Student Profile: Elijah Wilson

By Brittany Goltry

Before attending the OSU College of Forestry (CoF), Elijah Wilson had never travelled abroad, did not speak Spanish and never thought that he could afford to study abroad. Originally from Cottage Grove, OR, Elijah knew that he wanted to go into a forestry and engineering related field in college. He began his first term at OSU in the Forest & Civil Engineering five-year dual degree program. It did not take long for him to realize that civil engineering was not for him, but he liked the small class sizes and personable vibe within the College of Forestry, so he decided to look exclusively at CoF majors.

“One of the things that I really like about the College of Forestry is the first name basis you have with the professors. Any professor would be happy to answer your questions and if they don’t know the answer, they will get you in touch with someone who does,” he said.

After meeting with David Smith, Renewable Materials academic advisor, Elijah knew that he had found the right fit. By the end of his freshman year, Elijah was majoring in Renewable Materials with the Science & Engineering option and a Bioenergy minor. He also joined the OSU student chapter of the national Forest Products Society (FPS), which encourages awareness about forest products. It was his involvement in FPS that sparked Elijah’s interest in studying abroad.

“I had never even considered it because I could never afford it,” replied Elijah of studying abroad.

A fellow FPS member helped Elijah to realize that studying abroad does not have to be expensive.
Elijah applied for a three-term internship in Nicaragua with a non-governmental organization (NGO) called Asofenix during the 2012-13 academic year. Asofenix is dedicated to improving life in rural communities through renewable energy sources such as micro wind turbines, wood stoves and hydroelectric dams.

“The way I thought about the company was, using renewable energy as a way to fight poverty,” Elijah said.

Elijah learned that he was accepted into the program in June of 2012, just three months before he would be leaving the country. He was completely unprepared and had no idea what was in store for him.

“The first three days were the hardest for me because I had to deal with the heat of Nicaragua which was something I had never experienced before, see all the poverty that is there, travel many hours and find my way in a place where I did not speak the language, and just become familiarized with living in a new country,” he recounted. “Once I had gotten settled in and understood how things worked, it was not so bad.”

Elijah spent the first month with a host family in Leon, Nicaragua, and attended Dariana Spanish School. The rest of his trip was spent mostly in Managua, where the Asofenix office is located, and in the rural communities that he worked with. Elijah’s primary task was to improve wood cook stoves.

“The main thing that people use wood for worldwide is as fuel for cooking,” he explained. “Improved cook stoves are more efficient and use less wood.”

Elijah helped to develop a program to integrate wood stoves into rural communities. He worked directly with the communities to teach them how to use the stoves.

“I helped the families integrate this equipment into their daily lives. I revived and redesigned the cook stove program to make it more usable,” Elijah described. “It was interesting to be able to apply what you’re learning to real life and see how ideas like that can be used.”

Because he went to a developing country, Elijah saw poverty first-hand. But one of his favorite parts of the trip was the positive attitude of the people that he met.

“Being able to meet these people in rural communities who, by our standards are way way below the poverty line, but were happy ... it helps you appreciate so much more what you have here in the U.S.” revealed Elijah.

After returning from Nicaragua in July 2013, Elijah had caught the travelling bug. That summer, he went on the Insights from Scandinavia trip, a fifteen-day study tour through Finland, Denmark, and Sweden, hosted by OSU College of Forestry faculty. He also landed an internship with Weyerhaeuser, one of the world’s largest private owners of timberlands.

Elijah is now in his fourth year at OSU and is using his experience with improved cook stoves as part of his thesis for his bioenergy minor. He is a member of the International Forestry Students Association (IFSA), the Vice President of FPS, and a member of the Leadership Academy through the College of Agricultural Sciences. Studying abroad in Nicaragua inspired Elijah to minor in Spanish, and he is considering adding an international degree as well. Someday he hopes to pursue a master’s degree and would eventually like to obtain a doctorate. For a career, Elijah would like to explore the business side of wood products. He wants to continue travelling abroad, and is contemplating the idea of earning his master’s degree overseas.

“I would love to go into higher management in a wood products company like Weyerhaeuser,” Elijah declared. “Preferably an international company so that I could go abroad and help to integrate cook stoves all over the world.”

Elijah’s Nicaragua Blog
elijahnicaragua201213.wordpress.com

International Forestry Students Association (IFSA)
cubs.forestry.oregonstate.edu/ifsa

CAS Leadership Academy
agsci.oregonstate.edu/leadership_academy

IE3 Global Internships
ie3global.ous.edu
“My major research interest is in remote sensing of the carbon, water and energy balance of terrestrial ecosystems,” said Thomas. “I am also interested in studying changes in vegetation and vegetation cover over time using time series of satellite data.”

You probably haven’t met too many people as remarkable as faculty member, Thomas Hilker! He is a recent addition to the College of Forestry as an assistant professor, teaching remote sensing in the Department of Forest Engineering, Resources & Management (FERM), and his list of accolades is long and impressive.

