, Bossmann and Troyer received more than \$300,000 in funding from the National Science Foundation to continue this research. Maynez and Bossmann are also working on a treatment method that would target and kill the most active cells of a tumor — the stem cells — and only require about one percent of the drugs that are presently needed.

“The best thing is knowing that our research will probably be influential,” Maynez said. “Right now, what I’m doing seems small, but in the big picture it is meaningful.”

Journey to Discovery

Angela Grommet, a senior at K-State, had no plans of becoming a researcher until she took an honors chemistry course during her freshman year with Christer Aakeröy, university distinguished professor of chemistry.

“I was initially going to go into chemical engineering,”



Grommet said. “I really enjoyed Dr. Aakerøy’s class, and I knew he was a chemist, so I made an appointment to speak with him. He suggested that I try research...and I fell in love with exploring how things work.”

Aakerøy, who has received over \$2 million in research funding from organizations such as the National Science Foundation, is quick to see the potential in his students and involve them in research at the undergraduate level. Since 2010, Grommet and Aakerøy have been a team, working on various research projects together. While neither of them specifically had cancer in mind when they began, they quickly realized the potential of their findings.

“Cancer research was not the starting point,” Aakerøy said. “It was only after several years of working in this area that we realized that what we knew could actually be used for developing better cancer drugs.”

Aakerøy and Grommet are working on understanding the binding patterns of different types of compounds. Using the “rules” that Aakerøy and Grommet are developing, chemists could create a molecular capsule that would break down and release the cancer drug when exposed to the higher acidity of cancer cells. If successful, this strategy could lead to more carefully targeted and controlled delivery of cancer drugs.

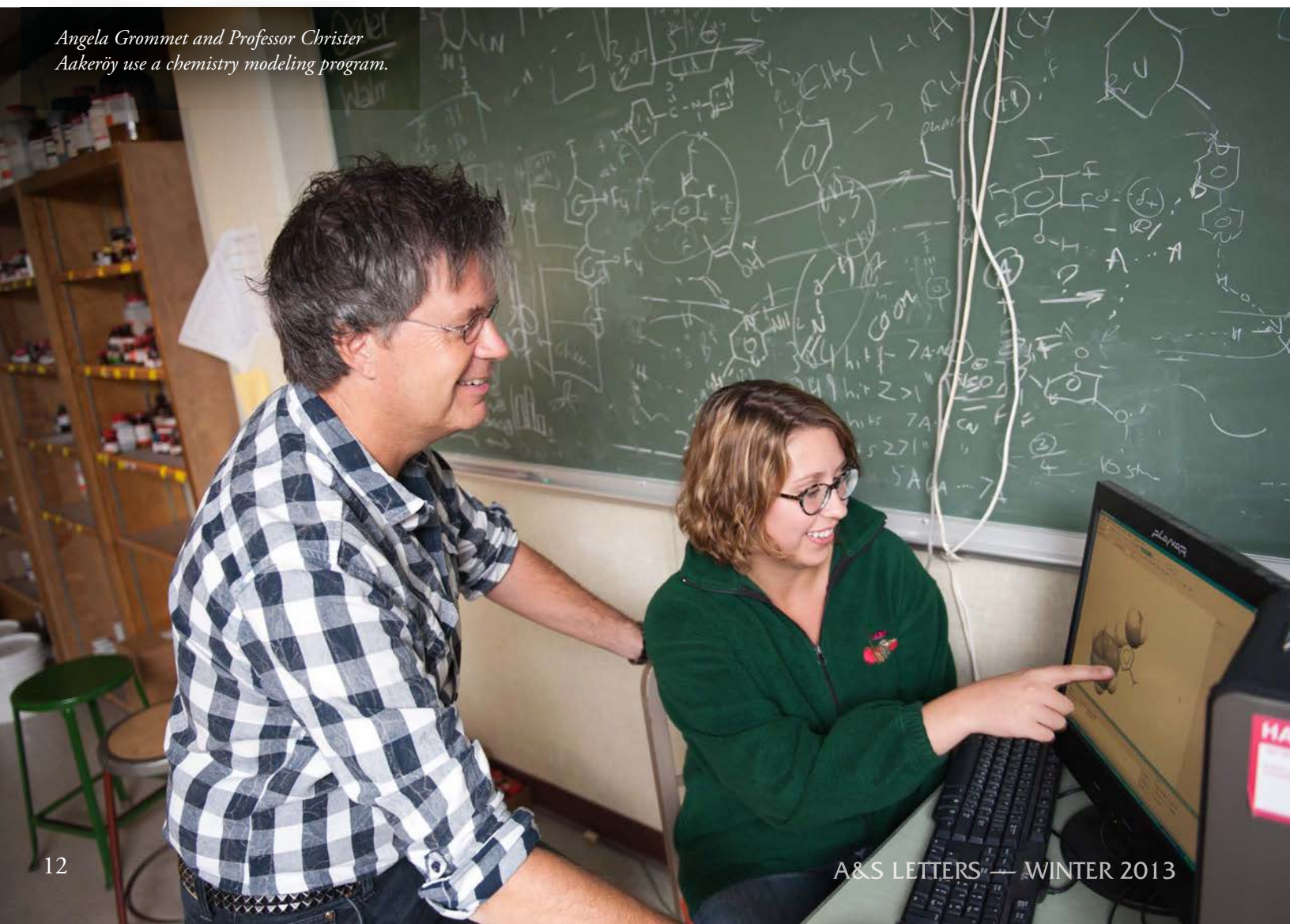
Grommet’s curiosity and dedication have helped her to gain some notable achievements. Among them are two Cancer Research Awards from the Johnson Center, and being named a 2012 Barry M. Goldwater Scholar, a prestigious national honor given to a small percentage of undergraduate applicants in the fields of mathematics, science, or engineering. As excited as Grommet was to earn such an award, the lessons and values she has acquired from conducting research have given her a new perspective on what matters.

