Every day is Earth Day at ESF and now, thanks to a joint proclamation by the city of Syracuse and Onondaga County, every Earth Day will also be known as SUNY ESF Day.

In recognizing the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22 this year, the city and county also recognized the contributions ESF has made to local, state and national environmental and sustainability efforts.

“It is important now, more than ever, that we be good stewards of our local environment. SUNY ESF has been a leader in this front, and it is fitting that we recognize their efforts on Earth Day,” said County Executive Ryan McMahon.

“SUNY ESF has played an integral role in Syracuse’s emergence as a leader in sustainability and green technology,” said city of Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh. “The College has produced some of the foremost leaders in environmental stewardship and natural resource management, and has made significant contributions throughout the Central New York region and around the world. It is fitting to honor ESF with a proclamation on this day recognizing 50 years of coordinated efforts to protect the earth, and I’m proud to have this world-class institution right in our own backyard.”

“We are honored to have the work of our faculty and students recognized with this proclamation,” said David Amberg, then-interim president. “The College’s mission is at the very heart of Earth Day, as developing sustainable solutions for every facet of life is the foundation for all that we do. We prepare graduates to meet the critical call to action for clean air; clean water; to protect, preserve, and understand biodiversity; and to ignite a passion in those around us for caring for the world that gives so much to us.”

The joint proclamation was issued by the city and county on April 22, 2020. This year the College celebrated Earth Week with virtual celebrations in light of the pandemic. In the fall, the College expects to celebrate the half-birthday of SUNY ESF Day with a day of in-person events that recommit the College and local community to the united spirit and sense of shared responsibility that originally energized this movement on April 22, 1970.

Photograph by Wendy P. Osborne
FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dear Members of the ESF Community,

The fall 2020 semester is almost upon us, and I am excited to confirm that the search for ESF’s next president is progressing as planned. Please continue to watch your inbox for periodic updates or visit our website at www.esf.edu/president-search.htm.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to extend my appreciation to Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration Joe Rufo, who agreed to serve as officer-in-charge until the new president takes office.

The trustees and I would like to once again extend our gratitude to David Amberg for his service to the College as interim president. Dr. Amberg led ESF through some very challenging times.

Dr. Amberg initiated the development of a partnership with Clarkson University that includes a newly funded Center of Excellence for Healthy Water, supported the construction of a new state-of-the-art analytical chemistry lab as a state resource to monitor water quality and led efforts to redesign the graduate program to increase stipends for graduate students. All these efforts will positively affect our ability to recruit quality Ph.D. students.

In addition, during his two years at the College, Dr. Amberg’s advocacy resulted in nearly $1.9 million in funding through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for climate and applied forestry research, as well as the Environmental Protection Fund for the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, the Visitor’s Interpretive Center in Newcomb and the American Chestnut Restoration project.

Dr. Amberg’s commitment to the student experience led to the College’s effort to centralize student experiential learning and internship opportunities and established the First-Year Experience Task Force to address issues of student success and retention. Under his leadership, ESF launched its first online bachelor’s degree program in sustainability management.

Finally, Dr. Amberg was instrumental in the College developing a new and comprehensive facilities master plan and facilitating the critical $40 million retrofit of the historic Marshall Hall, including the incorporation of many “green” aspects and technologies across other Syracuse campus buildings.

Dr. Amberg will be remembered for these and other accomplishments, but his legacy may well be his ability to unite people around the ESF mission and to inspire faculty, staff and students to work together toward a common goal.

All of us at ESF wish you well, Dave.

Sincerely,

Matthew Marko
Chair, ESF Board of Trustees
ACROSS THE QUAD
ESF celebrates graduation at the Ranger School and its new director, a department name change and Mighty Oaks coaches fighting COVID-19.

ESF STUDENTS
Lindsay Eberhart’s ’21 connection to ESF started at a young age.

DEPARTMENT NEWS
Learn what’s new from three of ESF’s academic departments.

ESF RESEARCH
ESF researchers are honored for their research on the environment.

ADVANCING ESF
Pack Scholarships enable students to make a difference studying environmental issues.

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Thousands of landscape architecture students have traveled through the Off-Campus Program.

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ESF marks 100 years of paper science at the College.

IN THE WEB

For additional content, we invite you to check out the online ESF Magazine at www.magazine.esf.edu
Dr. Mariann Garrison-Johnston Named Ranger School Director

Dr. Mariann Garrison-Johnston was named director of ESF’s Ranger School. She is the first woman to lead the Ranger School. Garrison-Johnston has been a faculty member at the Ranger School since 2008, coming to the Wanaka, New York, campus because of its commitment to forest technology and its location.

“Our commitment to hands-on training is one of the best in the country,” said Garrison-Johnston. “To care for the health and welfare of our forests, and to understand and make good decisions about how we utilize our resources, we need people who can navigate through the woods, who can identify, measure and monitor everything from trees to water to wildlife. ESF’s Ranger School excels in preparing students for careers in the outdoors through our intensive experiential programs, and I am excited to carry that legacy forward.”

She assumes the position from Dr. Michael Bridgen, who served as director since 2013 and retired in June 2020.

Garrison-Johnston earned her master’s and doctorate degrees from the University of Idaho, and her bachelor’s degree from Colorado State University. Before joining ESF, she was a research scientist with the Intermountain Forestry Cooperative in Idaho, where she performed directed research into regional forest nutrition and health issues in the inland northwestern United States.

ESF Faculty, Staff Honored with Chancellor’s Awards

Four ESF employees were honored this spring with SUNY Chancellor’s Awards, the system-level honors that acknowledge consistently superior professional achievement and encourage the ongoing pursuit of excellence.

The ESP honorees were James Sahm ’91, Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service; Dr. Neal Abrams for Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Service; Dr. Kimberly Schulz, Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching; and Dr. Shijie Liu, SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities.

Sahm currently serves as the supervisor of Computing and Network Services, but has taken on the responsibilities of the director of information technology since February 2016.

Through his leadership, numerous upgrades have been made to the campus infrastructure, both in Syracuse and at the remote campuses. He implemented a campus computer-swap program that contributed toward upgrading the ESF computing facilities/capacity and saved the College a considerable amount of money.

Abrams is an associate professor and associate chair in the Department of Chemistry. He chairs the departmental lab safety committee and is an ad-hoc member of the departmental review committee for promotion and tenure, and is the graduate curriculum coordinator for the department.

He’s been an integral part of every committee and task force that works with first-year students, including serving as co-chair for the First-Year Experience task force. Abrams is an active member of College governance, serving in numerous leadership positions.

He is a faculty leader in ESF’s commitment to community education and outreach. With the Open Academy, he designed and developed ESF’s first set of online courses offered through Coursera on photovoltaics.

Schulz, an associate professor in the Department of Environmental and Forest Biology, is described by her students as dedicated, inspirational and committed.

She gives numerous guest lectures across campus as well as educational presentations throughout the state related to aquatic science.

Students give her classes high marks. Many of her students attend graduate programs in aquatic ecology, and all gain a respect for the importance of water in ecosystems to humans.

Schulz has also been named a Fellow of the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography, received ESF’s Exemplary Researcher Award in 2012, and earned ESF’s Best Faculty Advisor Award from the Undergraduate Student Association in 2015.

Liu is a professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering focused on sustainable resources and the environment. He has made significant research and scientific contributions in the field of biological and catalytic processing of biomass into various value-added biochemical and biofuels and has contributed to the fundamentals of chemical engineering processes in addition to its applications in green processes.

Liu’s book, “Bioprocess Engineering: Kinetics, Sustainability and Reactor Design,” has been used to train students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in this key area for almost a decade. He is a dedicated teacher and has trained many Ph.D. and master of science students as well as several postdoctoral scientists and young academicians.

Liu has been an extraordinary and exemplary researcher with an international reputation and as such was also awarded ESF’s Exemplary Researcher Award. (See story on page 9.)

Mighty Oaks Coaches Play Key Positions in COVID-19 Fight

By Joel M. Shaw

Two Mighty Oaks coaches traded in their sports equipment for personal protection equipment (PPE) to serve on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic. Mighty Oaks Woodsmen Team Coach Sarah Murphy ’16 hung up her ax and chainsaw in exchange for an N95 mask and head-to-toe protective gear for her job as a registered nurse at Upstate University Hospital.

Murphy graduated from ESF in 2016 with a degree in sustainability energy. While at ESF, she was a member of the woodsmen team. She began coaching the team soon after graduating.

According to Murphy, the biggest adjustment since the pandemic began has been ensuring adequate supplies and wise use of essential items such as N95 masks, surgical masks and gowns, face shields and powered air-purifying respirators.

But it’s the human aspects of the job that are the most difficult.

“One of the hardest parts of the job has been not being able to be close to patients in times of stress to comfort them,” said Murphy.

When Andrew Koch graduated in 2018 with a degree in environmental and forest biology, he didn’t expect to be part of the fight against a global pandemic. The assistant basketball coach is an emergency medical technician for TLC Emergency Medical Services.

