A Year of Transformative Experiences

Director’s Message

2014 was an amazing year. Over 400 students - the most ever - undertook hands-on inquiry-based projects at the Preserves. I continue to be inspired by the power of these immersive experiences to transform the lives of students.

From freshmen classes to graduate students, students working at the Preserves overflowed with enthusiasm. One student wrote, “This class sparked a fire in my heart.” That’s just the kind of passion we are trying to inspire.

And these experiences are not just exciting, they have a lasting impact. A recent graduate wrote, “A lot of skills I learned at Fairfield Osborn Preserve have been helpful in my professional career. Recently I was in a job interview and my ability to decipher common tree species played a large role in me landing the job.”

It has been an exciting year for growing our Preserves. Participation in our programs is expanding and we received a significant land donation, sponsored innovative partnerships in technology, and made strides to create new facilities at the Galbreath Preserve.

It’s also gratifying to see that the work done at the Preserves is being recognized by the broader North Coast community. This year, we were the subject of several great news articles, including an in-depth story on Osborn Preserve in the Press Democrat.

Please consider a gift this year to continue the momentum. We are helping to transform our students into environmental leaders who have the skills and ability to address the challenges of this century. Thanks for your support.

Dr. Claudia Luke

Student Stories

Working at the Preserves has really opened up a door to my career as a teacher. It’s allowed me to put into practice the theories I learned in the classroom, made me a lot of connections with the community, and helped me live more sustainably. When I become a teacher, I’m excited about teaching my students about science, nature, and how to live lightly on the land.

Jeff Johnson
Pursuing a teaching credential at SSU
Class of 2013
40-Acres for Osborn

A Place to “Pignic”

In the last days of 2013, the Roth family—Bill and Joan and their daughters Ana, Maggie and Jessica—donated 40 acres to the Fairfield Osborn Preserve. The new property is on a beautiful ridge adjacent to the Preserve with sweeping vistas and an old stand of Douglas Fir.

These lands, nicknamed “The Pignic Field” by the Roth family for the pig rooting historically found at a favorite picnic spot, are now part of Osborn Preserve and help create new opportunities to teach students about the land and its history.

Established in 1972 and named in honor of Joan’s conservationist father, Fairfield Osborn, the Preserve now totals 450 acres of outdoor classroom space for research and education.

The Roths’ donations have made a lasting impact on environmental learning and discovery on Sonoma Mountain. Since the establishment of the Preserve, its programs have trained more than 1600 students and community members to lead tours as naturalist guides and to work on restoration projects with collaborators throughout the county.

For more about Preserve programs and the Roth family, see the Press Democrat article at: www.sonoma.edu/preserves/news/

New Technology, New Partnerships

Sensor Network With Rohnert Park and PG&E

Information technology (IT) has become inseparable from our ability to understand environmental complexity. New sensors now track everything from greenhouse gas emissions to microscopic processes. Applying new advances in technology to environmental questions requires collaboration between an IT workforce interested in the environment and an environmental workforce familiar with IT solutions.

The SSU Preserves is working with the Department of Engineering Science to create sensor-to-screen networks that enable students from all disciplines to learn about and experiment with data transmission, weather stations, sensor development, and solar power battery banks.

Alberto Maldonado, one of the SSU students employed to work on the Osborn Preserve Sensor Network, is gaining professional experience in technology and teaching others about the network. "Working on this project is giving me hands-on experience working with technologies that will make me more desirable by employers," said Maldonado.

The new sensor network has sparked new collaborations. The City of Rohnert Park is using data from the weather station to establish an early flood warning system and PG&E donated high resolution LiDAR data that is being used by Geography students to study erosion.

The Osborn Sensor Network is supported by SSU’s IRA program, PG&E, Steve Norwick Memorial Fund, Sonoma County Water Agency’s WATERS Collaborative, City of Rohnert Park, and Daphne Smith.
Staying Ahead of the Curve

SSU Preserves Aligned with Best Practices

This summer, Preserves Director Claudia Luke attended a national meeting to discuss a new report on field stations by the National Academy of Sciences. The report highlights best practices and provides recommendations to make field stations central to the challenges of the 21st Century. An analysis of Preserve accomplishments over the last five years, shows the SSU Preserves has already been prioritizing practices aligned with the National Academy’s recommendations. A few highlights:

1. Internship programs are being updated to connect students to the unique qualities and globally significant issues of California’s North Coast: biodiversity, coastal forests, and watershed productivity.

2. Collaborations with faculty and regional partners have been the hallmark of developing exceptional training experiences for students. Over the last 5 years, the SSU Preserves has increased by 8 fold the number of students engaged in projects at our 3 preserves.

3. New sensor-to-screen technologies that measure environmental change and engage engineering and computer science students are in development and are expanding regional partnerships and donation opportunities.

4. New zero-carbon overnight facilities at the Galbreath and Osborn Preserves to create immersive learning experiences and cross-disciplinary conversations are in planning.

While the National Academy of Science report extolled the virtues of university field sites, it also identified barriers to success, calling for greater financial support to broaden and deepen programs and modernize facilities.

Water at the Galbreath Preserve!

A new well, drilled in November, now produces drinking water for visitors to the Galbreath Preserve. The well will support overnight stays at the Preserve and is part of a planning effort to develop net-zero energy facilities.

The new facilities will create immersive experiences for students to learn about their connections to the land. The project has already been the subject of tours focused on sustainable practices.

For more information, see www.sonoma.edu/preserves/donate

2014 in Brief

Steve Norwick Memorial Grants ($1,000 each) were awarded this Fall to undergraduates undertaking research in Lyme’s disease, insect diversity, turtle habitat, camera trap imagery and sensor network development.

Best Water-Related Project Award was presented by County Supervisor Shirlee Zane to Dr. Michelle Goman’s Geography 317 students at the 2014 SSU Science Symposium for their study on tree ring analysis at the Osborn Preserve.

The New Galbreath Stewardship Program, started this Fall, engages community members in management and education at the Preserve. If you are interested, contact Preserve Director Claudia Luke (lukec@sonoma.edu)
Your generosity transforms the lives of students. 100% of our accomplishments are directly related to you and all of our donors.

Investment in the SSU Preserves provides the programs, equipment and facilities that help students gain critical thinking and problem solving skills. These skills help them become well-rounded individuals with the motivation and talents needed to make a difference in the world and address the challenges of this century.

Thank you to our donors for making student educational experiences possible this year. Special thanks to Bob Johnson, Daphne Smith, Steve Norwick friends and family, and the William and Joan Roth family for substantial gifts to our programs. A full list of donors is on our website.

Whether you’d like to make a one-time gift, a multi-year pledge, add the Preserves to your will or trust, upgrade facilities at the Osborn Preserve, or help build new educational spaces at the Galbreath Preserve, please consider us in your giving plans.

Thank You!

Investment Today,
Transformation Tomorrow

Donations can be accepted online, by phone, or in the enclosed envelope. SSU provides a full range of giving opportunities, including life income gifts, appreciated stock, and naming opportunities. Gifts are fully tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Claudia Luke, Preserves Director
lukec@sonoma.edu, 707-664-3416

Michelle Covington, SSU Development
michelle.covington@sonoma.edu
707-664-4151

www.sonoma.edu/preserves/donate