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Three Recent Graduates Begin PhD Programs in the Fall

Posted [May 18, 2010](#) at 2:56 pm by [Melanie Marquez](#)

(St. Petersburg, Fla.) May 18, 2010 – Three members of USF St. Petersburg’s class of 2010 will start PhD programs in the fall; Ben Hardisty heads to the University of Utah, Peyton Jones will stay in the southeast and study at Tulane University and Alanna Lecher will go to the University of California, Santa Cruz. Their research topics range from mathematical biology to civil rights history.

[Ben Hardisty](#)

Hardisty will enter a five-year program for a PhD in biology. He earned a bachelor’s degree at USF St. Petersburg in political science. During his undergraduate program he took a science elective and quickly became a researcher with Professor Deby Cassill. This led to a master’s degree in environmental science and policy, a degree he will finish this summer.

She saw something in me,” Hardisty said. “It was really only when I met Dr. Cassill that I became more focused and could see biology being a career.”

At the University of Utah he will study transposons, DNA sequences that can move within a single cell, and research the applications of mathematical biology to genetics.

[Peyton Jones](#)

Jones earned a four-year fellowship for a PhD in history at Tulane University. He graduated this month with a master’s degree in Florida studies. At Tulane, Jones will study southern and civil rights history. His interests include social history and the theoretical foundations of history.

As a graduate assistant and top student in the Florida studies program, Jones conducted research for Professor Ray Arsenault’s recent book on the famous African-American opera singer Marian Anderson and assisted with other projects, including collaborations with the Florida Humanities Council. He was a recipient of the Pinellas County Historical Society Scholarship and participated in their annual conferences.

[Alanna Lecher](#)

Lecher will start a PhD program in Earth and Planetary Sciences at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She graduated this month with a bachelor’s degree in environmental science and policy. As an undergraduate, Lecher was active in research activities.

I am prepared for graduate school because of the research experience I gained as a student at USFSP,” Lecher said. “The ability to get so involved in research as an undergraduate is what made my application so competitive.”

Lecher used radiochemistry to study the effect of effluent from the Mississippi River on the Gulf of Mexico dead zone. She also measured submarine groundwater discharge along the continental shelf off the west coast of Florida. For her honors thesis, she mathematically modeled marine groundwater discharge off the coast of Tampa Bay.