The number of safety precautions the TLC technicians now take in response to the pandemic has increased. When TLC transports patients, Koch must don an N95 mask, face shield, and gloves as well as try to maintain a safe distance from the patient.

Koch is concerned about the shortage of essential items needed by healthcare professionals.

“It’s especially difficult in emergency medical services having to constantly put PPE on and take it off so as not to contaminate the cab of the ambulance or non-COVID patients,” said Koch. “It’s been a challenge for me to protect myself as best as I can in the field knowing that there’s a shortage of PPE nationwide … I’m trying my best to stay safe and healthy.”

Joel Shaw, production coordinator in the Office of Communications and Marketing, also writes about ESF athletics.
Global Pandemic Doesn’t Stop Ranger School Class of 2020

By Karen B. Moore

A canceled spring break, courses modified mid-semester, Saturday classes, social distancing, technology and dedication. These were the elements that allowed the Ranger School class of 2020 to graduate in-person and together as a class.

When the coronavirus pandemic resulted in college campuses nationwide sending students home to finish their semester remotely, the faculty and staff at the Ranger School knew their location was an advantage that could enable them to finish the semester in person.

Located in Wanakena, New York, the Ranger School’s remote location insulated the campus from the virus that was moving through the country. “We learned we were going to remain open on March 12,” said Dr. Michael Bridgen, Ranger School director who retired at the end of June.

After learning the Ranger School would remain open, faculty and staff swung into action. “We knew we had to cancel spring break to keep students from bringing the virus back to campus,” said Bridgen.

For parents, the decision to keep students on campus brought both relief and gratitude. “When my daughter called to let me know she wouldn’t be coming home for spring break since they were going to try and finish out the semester in isolation, I was actually relieved to hear it,” said Debbie Caviness, mother to Taylor and director of the Office of Alumni Relations.

“Not that I didn’t want her to come home,” said Caviness, “but I knew how hard she and her classmates had worked over the past year and I was grateful they would have a chance to finish their degrees.”

Bridgen credits the ESF administration with being supportive of the decision to finish the program in person. “All of us agreed the safest option for the students was to stay here, skip spring break and avoid infection,” he said.

Graduation was also moved up in response to the changing news surrounding COVID-19. “We changed the date twice,” he said.

“It’s fair to say the staff and students were united in wanting to stay to complete the program,” Bridgen said.

Students and faculty stayed on campus, supplies were delivered and left to be brought in and sanitized. Faculty members took on additional course work to rewrite and teach classes normally taught by visiting instructors.

“The faculty went above and beyond to present the courses,” Bridgen said, to fit nine weeks of instruction into five weeks.

Even before he saw how the class responded to the pandemic, Bridgen was impressed with the quality of students at the Ranger School this year. “They were very engaged as a group and supportive of each other,” he said. The group had a large interest in community service with several students earning the Ranger School Service Award given to graduating students in recognition of significant volunteer service. Students volunteered at the Society of American Foresters meeting in February, participated in the Adopt-A-Highway program and the lighting of the fire tower, hiking up to Cathedral Rock to illuminate the tower with flashlights for the annual regional event.

For graduate Taylor Caviness ’20, the graduation capped off a tough, yet rewarding year.

“Being able to learn about the forest and the species of trees, especially in Wanakena, was an amazing experience. Although the second semester didn’t go as we had planned by squeezing eight weeks of classes, labs, and major projects into four, to be able to graduate a month early, is a great accomplishment,” she said.

Said Debbie Caviness who watched the ceremony live online, “I thought they did a great job with it. It was really nice that Mike had something to say or a story about all of the students. It felt very personal and it was great to see them get their degree and move the tassel.”

There was still work to be done after the ceremony. The staff had to safely move the students off-campus.

June McWarf, Ranger School program aide, scheduled students at 45-minute intervals to get their belongings out of the dorm and moved off campus safely.

“We couldn’t let families in the building,” said Bridgen, so students would bring their belongings out of the building and meet their parents outside. Thankfully, it didn’t rain on move-out day. “We had luck, planning and dedicated people,” said Bridgen.

The class of 2020 marked Bridgen’s last year at the helm of the Ranger School. Asked how he felt about going out on such a historic year, he said, “I feel really good about it. It was a wonderful class. They really shined at the end. This was a very good class to call my last.”

Department Name Change Reflects Full Spectrum of Program

The Department of Chemical Engineering is the new moniker for one of the College’s departments. The name change for what was called the Department of Paper and Bioprocess Engineering “captures more fully the complete spectrum of academic programs offered within the department,” said Interim Department Chair Bandaru Ramarao.

The name change was announced to the campus community April 9.

The decision received widespread support from the Bioprocess Engineering Advisory Board, Syracuse Pulp and Paper Foundation, alumni, students, and various members of the campus community.

“The new name helps to define the department’s mission in a broader science and engineering context and emphasizes the department’s organic links to the fundamental sciences of chemistry and, increasingly, biology as well as to the applied sciences of biotechnology and of the environment,” according to Ramarao.

Changing the name to chemical engineering highlights the department’s connection to environmental engineering and science, as chemical engineering principles play an important role in modern environmental engineering processes.

“Chemical engineering is an umbrella description of our academic programs,” said Ramarao. “With the addition of the proposed chemical engineering program, we expect a new vitality and synergy between all of our undergraduate and graduate academic programs.”

A story on the 100th anniversary of ESF’s paper science program is located on page 23.
Environmental Resources Engineering

In the past year, the Department of Environmental Resources Engineering (ERE) welcomed one new faculty member and said farewell to another. Dr. Yaqi You joined the department in February as an assistant professor. Yaqi works in environmental microbiology and biotechnology at the interface of environmental engineering and environmental health. In the fall, Yaqi will take over teaching fate and transport of contaminants from Dr. Neil Murphy, who retired as a full-time member of the ERE department. However, Neil will continue to engage in research and service on campus and beyond. Our plans for a celebration to recognize Neil’s accomplishments were foiled by a global pandemic, but his contributions to the department, College and community are unparalleled. We are grateful for the time he gave us.

While the last part of the spring 2020 semester was complicated by the move to online instruction, ERE faculty and staff continued to engage in teaching, research and service activities. Dr. Bahram Salehi’s work in producing the first 10-meter resolution Canadian nationwide wetland inventory was selected as the feature paper of 2020 by the “Canadian Journal of Remote Sensing” and the map produced from the project was selected as a winner of the Esri Canada 2020 Map Calendar Contest.

Bahram was also invited by Google to present his wetland research using Google Earth Engine at the Google booth at the American Geophysical Union annual meeting in San Francisco in December 2019.

ERE students again received recognition via numerous awards. Students Cameron Daley, Mallory Delanoy, John Perez, Zaya Reilly-Zipkin and Tim Webb-Horvath received individual recognition at ESF’s Student Organization and Leadership Achievement Recognition (SOLAR) Ceremony.

The ERE Student Chapter of the New York Water Environment Association, advised by Doug Daley ’82, was also recognized as the Student Organization of the Year. Senior Justin Rosenberg was recognized with a Robin Hood Oak Award for Academic Excellence, which recognizes graduating seniors who have demonstrated their knowledge through research, internships, tutoring and in roles as teaching assistants.

Although the end of the academic year did not go as planned, the ERE faculty, staff and students rose to the challenge and completed the semester with true ESF spirit and determination. I am very proud to be part of such a committed group of individuals.

Environmental Studies

While the academic year may not have ended the way we would have hoped, we still have much to celebrate as a department, and I wanted to share just a few of those highlights with our alumni. We have expanded the department with the addition of a major in environmental interpretation and education, to be led by Shari Dann. Dr. Dann comes to ESF from Michigan State University (MSU) where, as associate professor in the Department of Community Sustainability, her work centered on community engagement.

Through the efforts of Dr. Paul Hirsch, we are expanding our online presence through the continued development and expansion of the online graduate certificate in environmental leadership. Colleagues in the Department of Environmental Studies are developing two additional online graduate certificates: one in science and environmental communication and public relations management, which will start in fall 2020, and another in environmental justice and inequality, slated to start spring 2021. By fall of 2021, the plan is for the three certificates plus a capstone experience to comprise a fully-online master of professional studies.

Our faculty continues to excel in their respective fields. Siije Kristiansen was elected vice chair of the International Communication Association’s Environmental Communication division. Valerie Luzadis ’97 began in January as chair of the board of directors of the National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE). David Sonnenfeld was appointed co-director of research (environment), with the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC), at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. Jill Weiss was appointed to the High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group and also received the Robin Hood Oak Award for Outstanding Academic Advisor. Theresa Sella received a seed grant from Iowa State University Crop Bioengineering Center to conduct research in the Netherlands and Germany in summer 2019 for a project “Enhancing Public Trust and Governance of Gene Editing for Agriculture and Food: A Comparison of Strategies between the EU and the U.S.” She was also a member of the team that was awarded a SUNY Discovery Challenge grant to fund a restoration science center.

We are proud to share that Dr. Lemir Teron was honored with an Unsung Hero award at the 35th annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration in Syracuse. Also, after serving on the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology’s Board of Trustees since 2018, he was recently installed as the board’s secretary.