“A lot of it can be frustrating, but for me, the most exciting part of doing research is when I see a pattern in the chemistry that possibly no one else has seen before,” Grommet said. “For me, it is more about the process of getting to that point than actually receiving the prize.”

Making It All Possible

The driving force behind many of the cancer research projects at K-State is the Johnson Center for Basic Cancer Research. Every year, the Johnson Center uses funds from private donors to award tens of thousands of dollars directly to undergraduates conducting cancer research in all disciplines, which is on top of the funding and support they provide for faculty and graduate students.

Angela Grommet and Professor Christer Aakerøy use a chemistry modeling program.



“It helps keep students motivated,” said Maynez of the Johnson Center. “It’s definitely important to have those funds to keep the research going.”

“We need a center which dares to invest in basic research and new methods that have not been tried,” added Bossmann. “To create a chance to really cure cancer, we have to develop new ways of tackling cancer — *that* we have to do with funds from private donors.”

The connection between funding and better research is an infinite cycle: more funding leads to better research, which attracts more students and researchers, further improving the research and leading to more funding for the University. The researchers at K-State know all too well what will happen if this cycle does not continue in the future.

“If science stops, the world stops completely,” Aakeröy said. “Everything we take for granted — cell phones, synthetic materials, plastics, pharmaceuticals — all come from science. If we don’t have the technology to make advances, we can never expect to stay on top.”

While student researchers such as Grommet and Maynez have witnessed the benefits of generous funding and support, they have also seen areas where there is room for improvement. Grommet gave one example of the Chemistry Department not having enough X-ray diffractometers for the number of samples that need to be processed, sometimes resulting in a long wait list. By the time they have access to the machine, many of the samples are no longer good.

“If we want to be one of the great research universities in the U.S., we really do need better instrumentation,” Grommet said. “We have the faculty, we have the students — we need the instruments.”

K-State 2025: Real Outcomes

For these researchers, K-State’s goal to become a top 50 public research university has implications that are far from abstract.

