

Hit the ground running

Top of Utah Voices



**Michael
Vaughan**

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Commentary

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In a few weeks, more than 1.4 million students will graduate with bachelor degrees from the nation's colleges and universities. Most of the colleges and universities across the country strive to give their students an advantage over the competition as they compete for jobs or admittance into graduate school.

The quest for a competitive advantage is understandable. The global playing field has intensified competition. Today's graduates will compete for jobs with the graduates from schools across the United States, and they will also face competition from highly educated professionals around the world.

Many universities are preparing their students for the demands of careers and post-graduate education through an undergraduate research experience.

Weber State University is

focused on military personnel working late-night shifts at Hill Air Force Base and other military facilities. Fatigue-related accidents cost the Air Force \$54 million annually and threaten homeland security.

Kristena studied 13 military air traffic and weapons controllers working rapidly rotating shift work schedules, using

a portable light-therapy device in a head visor. Fatigue measures were taken before and after the light treatment. Her research showed that exposure to bright light significantly reduced cognitive and physiological fatigue among the workers. Shift workers at Hill have incorporated fatigue countermeasures which Kristena found to be effective.

The significance of

Kristena's research led to her being selected to present at the National Posters on the Hill event in Washington, D.C., on April 25. Her project is one of only 60 selected from across the nation. This is the third consecutive year a WSU student has been selected for this prestigious competition, a distinction no other university in the state can claim.

Another student, WSU clinical laboratory science senior Michael McQuilkin, has worked closely with his instructor Travis Price and local hospitals to test for bacterial resistance in urinary-tract infections, which cause millions of clinical visits every year. Michael's research has shown that two of the most-prescribed antibiotics are largely ineffective and can actually worsen the condition. Michael's findings are being distributed in the local and national health care communities to positively

influence patient care.

This month, Michael's research was recognized nationally at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research in San Francisco. As a result of his undergraduate research experience, Michael was recently offered a job at the renowned Mayo Clinic.

Northern Utah will have an opportunity to see an especially creative example of undergraduate research on April 25 at Perry's Egyptian Theater in downtown Ogden. Issac Goeckeritz will premiere his new documentary film "Ogden: Junction City of the West." Issac, a WSU geography major, worked with history professor Gene Sessions on the documentary film, which chronicles the vast changes that the Transcontinental Railroad brought to Ogden. Issac worked three years

pulling together archival film and photographs, along with personal narratives, to tell the story of the importance in the 19th and 20th centuries of the railroad in Ogden. Issac plans to seek an internship with the filmmaker Ken Burns.

These are just three examples of undergraduate research. More than 3,000 WSU graduates will receive their diplomas on May 3 at in the Dee Events Center. For many of these graduates, a meaningful part of their undergraduate experience will have been the opportunity to work side-by-side with a dedicated faculty member. These students will hit the ground running. Their WSU education has prepared them to compete successfully, and their experience will benefit them and the communities in which they live.



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