Sustainable Resources Management

For this year’s department report, it took significant effort to recall and celebrate our high points given these recent few months with the coronavirus. That said, know that our sustainable resources management faculty, staff and students have performed exceptionally well with the forced shift from in-class/in-field teaching with an emphasis on experiential learning, to distance teaching and learning. While certainly not the ideal situation, we have made the best of it and have done our jobs despite the challenges. Nearly 40 SRM faculty, including visiting instructors, remotely taught over 50 courses during the COVID-19 pandemic, without fanfare or catastrophe (as far as I know). We just got it done. Getting it done included maintaining research and service programs, albeit in some reduced “holding-pattern” ways. There is only so much time in a day. Our faculty members are all working hard, and for some, they are working harder than at any other time in their professional lives. I am proud and appreciative of our work in SRM and across the ESF campus throughout these past months of extraordinary challenge.

While we have recently been consumed by the impacts of COVID-19, we cannot forget what we accomplished as a department this past year. Consider the following highlights:

We continued to be the second-largest department at ESF, working with over 400 SRM students, and graduating approximately 125. These numbers are consistent with our high-performance levels over the past five years.

It was our good fortune to have hired four new faculty members: Dr. Julia Burton (forest ecosystem management and silviculture); Dr. Endong Wang (construction management); Dr. Mohamad Razkenari (construction management); and Dr. Obste Therasme (sustainable energy management). These folks have brought a dynamic spark to the department that is setting us up for a new, brighter, more impactful future as the management department at ESF.
A Fish Tale
ESF’s newest Distinguished Professor’s studies influenced by childhood experiences

By Karen B. Moore

Growing up, Karin Limburg’s mother would take her children down to a pond and scoop “stuff” from the muck that they would take home and put in an aquarium to study. Her mother, who hailed from Sweden, prepared fish often for the family and Limburg spent many hours fishing with her father and uncles.

“They kinds of experiences are formative,” said Limburg, ESF’s newest member of the SUNY Distinguished Academy. “The things that we did as a child I think have a really important effect on how you view the world.”

In her master’s program at the University of Florida, Limburg did theoretical work on food webs but wanted to work with a more concrete resource for her Ph.D. at Cornell University, one that would bring humans into the equation. She looked to the roots of her childhood to find that area.

“People understand the importance of fish. It’s something that’s very emotional, something people get attached to,” she said. “When you think about the ways to interact with people about natural resources, fish is a good vehicle.”

Today Limburg in an internationally recognized scholar in fisheries ecology. When she was honored as a Distinguished Professor this spring, then-interim president David Amberg described her as “an exemplary scholar, teacher, scientist and colleague who has maintained an exceptionally high level of professional productivity.”

Limburg is perhaps best known for her work on “otolithology,” the study of bones in the inner ears of fish that hold a chemical record of that fish’s journey like the rings of a tree. She likens the otoliths to a logbook.

“I imagine if you will, that a fish swims up to you, sits down, pulls out a book and starts reading to you,” Limburg said. “It’s about the story of its life. That is pretty much what we can learn about fish from structures inside their heads.”

“It’s like the ultimate logbook for each fish,” she said. Not only can Limburg tell where the fish has been, but also if it was “happy” from the chemical composition of the otoliths. “That’s kind of amazing. The happy part is interesting, because that is something I kind of stumbled across.”

“For some species of fish, we can use otolith chemistry to say something about their physical condition throughout life. If better condition equates to well-being, we might then be able to say they were ‘happier.’ I think that’s cool,” she said.

Limburg was a research assistant professor at Stockholm University in Sweden before joining ESF’s Department of Environmental and Forest Biology in 1999 and has been one of the College’s most productive researchers ever since. She has performed research on the ancient fish of the Amazon, commercial cod stocks in the Baltic Sea, endangered species in the Grand Canyon, and the American shad in the Hudson River. She has created a robust research program focused on the anadromous fishes of the eastern United States along with fish otolith microchemistry.

Limburg is an author on more than 120 peer-reviewed journal publications. Her scholarship is widely cited by colleagues with nearly 2,500 citations a year over the past five years, one of the highest at ESF. She has been the principal investigator for almost 50 grants worth millions of dollars. Her scholarship is recognized by the international scientific community, as indicated by the number of invited keynote presentations she gives annually.

She earned her bachelor’s degree from Vassar College, her master’s degree from the University of Florida and her Ph.D. from Cornell University. She is currently a visiting professor in the Department of Aquatic Resources at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden, an adjunct in the Department of Earth Sciences, Syracuse University, and a member of the Graduate Faculty, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi.

Karen B. Moore is the senior writer in the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Dr. Shijie Liu Named Exemplary Researcher at ESF

Dr. Shijie Liu received dual recognition for his work as a researcher this spring when he was honored with both the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities and was named ESF’s Exemplary Researcher for 2020-21.

Liu, a professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering, focuses his work on sustainable resources and the environment. He has made significant research and scientific contributions in the field of biological and catalytic processing of biomass into various value-added biochemical and biofuels.

He was also instrumental in developing a partnership with the Beijing University of Chemical Technology (BUCT) that brings students from BUCT to ESF to spend a year on campus completing their degrees in bioprocess engineering.

Liu has contributed to the fundamentals of chemical engineering processes in addition to its applications in green processes.

His book, “Bioprocess Engineering: Kinetics, Sustainability and Reactor Design,” has been used to train students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels for almost a decade and has been a global influence in teaching undergraduate and graduate students. It is one of the textbooks in the field of bioprocess engineering, which articulates the key principles of bioreaction engineering and bioprocess systems engineering that enable bioprocess engineers to engage in the analysis, optimization, design, and consistent control over industrial biological processes.

Liu is a dedicated teacher of undergraduates and graduate students teaching a variety of courses and is a favorite among students.

He has trained numerous Ph.D. and master’s of science students and several postdoctoral scientists and young academics.

“Shijie is not only an extraordinary researcher and scholar, but also an excellent mentor and builder at ESF,” said Dr. Christopher Nomura, vice president for research.

“He has been instrumental in developing the bioprocess engineering major at the College and building partnerships that bring in outstanding students from the Beijing University of Chemical Technology to participate in this program. Shijie has consistently mentored large cadres of graduate students through the research process and their work is more relevant than ever in the spheres of bioprocess engineering towards the production of renewables.”

Liu is distinguished as one of the top researchers at ESF with an international reputation. He has been managing a team of approximately 10 graduate students for the past decade and has authored or co-authored more than 190 refereed journal publications in highly cited and reputed journals in the field. He has 7,012 total citations (Google Scholar) and has achieved a high H-Index factor of 51 (Google Scholar).

To sustain his research efforts, Liu has received over $1 million in external funding as sole PI and played a major supporting role in an additional $4 million in funding. His sponsors include New York State Energy Research & Development, the Department of Energy, and Alberta Pacific Forest Industries, Inc.

The Exemplary Researcher Award is a college-level award recognizing successful, currently active researchers with exemplary research activity, publication record and a graduate/undergraduate student mentorship program.

Liu was also honored this spring with the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities. (See story on page 6.)
By Karen B. Moore

In the past 50 years, more than 1,500 ESF landscape architecture students have studied in more than 200 locations around the globe through ESF’s pioneering Off-Campus Program (OCP).

The program was founded in 1970 by the late George F. Earle, a professor in the landscape architecture department who believed students would benefit from a broader educational experience.

“Our students — the future designers of the landscape — needed, I felt, the seeing and feeling of a kind of landscape and cultural ‘contrapposto,’” (an Italian sculptural term for “asymmetrically balanced opposites”), Earle wrote in The Global Classroom, a departmental publication about the program.

ESF’s program started like study-abroad programs at other colleges, with faculty members accompanying an entire class to a country where they would spend the semester taking classes and exploring the country as a group.

In the first years of the program Distinguished Teaching Professor George Curry and Earle took the first group to Antigua, Guatemala, followed by Earle and faculty member Claude Freeman ’59 taking students to Merida, Venezuela.

However, Curry said that model wasn’t sustainable at ESF with its relatively small landscape architecture faculty and studio-based instruction, so he and his colleagues changed the format. They devised a unique program that encourages students to study independently projects they themselves have developed in a location that they select. Each group is assigned a faculty advisor and the faculty arranges for an on-site consultant.

“The structure of the program is distinct from any other study-abroad model by emphasizing a high degree of experiential and self-directed learning,” wrote Matt Potteiger, professor and OCP coordinator, in an email.

“Students go off-campus not as an entire class but in small groups of four to seven so they can become part of the place, participating in daily life.”

“The idea of the program was essentially that the student was thrust into an environment that they were unfamiliar with,” said Richard Hawks ’72, Distinguished Service Professor and a student in the first OCP semester in Guatemala. “It was like jumping in the deep end of the pool, a total immersion in an unfamiliar culture and landscape.”