“We have a lot of brilliant minds and talented students doing research, and I think we could attract *more* students with the 2025 plan, which will push us to a higher level and let us do greater things,” Maynez said.

Having such a status will not only attract more high-profile students, but it will also help students achieve their goals once they graduate. For both Grommet and Maynez, research experiences at K-State have made a definite impact on their lives, especially when it comes to their futures.

“Starting out at K-State, I kind of knew that I liked chemistry and math, but all I was really aware of was working some kind of industry job, which didn’t sound very exciting. Now, I *know* where I want to go — I want to be like Dr. Aakeröy,” Grommet said. “I want to have my own lab, do my own research, teach,



“He [Professor Aakeröy] suggested that I try research... and I fell in love with exploring how things work.”
—Angela Grommet

and make the differences that he has made in students’ lives. I’m much more excited about my future now.”

Maynez has plans to pursue a dual M.D./Ph.D. in order to advance her research.

“Hopefully, I will continue to do cancer research and possibly find a treatment. I want to have an impact on people’s lives.”

For the professors who act as mentors, it is gratifying to see how research opportunities can help students transform into scholars. Though it’s more than a decade away, there are feelings in the Chemistry Department, at least, that a part of the K-State 2025 goal has already been met.

“I could not think of a better job to have than this, and the students make that possible,” Aakeröy said. “If it was only based on the students, we would already be one of those top 50.”



SUPPORT CANCER RESEARCH

THE NEED:

Johnson Center for Basic Cancer Research funding for student and faculty research, lab equipment, student travel to conferences and workshops

TO HELP:

Sheila Walker, director of development,
sheilaw@found.ksu.edu, 800-432-1578



Faculty physicists Robert Szoszkiewicz (left), Jeremy Schmit (center), and Bret Flanders (standing)

BIG-PICTURE PHYSICS

The potentially life-changing (and utterly cool) work of three K-State physicists

It reads like the plot of a mind-bending movie: Scientists studying and manipulating cells and molecules invisible to the naked eye...while the health of the world's population hangs in the balance.

But this scenario is far from a movie. It's real life for three faculty phenoms

in Kansas State University's biological physics group, which uses physics methods to study living organisms. Assistant professors Jeremy Schmit, Ph.D., and Robert Szoszkiewicz, Ph.D., and associate professor Bret Flanders, Ph.D., look at matter so tiny that it's measured in nanometers — or *billionths*

of a meter. Yet no matter how small a scale they work in, the results could lead to an impact of the biggest kind. These three are taking aim at diseases we're all touched by in one way or another: cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's, to name a few.

Cause and Treatment

A theoretical physicist, Jeremy Schmit researches protein aggregation — or how proteins stick together.

“Diseases like Alzheimer’s, Huntington’s, Parkinson’s — these are all caused by proteins that clump together in your brain,” Schmit said. “So I’m trying to figure out from a physical point of view: What is it that causes them to clump together? What can we do to mitigate that?”

While trying to figure out what causes problems on the biological side, Schmit also partners with biotechnology company Amgen to address the treatment end of things. His charge is to figure out how



to transport delicate, disease-treating proteins from the manufacturing plant to the patient...without having them fall apart.

Nature’s Mistakes

Like Schmit, Robert Szoszkiewicz’s work concentrates on proteins. Instead of looking at how proteins group together, though, Szoszkiewicz studies how they fold, which determines how they behave. He and some colleagues have developed a new tool that sheds light on the process.

“Proteins sometimes make mistakes; they do not fold in the way they should. If we know the intermediate steps, we can say what happened during each step, and maybe we can apply some molecular agents which will correct the steps,” said Szoszkiewicz, who has also collaborated with biochemistry faculty to observe proteins linked specifically to breast cancer.

“There are many diseases associated with protein folding: many cancers and

many neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer’s, Huntington’s, mad cow disease. We can maybe contribute to understanding some parts of this puzzle.”

Small-Scale Surgery

Much like his colleagues, Bret Flanders is taking on some of health’s biggest challenges. He and his team spent the last five years creating nanomaterials that let them work on an extremely small scale. And now Flanders has an ambitious plan to revolutionize surgery — for cancer, in vitro fertilization, and even root canals.

