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Moments pinpoint students' paths

Andrew Sage '08 masterminded a series of thefts his senior year at Linfield.

Sage, now a graduate student at Western Illinois University, directed students to steal a cell phone and deceive an interviewer. The thefts were part of a collaborative research project on deception and lying he conducted with Kay Livesay, associate professor of psychology.

During the interviews, student volunteers were asked to incorporate four nonverbal cues into their responses – fidgeting, hand movements, leg movements and shifty eyes. If they could successfully mislead the interviewer about the theft, they earned \$20.

“That got them motivated to lie,” said Sage with a smile. “We found that when we incorporated the lying cues, participants were twice as likely to think that a truthful statement was a lie.”

The research project was ideal for Sage, a member of the National Guard who hopes eventually to work for the CIA. “I learned that eye witness testimonies are highly inaccurate, though they are heavily relied upon by law officials,” he said.

Emily Young '05 spent nearly every day of her senior year in the psychology rat lab – and her successful experiment made it all worthwhile.

After stumbling upon research about drug interactions, she wondered, “Why are cocaine and alcohol so commonly co-abused?” and decided to find out. She designed a research experiment with rats looking at the effects of these drugs when given alone and in combination.

“It was one of the coolest things I'd done at Linfield,” she said. “It actually worked. It was exciting to get results right away, especially as an undergraduate.”

As a research assistant at Oregon Health and Science University, Young is now conducting alcohol research with mice and plans to pursue a doctorate in behavioral neuroscience.

Brenda Gehrke '99 remembers the semester that set her life's path.

As a Linfield junior, Gehrke developed an interest in brain injury and jumped at the chance to take part in research with Lee Bakner, professor of psychology. At that time, she was one of the few students doing research at Linfield.

“It was one-on-one research and I took part in every step of the process,” said Gehrke, who went on to earn a Ph.D. in biopsychology from the University of Ken-

tucky. “It gave me a good foundation and prepared me for graduate school.”

Now a pharmacologist with the Food and Drug Administration, she evaluates the safety of oncology drugs.

A favorite part of research for Amanda Struthers '04 is presenting it to groups of people, a practice she started while a student at Linfield.

“It can spur great questions and conversations, which is the exciting part,” said Struthers, a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska conducting nicotine cessation research.

Fascinated by the physiological and psychological factors that play into drug dependence, she studies the underlying neural mechanisms involved in nicotine dependence. In the future, Struthers hopes to teach at a small, liberal arts institution like Linfield. “I loved my experience – getting to know my professors and having the liberal arts perspective,” she said. “I want to be part of that at the teaching level.”



Emily Young '05