“The whole time they are immersed in a different culture,” Potteiger said. “While new places can be exciting they can also be challenging. Through this experience of difference, students can begin to understand and adjust to these differences, which is critical for their future role as professionals and designing for a diversity of people and places.”

That immersive experience is something Keenan Porter, ’20 LA, looked forward to from the moment he toured ESF as a high school student.

“The program was a core reason I decided to go to ESF,” he wrote in an email. “The program is completely different from any other study-abroad program, with a high degree of
“As the coordinator of this program for over 25 years I’ve seen students go beyond their comfort zones and gain greater self-direction and confidence that comes with doing a rigorous study of their own design,”

— Matthew Potteiger

freedom to choose where you live and what you study. You are completely immersed in a new place, deciding for yourself how to spend each day in order to complete your research but also to have a fun and fulfilling experience.”

Porter traveled to Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, where his study semester was located. He not only benefited academically, but also embraced the opportunity to travel to other cities and countries. He visited 30 Dutch cities during his time in the Netherlands, as well as cities in Belgium, Germany and Denmark. “This exposed me to countless new cultures, ideas and design approaches that have changed how I view space and design landscapes,” he explained.

Prior to the Off-Campus Program semester, students work one-on-one with their faculty advisor to develop their study proposals. “The Off-Campus Program serves as an undergraduate thesis or capstone project for our undergraduate students, giving them experience with project definition, methodology, field work and documentation, all of which contribute to their self confidence and attractiveness to employers,” remarked Dr. Doug Johnston ’80, professor and chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture who participated in the Off-Campus Program by studying in Northern Scotland in 1979.

“Graduates of the program have much higher rates of employment and higher starting salaries than the national average, which we in part attribute to the Off-Campus Program,” Johnston said.

Alumna Kate Chesebrough ’16 found inspiration for her semester abroad in the 2010 documentary “Waste Land” that chronicles artist Vik Muniz’s work with catadores, or waste pickers of recyclable material, at a landfill outside Rio de Janeiro. The trash was transformed into art that ultimately sold at auction houses in London.

“I was struck with the idea that creative thinking and engaged interactions transform how we see material and each other. ... I had to be there,” she wrote in an email. After sending her portfolio to Muniz’s studio in Rio de Janeiro multiple times, she wrote an email to the artist’s studio, in rudimentary Portuguese: “I can help you with your work,” and received a response within 10 minutes.

She served as a full-time studio intern and, upon arriving in Rio, was given a place to stay at the artist-in-residency house adjacent to the emerging Escola Vidigal, an arts-and-technology after-school program that the studio had just founded in one of the hillside favelas. Because of the OCP’s open-ended structure, Chesebrough was able to pivot her three-month study to focus on the dynamic between the favela, the surrounding low-income neighborhood, and the artist studio, centered on the role of the arts school.

While students are off campus they maintain communication with their advisor who also visits them for a week to work with them in the field during the fifth week of the study. In the early years of the program, correspondence by mail took weeks each way. Today, communication is instantaneous.

“When we started the program, a letter from Greece literally took three weeks to get here and if the advisor wrote back immediately it took another three weeks to reach the students,” said Hawks. Phone service was also limited, which contributed to the immersive feel of the program.

Curry noted this lag in communications required students to think on their feet and adapt to different situations. If they arrived at a study site that was under construction or otherwise not available, they had to figure out what to do. “If they waited for a response, their semester would be almost over,” he said. While today, students can consult with their advisors with more ease, a sudden change in the study plan isn’t unusual.

“Students realize things aren’t quite as well structured in the world as they are in the classroom or at home. Adapting to changing situations and dealing with uncertainty is part of the learning process for students,” said Johnston.

Hannah Noll ’20 planned to focus her studies in Rotterdam on contemporary, urban green infrastructure projects. “Like the northeastern United States, Rotterdam receives a lot of rain, so there is high demand for spaces that filter urban runoff and help with flood mitigation,” she wrote in an email.

However, once onsite, she discovered something else that interested her. “After visiting all the contemporary green infrastructure projects in the city, I noticed a trend; the surrounding neighborhoods were also contemporary, urban and promoting sustainability in other ways.” Her study focus shifted to these neighborhoods and the ways they were addressing sustainability.

“One of the things this program does in addition to the students’ experience is that it makes ESF have one of the best-traveled faculties in the United States and that of course influences how they give lectures, direct
studios and give seminars,” said Curry who as faculty advisor accompanied between 30 and 35 student groups over the years.

“I went off-campus with George (Earle) to Guatemala in 1970. I had only been at ESF for four years and I was a young faculty member so the whole idea of being part of this at the very beginning is something that’s always affected my teaching.”

The off-campus experience is often also life-changing for the students. Porter studied the design, ecology and management of the Amstelveen Heemparks, a unique system of urban public parks that were designed and managed to reflect the native peat ecosystems of the region. “I chose this site and topic because of my passion for native plants and ecologically focused design,” he explained.

“The parks have over 400 endemic species and were unlike any park I have ever been to. My project certainly influenced my career goals, giving me a new interest in landscape management of ecologically focused designs.”

Porter plans to continue his education at ESF pursuing a master’s degree and return to the Netherlands to further study the Heemparks.

After they return from their fall semester abroad, students present their work and mentor the next group preparing to go off campus. The culmination of their work is the Festival of Places, a celebration open to the campus community. The festival includes a poster session, the George F. Earle Lecture, which often features a graduate of the landscape architecture program, and finally the festival itself. For the festival, students create tableaus of their study sites and often prepare food from the country they visited, bringing those cultures and memories back to campus.

“The study-abroad program allowed me to really find what it was I liked about landscape architecture,” wrote Matt Romano ’20 who studied in Beijing, China. “Personally, the program allowed me to push myself out of my comfort zone. ... I found what I liked, what I did not like, and what I wish I knew more about. I feel more confident in myself and my abilities after going through this program.”

That transformative experience of the program is something the faculty have witnessed again and again. “As the coordinator of this program for over 25 years I’ve seen students go beyond their comfort zones and gain greater self-direction and confidence that comes with doing a rigorous study of their own design,” Potteiger said.

“When we survey alumni, the opportunity to experience an unfamiliar environment not as a tourist might, but more like a resident, the professional confidence and cultural sensitivity and maturity gained by navigating different customs, places, and people are universal responses,” Johnston wrote.

“Not only does this experience open their eyes to a new culture, a new place, a new environment, but it also makes them more aware of people from different backgrounds,” said Curry. “I think to some extent this experience off campus makes these students much more tolerant and aware of differences in their own culture and that seems to be an important aspect, especially in the time we are living in. In short, the OCP not only develops better designers and professionals, it develops better citizens.”

Karen B. Moore is the senior writer in the Office of Communications and Marketing.

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Your unrestricted support means more now than ever.

The need for flexible funds has rarely been greater. The ESF Annual Fund in partnership with our new Extraordinary Aid Fund (EAF) will help us meet the need, providing direct, immediate financial aid to our students, particularly those facing financial hardships from COVID-19.

Support for the ESF Annual Fund underwrites the Presidential/National Scholarship Program. These awards make what is already their first choice for academics the best financial option for them and their families.

The Extraordinary Aid Fund was established to address the increased demand for financial aid because of the global pandemic. The financial realities for ESF students and their families are rapidly changing. Assistance from the EAF will help ensure that their journeys at ESF can continue.

While we work to address the immediate challenges for students, we remain ever optimistic about the future of ESF because of generous support from donors like you.

Give now at www.esf.edu/donateafeaf/
Nicole Williams ’05 Rolls Into Helping Others

By Stephanie Specchio

Mariel Hemingway is noted for saying, “Nothing in nature lives for itself. Rivers do not drink their own water. Trees do not eat their own fruit. The sun does not give heat for itself, and flowers do not spread fragrance for themselves.” This penchant for helping others drives ESF alumna Nicole Williams ’05, too.

“They help others and organizations in lots of ways and for lots of very personal reasons,” said Williams. “I help those who can’t help themselves, because they need help to survive.”

Animals and the planet fall into this category, which is what brought Williams to ESF in 2001. “I spent four of the best years of my life at ESF,” said Williams. “I formed my values at ESF. That’s where I learned how important the environment and conservation really are.”

During her studies, she met mentor and future supervisor, the late Alan Rabinowitz, from the Big Cat Conservation Program at the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) when he was a guest lecturer on campus. As she listened to Rabinowitz, Williams pictured herself working with the cats at WCS. At the time, she was a sophomore studying environmental and forest biology with aspirations to practice zoological veterinary medicine. The presentation had all the right elements — animals, the environment and conservation — and led to a full-time position with the WCS, housed at the Bronx Zoo, from 2005 to 2007. Here Williams fine-tuned her vision on the dichotomy between zoos and natural habitats.

“Conservation programs at zoos have an important role,” Williams said, who grew up playing in swamps catching frogs and insects. “They dedicate much effort to ensuring diversity of genes. These captive breeding programs help to ensure people can enjoy and learn about a wide variety of species. But these animals will never be wild. My experience with WCS helped me realize I’m most interested in the on-the-ground approach that will help solve problems found at the intersection of human/wildlife interactions: people who live with lions that kill their cattle and watch jaguars take both their livestock and their livelihood. These are the issues I think about.”