“One area that we’re keenly interested in is developing the tools to do surgical procedures on a single-cellular or few-cellular level. That’s probably 10 years down the road,” Flanders said.

“The idea is that if you can work on this small of a scale, you can impact fewer cells in the body. Theoretically, you could remove just the cancerous cells without affecting the healthy ones. Or you could treat an infected area without disturbing the area around it.”

Students in the Mix

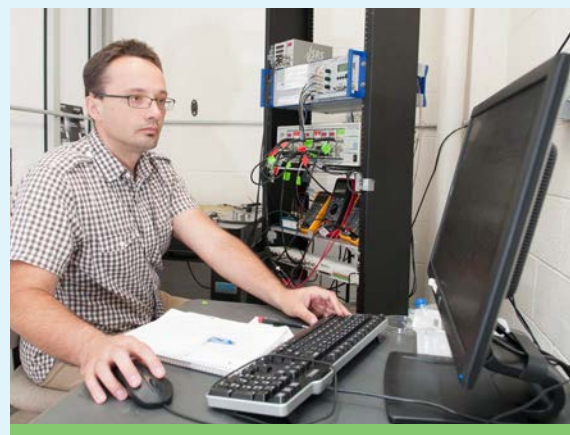
To date, this faculty trio has earned grants from the National Science Foundation (Flanders, Szoszkiewicz), the Johnson Center for Basic Cancer Research (Szoszkiewicz), and biotechnology company Amgen (Schmit). And while funding is always limited, their ideas are not. For that reason, each of them heads up a research team of postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and undergraduates to help bring their many notions to life.

All three faculty members characterize the students — in particular the grad students — as absolutely crucial to the success of the Department and its research.

“Far and away, hands-on lab work on a common project is the most rewarding because the student develops quicker, I learn something, and the project advances,” Flanders said.

K-State 2025

The ultimate goal for these teachers and researchers is simple: use science to change the world for the better. It’s a goal that dovetails nicely with the University’s K-State 2025 goal of becoming a top 50



public research institution, Schmit says.

“We’re all in this trying to do the most influential research possible, and to try to have the biggest impact on the field as possible. And there’s a big feedback loop there: The better the research you’re doing, the more students want to come and work in your department, and the more people pay attention to the work that comes out of your department. You can come at this with an entirely self-serving point of view, but it feeds back into those big-picture goals.”



PROPEL PHYSICS



THE NEED:

Scholarship funding for graduate students, who are invaluable to the Department’s research and national reputation

TO HELP:

Sheila Walker, director of development, sheilaw@found.ksu.edu, 800-432-1578

Remembering Shirley Olson



When Shirley Olson first set foot in the dean's office of the College of Arts and Sciences, she was a 26-year-old woman, practically a newlywed to husband Willard, with just two professional experiences to her name. She was not yet a mother, not yet a boss, not yet helping direct the largest college at Kansas State University. That was in 1965. She *began* in an entry-level administrative position. What she *became* was absolutely indispensable, acting as assistant to the dean until just days before her passing in July 2012.

Former Dean William L. Stamey, who served from 1969 to 1987, is Olson's self-proclaimed "oldest friend" in the College. It was in fall of 1965, as then-associate dean, that he hired her on to the dean's office.

"It had been a clerical position, helping with the budget and so on. Very quickly, Shirley just took over, and I was so glad. She remade the position in her image, which as images go was just about as good as it gets," Stamey said.

"In the time I was associate dean and dean, we never added a single employee in that office. And the College maybe doubled in size. She just managed things so well as the person in charge. In the College, when you mentioned 'Shirley,' that was a name that meant something. Nobody ever said, 'Shirley who?'"

Annette Maggio, administrative assistant to the dean, began working alongside Olson in 1980, and the two became fast friends.

