

# The Jerry Manion Outstanding Student Award

Jerry Manion served for 27 years as chairman of the Department of Chemistry, from its beginnings in 1965 until he stepped down in 1992. He followed his extensive service as chair with an additional 22 years of work as a professor of organic chemistry until his passing in 2014.

Jerry's 49 years of combined service at UCA, the longest tenure of any professor at the university in 2014, included many opportunities to mentor students in his class, his lab, and his office. A great many students had their careers and futures shaped by Jerry's input and advice. His mark on the department continues today in the faculty he hired and the students who continue to be drawn to UCA Chemistry for its dedication to student-focused instruction and its passion for chemistry.

In 2011, Dr. Slaton Fry (B.S. 1980) established an award fund honoring Jerry's impact on Slaton when he was a student. This fund now supports the department's Jerry Manion Award, annually recognizing its outstanding graduate as voted by department faculty. Not surprisingly, Jerry Manion Award winners have continued to represent those same ideals that Jerry championed when he was a professor for 49 years. Thank you, Jerry, and thank you, Slaton.

## Recipients:

- Emily Tran (2019)
- Kaitlyn Walden (2018)
- Danica Ordoñez (2017)
- Amber Rolland (2016)
- Sergio Perez Bakovic (2015)
- Aaron Owen (2014)
- Ryan Parker (2013)
- Venusa Phomakay (2012)
- Brian Besel (2011)

## 2019 - Emily Tran

Emily, a first-generation college student, came to UCA from Fort Smith, AR. She earned an ACS-certified B.S. degree in chemistry (May 2019), with minors in mathematics and computer science, including departmental honors. Her research in the laboratory of Dr. Greg Naumiec was summarized in her thesis "Squaramide-based anti-parasitic drugs toward the discovery of novel treatments for American *trypanosomiasis*," earning the 2019 Outstanding Departmental Thesis Award (funded by Advancement of Undergraduate Research in the Sciences). She represented UCA very well in 2017, being awarded a Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and in 2018, being honored with a Goldwater Scholarship Honorable Mention and an Honorable Mention for the Arkansas INBRE Oral Presentation Competition. Em was a fixture in the department's national-award-winning student ACS chapter throughout her time at UCA, serving as its president in her senior year. Em is also a highly artistic and creative person. For years the student ACS display board was decorated with her innovative original Drs. Flame and Krystal seasonal displays. She also worked as a teaching and stockroom assistant and served on the department safety committee. Em is following her B.S. degree with a post-baccalaureate research fellowship at the National Institutes of Health in Maryland. Her goal is to complete an MD/PhD degree likely focusing on medicinal chemistry research.



## 2018 – Kaitlyn Walden



Formerly from Huntsville, AR, Kaitlyn (left) received a Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and a minor in Honors Interdisciplinary Studies. Beginning in the Summer of 2016, Kaitlyn worked with Dr. Yarberry on chemical education research for two years. Kaitlyn aspires to be a pediatrician and will attend the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Medicine in the Fall of 2018. Kaitlyn is picture here (left) with Dr. Yarberry (right).

## 2017 – Danica Ordoñez



Coming from Little Rock, AR, Danica graduated with a degree in Biochemistry, and minors in Art and Interdisciplinary Studies. In the summer of 2016, Danica worked with Dr. Victoria Dunlap, a current faculty member specializing in biochemistry, where they studied the structural behaviors of the intrinsically disordered protein ligands of calmodulin. Danica will be continuing her education at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Medicine in the Fall of 2017. Danica is pictured here (left) on her graduation day with Dr. Dunlap (right).

## 2016 - Amber Rolland

Originally from Monette, AR, Amber now attends the University of Oregon, where she is pursuing a PhD from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in the laboratory of Jim Prell. She was selected as both a Dean's First-Year Merit Award recipient and an Anderson Family ARCS Scholar, and her studies will focus on utilizing native mass spectrometry to investigate the interactions and dynamics of membrane proteins and lipids. In the summer of 2016, Amber worked at the National Center for Toxicological Research (a branch of the FDA) through their Summer Student Research Program, where she participated in a project developing imaging mass spectrometry methods to study the distribution of chemotherapeutic drugs with cardiotoxic side effects in heart tissue. Amber is pictured here (right) with Patsy Manion (left), the late Dr. Manion's wife and an avid supporter of the UCA Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.



## 2015 - Sergio Perez Bakovic



Sergio, who came to UCA from his home country of Bolivia, took a short break from his studies after receiving his undergraduate degree, working for a local orthodontist in Conway. He is currently pursuing graduate studies in chemical engineering at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Sergio is pictured here (right) with Dr. Karen Steelman, his undergraduate research advisor and a former faculty member specializing in analytical chemistry.

## 2014 - Aaron Owen

Hailing from Van Buren, AR, Aaron was accepted into the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences School of Medicine, where he is currently pursuing his MD. Pictured to the right, Aaron lives in Conway with his beautiful family.



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## 2013 - Ryan Parker



Ryan, a native of Heber Springs, AR, earned an M.A. in Chemistry from the University of Texas with the Brodbelt group, focusing on biological applications of mass spectrometry. Throughout his years in graduate school, he wrote a large collection of software for the analysis of mass spectral data utilized by the members of his lab. He now uses this hobby/skillset in his career as a software developer in the Dean's Office for the College of Natural Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin, where this photo was taken.

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## 2012 - Venusa Phomakay

Arriving at UCA from Alma, AR, Venusa continued her education by attending medical school at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in the fall of 2012. During her four years in the School of Medicine, she participated in many activities on campus and in the community: serving on the UAMS Christian Medical Association leadership team, participating in medical missions in Guatemala two years in a row, and volunteering at a student-run free clinic for underserved community members. She met her fiancé, Coy Lock, during her 2<sup>nd</sup> year at UAMS while volunteering at an applicant interview day. In May 2016, she graduated from medical school with Honors in Research and was co-awarded the Faculty Key (given to the most



outstanding senior student voted by the faculty). In July 2016, Venusa began her training as a Resident Physician in Memphis, TN. She plans to complete a combined residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics in 2020. She is pictured here (left) with Dr. Robert Mauldin (right), former department chair and current faculty member specializing in analytical chemistry.

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## 2011 - Brian Besel

Immediately after graduation from UCA, Brian left his hometown of Rogers, AR for Fort Collins, CO, where he worked as a toxicologist for Rocky Mountain Instrumental Laboratory (known for running tests for forensics and pharmaceutical companies). He later resigned to pursue a career in the classroom and is currently teaching chemistry at Fossil Ridge High School in Fort Collins. He received his Master's in Education from Colorado State University in May 2014. Brian is pictured here (middle) between Dr. Patrick Desrochers (left), inorganic chemist and current chair of the department, and Dr. Richard Tarkka (right), current faculty member specializing in organic chemistry.