In 2007, Williams, Rabinowitz, and several other colleagues left the WCS to form Panthera, the only organization in the world devoted exclusively to the conservation of the world’s 40 wildcat species and their ecosystems, according to Panthera’s website. Williams served as a program officer at Panthera for five years.

“I loved it,” Williams recalls. “The work the scientists and support staff do at Panthera is transformational and crucial for our planet and the preservation of our ecosystem.”

Williams learned numerous lessons at Panthera, one being that everyone on the team is important — including administrators.

“A piece of my soul yearns to be a program manager and to be on the front line of pivotal discoveries,” Williams said. “I now know that behind every scientist, every program manager is a team of administrators. For the researcher to be successful, the numbers have to work. Every aspect of the organization has to be in sync to realize the mission.”

She used this knowledge as she made her next career move: opening Five Stride Skate Shop in New York City with her soulmate, Drew.

“Leaving the 9-to-5 world, leaving Panthera, becoming an entrepreneur were life-defining decisions,” Williams said.

Williams applied the skills from the skate shop to her current position as the finance and business manager for Ocean Outcomes, a nonprofit organization that works for healthy aquatic ecosystems, a plentiful and profitable wild seafood supply, and thriving fishing communities. Williams said that the organization’s mission aligns with her vision for a healthier planet.

“I do the books at the skate shops, so my skills were transferable to the position at Ocean Outcomes,” said Williams. She and Drew now live in Portland, Oregon, and have opened a second skate shop. “Sometimes our lives go in a different direction than we imagine, but we always find our way.”

Sports has always been the one constant in Williams’s life. She started ice skating when she was six and was a member of Syracuse University’s synchronized figure skating club team. Although she wore soccer cleats for a few seasons, her real love has always been skating, which made the transition from blades to wheels fairly easy. When she was a newcomer to New York City in 2005, she needed something to do outside of work and turned to sports once again. This time, she found roller derby.

“It fits my personality,” said Williams, who is now in her 15th season with roller derby, holds seven championships, has represented America in international play, and is known on the circuit as Bonnie Thunders. “I like competition and sports; I need to be active, and roller derby allows me to be part of the community — something team-oriented with a lot of spirit.”

The inspiration behind her track name, she said, is Johnny Thunders, an American guitarist, singer-songwriter and member of the New York Dolls, who is one of her favorite musicians. Johnny and Bonnie rhyme, and Thunders “just sounds good,” she said.

Stephanie Specchio is the associate vice president of communications and marketing at ESF.
Ana Menezes ’08

Redefining Governance

By Judy Gelman Myers

In December 2019, Ana Menezes received a 100 Best Employees Award from the United Nations’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It was the FAO’s way of acknowledging her contribution to ending world hunger through effective management of commercial aquaculture. She currently works at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, supporting member states around the world in developing strategies and technological approaches to farming aquatic species in a sustainable and profitable manner.

Menezes graduated from ESF in 2008 with a Ph.D. in environmental science, environmental and natural resources policy.

Writer Judy Gelman Myers recently spoke with Menezes about her views on sustainability and how her education at ESF trained her for her critical work at FAO.

ESF: You graduated from ESF in 2008 with a Ph.D. in environmental science and natural resources policy. Tell me about your studies.

AM: I had a very rich background before coming to ESF. I’d been an agriculture engineer, aquaculture researcher and national director of environmental planning in Mozambique, my home country, where I liaised between donors and governmental environment units.

Unhappy with the environmental degradation and socioeconomic disparities I was seeing in Mozambique, I started questioning what I was doing and applied for and won a Fulbright.

While I was preparing to leave Africa to come to ESF, I attended my friend’s birthday party, hosted by Nelson Mandela’s wife. Mandela became inquisitive about my work and where I saw myself in the future. I told him my reservations about how Mozambique was managing its financial and natural resources in the name of poverty eradication, and he told me I was mixing politics with policies. He advised me to focus on fisheries and aquaculture and expressed his wish that more women work with environmental models, as we are the safeguards of family food security, making us the best stewards of the environment.

Here in Syracuse, the head of ESF convinced me to do my Ph.D. in environmental sciences and natural resources management. The wonderful faculty at ESF and Maxwell School helped me understand that my questions were much bigger than fish, plants or the ecosystem specifically. I was looking at the full scope of sustainability, encompassing socioeconomics, the law, institutions and the environment.

For my own purposes, I summarized it in one word: governance. At that point I understood that my conversation with Mandela was about governance that put people at the center of the ecosystem, not preservation of the ecosystem per se, or fish per se.

ESF: Tell me about your work at FAO.

AM: For my first six years I was based in Ethiopia, as a fisheries and aquaculture officer. My work ranged from policy drafting and advocacy to mass creation of sustainable farming of aquatic products. My approach was to create an ecosystem-based aquaculture or fishery with profit in mind.

It was very difficult to sell an ecosystem-based approach coupled with business, as they seem to contradict each other. The solution was to show how we could use the ecosystem in a way that fisherfolks and farmers could have money in their pockets. I strove to weaponize people with as much knowledge as possible, teaching basic technical things such as why phytoplankton are important for healthy fish production, or more complicated topics such as finances.

I currently work at headquarters in Rome, for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. We develop policies and strategies for the sound development of aquaculture, and we provide technical support to member states worldwide. I do miss the field, though — that’s where you feel the flesh and blood and sense the pulse.

ESF: I imagine strategies and technical support vary according to the member state.

AM: You’re absolutely right. One size in governance doesn’t fit all. We have to consider the specificities and variables of each country and each environment.

Let’s suppose I’m working with Kenya, where there are two totally different environments — inland and marine. There are also different levels of aquaculture (commercial and noncommercial, integrated or monocrop). Finally, there’s the gender dimension. There are more women working with fish processing...
and marketing. How do you integrate them in a meaningful way as safeguards of the environment but also family buffers regarding food-nutrition security and carriers of cultural and family values?

**ESF:** What do you like best about your work at FAO?

**AM:** I love teaching fisherfolk and farmers how to transform whatever technique or system they’re using into one that’s less harmful and more efficient. At the same time, I also love working with policymakers and fisheries managers drafting and implementing programs.

People today don’t want answers, they need solutions. The technical expertise is out there. Any failure that occurs now is a failure of governance, of our living up to our promise to bring solutions.

**ESF:** Where did you find the greatest resistance to your ideas?

**AM:** From FAO and from national governments. As an organization, FAO was not as open to the private sector as it is today. Many thought of FAO as serving the poorest of the poor. Reaching out to people with a business approach meant we were not working for our mandate — we were working for a different cohort of people above the poverty line who already had means.

We finally erased that thinking by showing it’s as possible to do commercial aquaculture on a very small scale as it is to do it on a medium or large scale: we could transform small farmers by giving them a startup credit and the knowledge it takes to transform the aquaculture and fishery sector beyond subsistence level. Strong tailored capacity building was the key.

The second area of resistance came from national governments. In the past, funding for aquaculture would go from governments and donors to farmers in the form of handouts. The political goal was to reach as many constituents as possible, through programs that covered as many as 20,000 people. Sometimes in the U.N. our approaches were more popular than effective; we wanted to solve all matters through projects, and when we left, little stayed behind.

In contrast, I suggested equipping 200 people rather than 20,000. I explained that if 200 people are well-trained and well-equipped, they can generate healthy commercial sectors to develop a full aquaculture value chain that could employ others and create subsidiary enterprises. In this way, the 20,000 would eventually be covered and the enterprises become sustainable even when the project ends. Finally, I won the support of the ministers in Africa, as well as my FAO managers. For the last few years, they’ve said, OK, we’ll do commercial aquaculture within an ecosystem-based approach.

In this way, the 20,000 would eventually be covered and the enterprises become sustainable even when the project ends. Finally, I won the support of the ministers in Africa, as well as my FAO managers. For the last few years, they’ve said, OK, we’ll do commercial aquaculture within an ecosystem-based approach.

**ESF:** Congratulations on being named one of FAO’s 100 top employees. How did that happen, since it sounds as if you were frequently at odds with the organization?

**AM:** We got a new director general in June. He wanted to celebrate the contributions that FAO employees were making around the world. Winning that award was like a cherry on top of a delicious chocolate cake. For me, it meant that my contribution had been acknowledged by the member states, by my colleagues in FAO and by my management.

Three people came to mind as I received the award — my biological parents and my very best friend, Franciscan father Armindo, whom I’ve known since I was four years old. These three taught me the joy of serving and being a servant of the people, even if all you do is share your knowledge.

**ESF:** Is there anything you want to add?

**AM:** I want to tell the 2020 graduates that the world is waiting for them. Whatever little contribution they make to a better world is already much appreciated by everybody. They shouldn’t be afraid of graduating in one field and ending up in another. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic may change their path, but it will come. The thinking now should be, ‘Let me contribute to a better world.’