"My relationship with Shirley spans 32 years. She hired me in my young adulthood. I was with her longer than I lived with the family I was born into," Maggio said. "We had an understanding in our working relationship: I knew I had to make things happen if that's what she wanted — period.

"I would tease her sometimes and call her colonel. Sometimes I'd promote her up to general!"

The nicknames were a good fit. Olson was fiercely devoted to keeping the College running like clockwork.

She trained an incredible 10 deans during her tenure, along with supervising the College's complicated budget, managing the entirety of the dean's office staff, and staying connected to the heads of every department (26 at last count).

But Olson did more than that. She remembered birthdays, sewed on buttons, cooked mini-feasts for the entire office, took deans suit shopping, and looked after the well-being of every person she came across.

When she announced that she was pregnant with her son, Casey, she worried because her due date fell during the busy class registration season. When she went on vacation (ever so rarely), she insisted on calling in to the office. When a struggling student worker abruptly stopped showing up to work and class, Olson sought her out, convincing her to finish school and make something of herself. Later, she even helped plan the young woman's wedding.

Olson was, in no uncertain terms, the College matriarch, according to her last dean, Peter Dorhout.

"Shirley was kind of like your mom...with this College, in particular. Like your mom, she helped manage everything from the beginning. She had a way of caring for everybody, regardless of their faults — and she knew your faults, just like your mom."

For the first time in 47 years, Shirley Olson isn't the first to arrive and the last to leave in the dean's office each day. And it's still hard for those in the College to believe. But her presence, in a way, remains.

"She was the rock of the College — the constant across 10 generations of deans, countless faculty, innumerable staff, so many student workers," Dorhout said.

"That was her upbringing — the Lutheran farm-girl work ethic. And I think a lot of people around here really tried to emulate that. She stimulated that in all of us."

HONOR SHIRLEY OLSON

THE NEED:

Shirley L. Olson Memorial Fund scholarships

TO HELP:

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2012 ALUMNI MERIT AWARD

CHRIS STEINCAMP

Proud Alumnus:
'89 B.A.Sc. geology

Other Education:
'93 J.D., Washburn University School of Law

Career Highlights:
An environmental attorney, Steincamp is a managing partner at Depew Gillen Rathbun & McInteer, LC, in Wichita, Kan. He is very active in his field — contributing work to professional publications and journals, giving seminars to professional and educational groups, and serving as a member and past president of Kansas State University's Geology Alumni Advisory Council.

A Few Words:
"Chris has achieved great respect, specializing in legal issues involving environmental concerns. He continued his education after his bachelor's degree by completing a law degree, and he maintains his professional standing as a licensed professional geologist in the state of Kansas. He may well be unique among our alumni."

— *George Clark, head of K-State's Department of Geology, who nominated Steincamp*

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Vickie Choitz with Dean Peter Dorhout.

VICKIE CHOITZ

Proud Alumna:

'98 B.A. political science and secondary education, secondary major in women's studies

Other Education:

'01 M.S. public policy, Harvard University (Truman Scholarship)

Current Position:

Senior policy analyst with the Center for Law and Social Policy in Washington, D.C., where she advocates for low-income, lower-skilled adults

A Few Words:

"Vickie's career success exemplifies the quality and commitment of our students, and the work she does exemplifies our departmental objective of putting those talents and passions to work to improve the lives of the disadvantaged in our communities."

— Michele Janette, head of K-State's Women's Studies Department, who nominated Choitz

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The Land Grant Legacy Society represents the past, present, and future of Kansas State University. The society, which is part of the KSU Foundation Presidents Club, honors alumni and friends who have chosen to support the University by including K-State in their estate plans. By remembering the College of Arts and Sciences in their estate plans or deferred gift arrangements last fiscal year, these alumni ensure future opportunities for the students and faculty of tomorrow.

Doug and Lucinda Anstaett
Kyle and Gail Antenen
Cheryl Blake
Mark Chapman and Cheryl Mellenthin
Bunny Clark
Steve and Karla Fisher
Aaron Otto
Tim and Sharon Taylor
Robert Williams
Mel Zimmerman