Judy Gelman Myers is a freelance science writer based in New York City.
Pack Scholarship Enables Students to Make a Difference

By Karen B. Moore

Exploring the link between climate change and human migration to understanding women's role in the food system are two of the projects that a fellowship at ESF makes possible.

Graduate students Susan S. Ekoh and Lucia Pérez Volkow can delve into areas that can influence future policy thanks to scholarships through ESF’s Randolph G. Pack Environmental Institute.

The Institute supports and encourages the research and public service activities of ESF’s Department of Environmental Studies in the areas of international, environmental, natural resources, and conservation policy.

Students are selected because they clearly articulate how their projects align with the Pack mission to create and disseminate knowledge about environmental concerns of high public interest, according to Benette Whitmore, department chair.

Ekoh is one such student and a two-time recipient of a Pack fellowship. The first opportunity with the United Nations Environmental program in New York City led to her second grant.

“I knew I wanted to do something related to climate change,” Ekoh said. “During the fellowship, I followed the Global Compact for Migration to see how different countries talk about (human) migration and climate change as something that needs to be considered.”

Ekoh is exploring that connection as it is affected by extreme weather events such as flooding in Lagos, Nigeria. “I’m looking at the long term. Do people choose to stay or move, and if they move will they stay within the community, region or country?” She’s also looking at how a person’s economic situation figures into the decision.

“There’s so much more that we need to know,” she said. “Specifically, the views of the communities and individuals impacted and how the policies are decided.”

The Pack fellowship will enable her to hire people in Nigeria to administer data collection surveys. Due to travel restrictions surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, Ekoh is doing the data collection online, “but because not all populations will be accessible, I had — and have — plans to travel to Nigeria to do in-person fieldwork.”

Once complete, Ekoh’s work will help inform policies and programs. “We’ll be able to understand how people see risks of staying in a location or moving, and tailor policies accordingly.”

For Pérez Volkow, the support of the Institute allows her to study women’s role in shaping the landscape and the diet in the indigenous community of Lacanja Chansayab, Chiapas, Mexico.

“Women’s role in the food system has been understudied and undervalued,” Pérez Volkow wrote in an email. “Through my study, we are realizing how women are crucial to keeping the traditional food system since they not only harvest the food, but also are the only ones who know how to cook the traditional meals.”

Industrial food is taking over traditional food, Pérez Volkow explained, and since industrial food brings with it products high in saturated fats and sugars it also leads to an increase in diseases such as diabetes. Industrial food also brings with it a huge amount of pollution through the plastic and other materials that are not recycled in that part of Mexico.

“Traditional systems are more sustainable since they don’t require the input of agrochemicals and by being an agroforestry system,” Pérez Volkow said. “They are able to maintain several ecosystem functions like biodiversity. It is also the way that communities are able to have food sovereignty by being able to control their food system and ensure they have enough food and that it is culturally appropriate food, without depending on buying it from external sources.”

“Women are shaping, in very positive ways, the landscape and the diet of Lacanja Chansayab and thanks to the Pack Institute, I will be able to demonstrate this in a clear way,” Pérez Volkow said.

The Pack Institute was established at ESF in November 1995 with a gift from Virginia Pack Townsend, to honor her father, Randolph Greene Pack. Randolph Pack was a philanthropist and international forestry policy expert.

“The Institute is a living representation of the interest of many generations of our family in sensible land use planning and environmental policy and regulation,” said James Townsend. “It is an honor to be associated with the legacy of Randolph G. Pack, our grandfather, and the activities of the Institute particularly for the scholarly efforts of the master’s and doctoral candidates whose work mirrors the concerns of our grandfather.”

“The Institute allows students to travel to research sites and faculty to attend professional conferences, all of which contribute significantly to their academic pursuits that might otherwise present impossible challenges,” said Whitmore.

The Institute also sponsors the department’s monthly seminar series where they bring in speakers who present on topics that engage diverse publics around complex environmental issues. “This well-attended event has inspired intellectual engagement for our graduate students and faculty, which extends to the campus and local community,” said Whitmore.

“The Pack grant has done so much for me,” Ekoh said. “I appreciate the Institute and the people who made it possible. It reinforces my desire to pay it forward beyond my research. I want to be able to carry the generosity forward.”

Karen B. Moore is the senior writer in the Office of Communications and Marketing.
The Lafayette Road Experiment Station (LRES) is getting a makeover. The once heavily wooded 44-acre plot is at the root of a mighty crusade: restore the American chestnut.

The first step, which began in spring 2020, was to create the necessary infrastructure. An access road and log landing were created, leading from below the barn into the middle of the property enabling loggers to transform the site into discreet areas, each destined for specific purposes.

The first two areas have been designated as shelterwood restorations. Understory, such as invasive buckthorn and poison ivy, was removed so the trees have less competition for resources. Another component that influences the success of a shelterwood is the amount of light. In spots where the canopy was particularly heavy, researchers identified specific trees to remove, allowing additional light to penetrate the canopies and nourish the seedlings.

Each shelterwood area had a prescription that retained different amounts of canopy based on how many overstory trees remain. Paths with signage will wind through the new chestnut/oak/hickory restoration demonstration. This will allow the public as well as researchers to compare and contrast how chestnut grows under different light levels.

“We didn’t just do a clear cut in this area,” said Dr. William Powell, co-director of the American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project. “We knew we would be planting American chestnut seedlings in this area, but we wanted to integrate the American chestnut into a forest. We left many of the older trees, and our hope is that the chestnuts will grow alongside of them.”

The re-imagined LRES encourages agro-forestry demonstrations using dual cropping. In one area, the American chestnut and the American/European hybrid are mixed to create a chestnut orchard. According to the Agricultural Marketing Research Center, the United States is one of the few nations in the world that can grow chestnuts, yet doesn’t have a significant chestnut industry. United States chestnut production is less than 1 percent of total world production, with 919 farms producing chestnuts on more than 3,700 acres. Currently, New York is not listed among the top five chestnut-producing states. Researchers at the LRES aim to change these statistics.

The second orchard is dedicated to mixed crops.

“One ESF faculty member is doing a mixed orchard with chestnut trees and grapevines,” said Powell. “This is done in Spain, and there is a clear economic advantage to this type of ‘tree-to-table’ farming.”

The final area of the new LRES will be a demonstration area, where visitors can come to learn about the research that supported the American chestnut restoration, discover interesting facts about the tree that was almost rendered extinct, and engage in some interactive exhibits.

This work was made possible by a $3.2 million gift from the Templeton World Charity Foundation, the College’s largest ever charitable gift. The Templeton World Charity funds scientific breakthroughs and development of practical tools relating to the search for meaning, purpose and truth. The charity describes itself as serving as “a global philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to Big Questions of life and the universe, in areas of science, theology, philosophy, and human society.”

Dana Piwinski ’80, senior director of major gifts for ESF, emphasized what a great partner Templeton World Charity Foundation has been over the past several years with prior grants to the effort. “This new exceptional level of support is truly enabling the restoration phase of the project to begin in earnest,” he said.

Stephanie Specchio is the associate vice president of communications and marketing at ESF.
Life Comes Full Circle
Lindsay Eberhart’s family tradition leads to ESF

By Lindsay Eberhart ’21
Senior, environmental studies

Fifty years ago, my grandfather bought a camp in Wanakena, New York. For years, the small house on Cranberry Lake was the place my family spent summer vacations. Wanakena became a place of many family traditions. One of those traditions was a nightly walk. It was a simple tradition — we walked the same circle route every night; together, the five of us would swoon over how bright the Milky Way was, and my mom never missed the opportunity to point out Orion’s belt. I would be on the lookout for frogs and snakes, grabbing them with my little hands if I could to get a closer look, then quickly letting them go on their way.

The route looped us around ESF’s Ranger School. Growing up, I knew the Ranger School only as a group of students in hard hats gazing up at trees for what seemed like hours. My parents would say, “Lindsay, maybe you’ll go to college here and become a ranger one day!” Nine-year-old me, battling with a tomboy identity, scoffed at these comments, but before I knew it, I was a junior in high school with no idea what to do next.

Then I attended a college fair. I walked aimlessly, taking brochures for nursing schools because that’s what my mom did, and what my older sister was doing. I came across a bright green table and before I knew it, I had a pamphlet in my hand. On the front was a vibrant satellite image of the earth, and on the back, a photo of the building I had been circling for 17 years. Soon after I applied as an early-decision applicant to ESF’s Syracuse campus. It was the only school I applied to. I entered the environmental studies program, thinking it was broad enough to figure out what was important to me in this field of work.

So far, so good, as I enter my senior year; the school, the major, the opportunities I found, and the ones that found me at ESF. When I reflect on how I got to ESF, I feel so much gratitude for my PopPop’s hunting camp, for simple traditions, and trusting that knowing what I need to do will come with due time. Just as I circled the Ranger School as a young girl, I believe I ended up at ESF in a full circle.

I have been granted wonderful opportunities, inside and outside of the classroom. From being a part of the soccer team and going to two national championships, to traveling to Puerto Rico with other ESF students to volunteer after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. I am overwhelmed by the experiences I have had through ESF.

Additionally, I have been cultivating a relationship with Planet Forward, which is a platform for college students to engage in storytelling to facilitate positive environmental change. In April of my first year, I traveled to Washington D.C. for the Planet Forward summit. Sitting there, surrounded by students gleaming with passion for connecting people and the planet, I remember feeling I was in the right place. Inspired by the event, and encouraged by my professors, the following two years I submitted stories into the contest. I was a finalist each year, and although I haven’t scored the gold yet, I am energized, and motivated by the acknowledgment.

The opportunity the Planet Forward platform granted me to creatively express concern, and advocate for positive change and solutions through storytelling has been critical in molding my present and future paths.

I hope to ultimately own a farm, where I can produce food for everyone in my community but I don’t feel I am ready to put my roots down yet. Last semester I went to a week-long conference at the United Nations-Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) in Rome, Italy, as a Planet Forward delegate. This experience enlightened me to the potential that my voice, in combination with others, can have on global policy change. I came to know I have more to learn.
The ESF Alumni Association is proud to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of the 2020 Alumni Memorial Scholarship recipients. These scholarships are awarded in remembrance of those alumni who lost their lives while bravely serving their country during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. Memorial plaques with the names of these honored alumni can be seen in the Rotunda of Bray Hall. Selection criteria for these awards are based not only on academic excellence, but also on extracurricular activities and strength of character. Funds for these awards are made possible via the ESF Golf Tournament. While we regretfully could not honor these amazing students in person at the annual Central New York Alumni Dinner due to social distancing protocols, we still offer them our wholehearted congratulations!

2020 Alumni Memorial Scholarship Recipients

Sophomores
Lucian Sacheli
Polymer Chemistry
Siela Zembsch
Landscape Architecture

Juniors
Maggie O’Brien
Environmental Studies
Kira Whisenhunt
Biotechnology

Seniors
Nicholas Bentley
Biochemistry and Biotechnology
Jordan Jessamy
Environmental Science

Graduate Students: US Citizens
John Pezzullo
Degree Sought: Ph.D. Natural Products Organic Chemistry
Melanie Berger
Degree Sought: Ph.D. Wildlife Management

Graduate Students: Non-U.S. Citizens
Jackson Doe-Mensah
Degree Sought: Ph.D. Chemical Engineering (Wood Science) Citizenship: Ghanian
Shannon Finnegan
Degree Sought: Ph.D. Environmental and Forest Biology Citizenship: Irish

Alumni Memorial Scholar
Jordan Jessamy ’20 Honored for Student Excellence

As a student, Jordan Jessamy ’20 was an active member of the campus community, earning him the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence. Along with his drive to help his fellow students, Jessamy was able to immerse himself in opportunities at ESF thanks to scholarship support including the Alumni Memorial Scholarship.

The Chancellor’s Award is the highest student honor in the SUNY system. Chancellor’s Award honorees excel both in academic achievement and at least one of the following areas: leadership, athletics, community service, creative and performing arts or career achievement.

Jessamy majored in environmental science with a concentration in wetlands and watershed resources and minored in applied statistics. He was active on campus as a co-founder of ESF’s Taking Root Student Peer Mentorship Program; president of the Roots and Pursuits Club; social media chair, digital content editor and lead photographer for The Knothole, the campus literary magazine; and past president of King’s Court Diversity Group.

He served as an undergraduate teaching assistant and tutor for general biology, a tour guide for ESF in the High School, a volunteer for A Tiny Home for Good service project, and was an invited speaker for a Ted X Style Talk hosted by ESF.

He had internships at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York, and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, in Chincoteague, Virginia.

"Part of the reason I was able to be so active on campus and still dedicate time to my studies was in part because of scholarships. Thanks to opportunities such as the Alumni Memorial Scholarship, I was able to be more financially secure during my time at ESF," he said. Without that support, Jessamy would’ve had to rely on more loans or off-campus employment.

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In an effort to remain fiscally responsible, the College is actively implementing cost-saving measures. As you may know, the ESF Magazine is available for online viewing and as such, we are asking any interested parties to take advantage of this option and forego a printed copy.

To elect this option and be sure you are notified when future issues are available online, please email alumni@esf.edu.

1952

Bill Gladstone (PSE) writes, “I will never forget having Thanksgiving dinner with Dean Illick. Mrs. Carruthers of the Bursar’s Office had a hand in that invitation!”

1960

Robert G. Torgersen (LA) writes, “I continue to work in the lower New York area, with my son doing the on-site leg work in New York, and I doing the drawings and the writing. Just moved to a lake-front house that we built on Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey, and correspond via email to my clients in New York state.”

1975

George Weick (FRM) writes, “I retired in February of 2019 after a 40-year and two-month career with the USDA Forest Services. My last position was the forest silviculturist for the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas. In March 2019, my wife and I moved to Midlothian, Texas to be close to our two children.”

1977

Philip Compte (FRM) writes, “After initially working in rural development/agroforestry in West Africa, I began working for the United Nations. I spent most of my 25 years of service in Peacekeeping Missions performing mostly logistics and administrative duties in Croatia, Angola, Kosovo, Liberia, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The final few years have been at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland where I presently reside. I was able to come full circle as one of the areas I was responsible for was environmental management and sustainable development within the premises at U.N. Headquarters in Geneva. Now that I am retired, I expect to spend more time in Ecuador where I have been establishing an organically-managed farm combining protection of natural regeneration, restoration of indigenous species along with pasturing and agriculture. In an area accustomed to slash-and-burn and extensive ranching, it has not been easy. I am also now considering rejoining the Peace Corps to get active in environmental education and direct transfer of sustainable agroforestry skills. As we enter our retirement years, a time to refocus and rediscover. Greetings to all.”

1981

R. Douglas Petrie (CM/WPE) celebrated 40 years in construction with Petrie Construction! Successfully operating for more than 40 years, Doug and his sons Eric (‘07, CM/WPE) and Adam (‘04, CM/WPE) are constructing challenging fast-paced commercial and multi-family residential projects throughout most of the continental U.S. Something to be very proud of!

1985

Chris Lincoln (EFB/FRM) and Tammara Van Ryn (FRM) send greetings from their new home in Saranac Lake, New York. Tammara left her position as the founding executive director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission at the end of 2019 to become the manager of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program at The Nature Conservancy in Keene Valley. Chris transitioned from operating his own certified organic vegetable farm to becoming an organic farm inspector. Just before their move and the COVID-19 shut down, Chris and Tammara traveled to Ecuador for a trek and 30-year reunion of their Peace Corps adventures there.

1996

Christopher Sears (LA) writes, “Activity for landscape architects in Atlanta is great! Would love to discuss offering employment to future grads looking to travel to the southeast United States for golden opportunities like I did back in 1996!”

2004

Jennifer (Conrad) Philipson (EFB) writes, “John Philipson (‘02, ES) and I bought our first house and I transitioned to a new career in laboratory animal care for human medical research. We are enjoying making our new house into a home.”

2007

Beth Ulion (ES) has seen 100 bald eagles in 2020. She only saw 43 in 2019.

2013

Christina Bak (FRM) is a Stumpie turned RN! She works in the Family Birthing Center at Alaska Native Medical Center. Christina writes, “Most of our moms are flown in from rural villages around the state to give birth in Anchorage. Many of them are alone and are afraid. We are taking every precaution at the hospital to keep our moms, their newborns, and the entire staff healthy. Our goal is for everyone to return to their families and for our babies to grow up strong, healthy, and become stewards to our amazing Alaskan home!”

Amelia Marple (FEG) writes, “I’m living in Washington, D.C. supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs as a business analyst and agree with prior sentiment that my years at ESF studying environmental resources engineering definitely prepared me well! If anyone is ever in the D.C. area feel free to reach out! marplea@msn.com or on LinkedIn!”

WEDDINGS AND CELEBRATIONS

2012

ESF alumni gathered at the wedding of Meagan Pepper (ES) and Benjamin Estes (CHE ‘07, ‘12 G) last summer, September 2019, in Rhode Island where several ESF alumni live and work!
1974

Mark Buckbee (FRM) was elected to represent District 2 (Oregon) on the National Society of American Foresters Board of Directors. His three-year term will extend through 2022. He can be contacted at buckbeefamily@msn.com and enjoys hearing from old ESF classmates.

1978

The Chazen Companies, an employee-owned multi-disciplinary consulting firm, announced the promotion of Rick Loewenstein, P.E. (FEG) to chief executive officer, effective Feb. 1, 2020. Loewenstein served as Chazen’s chief operating officer since September 2018 following an accomplished career as senior vice president and director of engineering services with CHA Consulting in Albany. Since starting with Chazen, Loewenstein has played a vital role in the company’s day-to-day operations and led the development of a new five-year strategic plan. During that time, he became familiar with Chazen’s people, operations, challenges and opportunities. In his new role, Loewenstein will be responsible for continuing to grow the firm, delivering outstanding service to the firm’s clients, and motivating, leading and developing the firm’s employees.

1986

March of Dimes, the leading nonprofit agency fighting for the health of moms and babies, announced the appointment of Andrew S. Coccaro, Jr. (EFB) as chief development officer, responsible for transforming its fundraising activities and strengthening, broadening and diversifying its revenue. Coccaro will work with organizational leaders to champion strategic, data-informed decision making and will serve as a catalyst in strengthening a culture steeped in donor-centric philanthropy, as well as oversee plans to support annual fundraising goals.

1993


1997

Melissa Forder (EFB) is the new National Park Service national fire planner, a role she has filled since the beginning of 2020. Melissa has worked for the NPS for more than 20 years, beginning her fire career in 2000 at Shenandoah National Park as the lead fire effects monitor. She spent eight years leading a crew in the collection of monitoring data throughout nine states, from Maine to Virginia. Melissa then became the fire ecologist for the Northeast and National Capital regions, before moving into her current position in the Southeast/Interior Region 2 as the deputy regional fire management officer. Melissa is interested in promoting professional growth opportunities for women in the NPS and is on the leadership teams for the Women-in-Fire Training Exchange and NPS Women’s Employee Resource Group. Melissa is a Type 1 planning section chief trainee on the Southern Area “Red” Incident Management Team. She has served in numerous planning section roles with the NPS IMT including the recent COVID-19 IMT response in Washington, D.C.

1998

Kelly Smith (CM) rejoined Hayner Hoyt as an estimator. At the beginning of her career, she served as a project manager at the company before moving into an estimator role with Doyner Masonry, Inc., a subsidiary company, and then returning to take on the estimator role with Hayner Hoyt. She returned to Hayner Hoyt after a period of career exploration which included assistant teaching and other construction estimator roles.

1999

Michael Goff (EFB) was promoted to staff industrial hygienist at Barton & Loguidice’s Rochester office. He is a member of the firm’s Environmental Practice Area.

2005

Robert Conden (FEG) was named principal engineer at Parsons Corporation.

2009

Johanna Duffy (ENSCI) was promoted to senior managing environmental scientist at Barton & Loguidice’s Syracuse office. She is a member of the firm’s Environmental Practice Area.

2013

MRB Group announced the selection of Senior Planning Associate Jane Nicholson (FRM) to Next City’s nationally-acclaimed Vanguard program for 2020. Next City is a journalistic non-profit, focusing on the revitalization of communities around the globe, and on best practices engaged in tackling complex urban challenges. Its cornerstone Vanguard program is an annual convening of the brightest minds in community revitalization. The 2020 Vanguard cohort comprises 44 young professionals, chosen from hundreds of applicants in the fields of urban design, social equity, and philanthropy from around the world. The cohort is charged with collaborating to develop innovative responses to pressing community development challenges facing the global community. Jane joined MRB Group in 2019 as part of the firm’s SmarterLocalGov initiative. She spearheads MRB Group’s long-range planning and urban design practice, helping communities to define their vision, and putting actionable strategies in place to support sustainable growth and development. She is recognized by the American Institute of Certified Planners and is a certified floodplain manager.

2014

Jesse Caputo (FRM) accepted an offer from the Forest Service as a research forester. Jesse has worked with the Family Forest Research Center for several years and has become a great asset for implementing and analyzing the National Woodland Owner Survey. He will continue to work on the NWOS and will be taking over the Southern New England forest inventory reporting responsibilities.

2017

Daniel Conrad (ES) joined Cost Control Associates in Queensbury, New York as an energy analyst. Dan has a background in solar energy and marketing.

2018

Nate Kennedy (ENSCI) writes a monthly article for The Citizen newspaper in Auburn, New York where he discusses hunting, fishing and conservation. Nate also works as a 4-H educator with the Cornell Cooperative Extension.
Join fellow ESF alumni on this spectacular adventure to the “Land of Ice and Fire!”

Highlights
- Reykjavik
- Northern Lights Cruise
- Search for the Northern Lights
- Golden Circle
- Thingvellir National Park
- Geysir
- Gullfoss Waterfall
- Lava Exhibition Center
- Vik
- Seljalandsfoss
- Skógafoss
- Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoons
- Skaftafell National Park
- Vatnajökull Glaciers
- Blue Lagoon

For more information, including pricing information and a daily schedule, visit: gateway.gocollette.com/link/1036800

We hope that you and your families are healthy and in good spirits. While we would love to be able to have you all return to campus to celebrate Homecoming and Reunion this fall, our main priority must be the safety and well-being of our alumni, students, faculty and staff. Therefore, due to health considerations, we have made the difficult decision to cancel this year’s on-campus Homecoming and Senior Reunion events. We will, however, be offering a number of programs online during the same timeframe. Be on the lookout for announcements for these opportunities to connect! For those of you who are celebrating milestone reunion years in 2020, you will be invited back next year to commemorate this special occasion. www.esf.edu/alumni/homecoming/

If you would like the opportunity to reach out to some old friends and rekindle friendships that started on the ESF campus, please contact us for a Class List (alumni@esf.edu).

Like branches on a tree, our lives may grow in different directions yet our roots remain as one.
In 1995, the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) celebrated the 75th anniversary of “paper science and engineering.” Based on this, it is natural to think of 2020 as the 100th anniversary of pulp and paper education at ESF. But is 2020 really the 100th anniversary? A brief look at the history of the College shows that the 100th anniversary could be celebrated over almost a decade.

The idea of a curriculum in pulp and paper manufacture was first proposed by Professor Nelson C. Brown in 1914, so the idea of the curriculum is well over 100 years old. The curriculum was approved in 1915 by the College trustees; however, the curriculum was not developed and students enrolled until 1920. The delay was probably due mostly to the intervention of World War I (and perhaps even the influenza pandemic of 1918). Early on, short courses were also offered by the College. The first to be developed was a month-long course on forestry held in 1913 in the Adirondacks. In 1916, a second six-week short-course was developed in pulp and paper manufacture, given to industry men by the forest chemistry faculty at ESF. It was only taught once, again interrupted by World War I. So, did pulp and paper education start in 1914, 1915, 1916 or 1920?

Professors Clarence E. Libby and Harry E. Watson joined the staff of the Department of Forest Chemistry and helped develop the curriculum in pulp and paper manufacture. From early on, the paper industry were key cooperators in the educational process. The first field trips to visit pulp and paper mills were organized by Professor Libby in 1920, the first year that students were enrolled in the program. In 1923, two of these students, Harris Hunt and Kenneth Sheridan, were the first to graduate with a B.S. in pulp and paper manufacture. So we have reason to celebrate the 100th anniversary through 2023.

So when do we celebrate? We originally planned to have the gala celebration of the 100th anniversary in fall 2020. Like the delay in the development of the curriculum 100 years ago by World War I (and ironically perhaps by the influenza pandemic), we need to adjust our celebrations for the anniversary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the changes in the operations of the College (we taught online, mainly from home since mid-March), it did not seem prudent to plan for a grand celebration this fall. Instead, just as the birth of pulp and paper education was a multi-year event, we are planning on celebrating this anniversary over the next three years. Starting with the 100th anniversary of the curriculum, the celebrations and development activities can span the time up to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the first graduates in 2023.

With this extended timeframe, there are opportunities for recognition of the College’s accomplishments and celebration. Of course, there will be a gala reception in 2023 concluding the celebration, but there are many other opportunities to connect and reconnect with our alumni and friends.

While the planning is continuing, we are discussing a number of activities and outreach events, including possible dinners in the Walters Hall Pilot Plant, reunion paper machine runs, and perhaps even sailing excursions on Lake Ontario, as well as other development activities. As we move towards the anniversary, we are also planning a historical timeline for the second floor of Walters Hall (and online) as well as creating 10 Top 10 lists for the department. Look for more information on compiling these lists in future communications.

Help us celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Pulp and Paper Education at ESF by contributing your stories, photos, etc. to the commemorative history book to be published as part of this endeavor.

• Who are the alumni that exemplify the spirit of the department?
• What are your favorite memories of ESF, the department or Walters Hall?
• Who was your favorite professor or staff person?
• How did ESF and the program influence your career?

If you have historical pictures and stories of your time in the department, please feel free to send them to me at gscott@esf.edu. As the book is nowhere near complete, I am looking for material to add to it. In addition, if you are interested in being on the planning committees for these celebrations, please get in contact with me.

Gary M. Scott
gscott@esf.edu
315-470-6523
Director, Division of Engineering

Sources
Every ESF student should have the opportunity to complete their education.

Now, more than ever, ESF students need your support. Many are facing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic, and a scholarship can be the reason they are able to continue their education.

The ESF College Foundation provides direct relief to our students through scholarships, including our newest option: the Extraordinary Aid Fund, supported by a matching gift. Sam and Carol Nappi of Jamesville, New York, have generously committed to matching the first $100,000 donated to the EAF — dollar-for-dollar. Please support ESF students with a scholarship. Visit www.esf.edu/eafdonate/ to get started.

Together, we can ensure all our students achieve their dreams, earn their ESF degrees, and have a chance to become the environmental leaders of tomorrow.