Thomas grew up in Germany where he gained an appreciation for the great outdoors. As an undergrad, he earned a Forestry degree at the University of Applied Sciences in Göttingen in 2000, and went on to get his master’s degree in Photogrammetry and Geoinformatics at the University of Stuttgart in 2002. At that point, he thought he was finished with his education. He had a successful career working for German companies in the GIS consulting field, designing GIS database software, and received an industry award for developing GIS applications. However, his love for nature brought him back to the world of academia. In 2005, he moved to Canada to work on a Ph.D. in Forestry at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver.

While in British Columbia, Thomas earned several awards and honors for his work in photogrammetry and geo-information research. His main interest was remote sensing of carbon, and its effects on land vegetation. To this day, these interests remain his primary passion.

“I wanted to see how the earth was sensitive to climate change,” Thomas explained.

His concern is the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and how it is stressing the world’s forests and other vegetation.

Through innovative research, he is able to test these effects with satellite mapping, remote optical systems, and laser scanning. His main goal is to understand the biosphere on a larger scale, seeing the “big picture” in regards to climate change. This includes the oceans and atmosphere, not just land vegetation.

After acquiring his Ph.D. from UBC, Thomas stayed on as a post-doctoral research fellow, teaching remote sensing at the graduate level and continuing his research. He then took a brief position with NASA at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, where he utilized his skills in remote sensing of the world’s terrestrial ecosystems.

Thomas enjoyed the Pacific Northwest so much, he decided to return, and when the opportunity came to teach at Oregon State University, he accepted a position as an assistant professor. He chose the OSU College of Forestry because of its well-known and respected scientists and its “large scale” research.

“I felt at home with the academic community”, he said.

When it comes to teaching methods, Thomas believes in presenting complex material in a way that students can understand, but challenges them to use their analytical and critical thinking skills. He wants students to appreciate the complexity of the Earth system and encourages their independent analysis of data.

When he’s not helping to address fundamental problems with the biosphere and passing that knowledge on to students, Thomas enjoys hiking, being outdoors, and spending time with his dog, Jazz.

“I just like being happy”, he revealed with a smile.
Field Guide to Shrubs of Northwest Forests

By Denise Ruttan
Source: Edward Jensen

On your next hike, instead of puzzling over the name of that large upright shrub with tiny white flowers and small red fruits, reach for the new field guide "Shrubs to Know in Pacific Northwest Forests" to quickly identify it as the native red elderberry.

Ed Jensen, a professor in Oregon State University’s College of Forestry, authored the full-color, easy-to-use field guide for the OSU Extension Service.

The soft-cover, glossy book describes nearly 100 different shrubs native to Pacific Northwest forests. It is useful to hikers and plant enthusiasts in Oregon, Washington, northern California, southern British Columbia, the panhandle of Idaho and adjoining parts of western Montana. It features 500 color photographs, an illustrated glossary of shrub terms, individual range maps and complete descriptions for each shrub species. It took Jensen about five years to research, write and photograph all the shrubs for the guide, which was published and designed by OSU’s Extension and Experiment Station Communications department.

The new guide is a companion to his popular "Trees to Know in Oregon" book, originally authored in 1950 by former OSU Extension forester Charles R. Ross. Under Jensen’s authorship, "Trees to Know" has undergone several major enhancements and revisions, including the addition of color photos in 2005 and the publication of a 60th anniversary edition in 2010. It has always been one of the most requested publications in the OSU Extension catalog.

"I meet people from all around the state who tell me that ‘Trees to Know’ helped launch their interest in Oregon’s trees and forests,” Jensen said. "I think it helps people develop a relationship with the forest when they get to know individual trees. I hope ‘Shrubs to Know’ will have that same impact."

Jensen teaches courses on tree and shrub identification and runs natural resource education programs at OSU. For about 10 years he served as director of two large continuing education programs for field-based natural resource specialists – the Silviculture Institute and the Natural Resources Institute.

The book costs $12, plus shipping and handling, and may be ordered from the OSU Extension catalog or by calling 1-800-561-6719.

Ed Jensen is just one of the many people affiliated with the College of Forestry who has contributed to forestry, natural resource and renewable material related publications. By attending OSU, our students have access to the very researchers and writers of the books that they will read and learn from. Our faculty, staff and alumni help to make the College of Forestry a world-renowned institution for teaching and learning about forests and related resources.
2013-2014 Ambassadors

Ambassadors for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources serve as student representatives of Oregon State University, the College of Agricultural Sciences (COA), and the College of Forestry (CoF). Ambassadors participate in promotional and recruiting activities including on-and off-campus events, professional conferences, as well as stakeholder and alumni events. They have the opportunity to develop and enhance their public speaking, time management, individual and group dynamic skills, prepare for student and pre-professional success, and engage in activities that promote the CAS and CoF.

The Colleges of Agricultural Sciences and Forestry are fortunate to have 11 outstanding students to promote, support and represent our colleges. This year’s Ambassador team includes:

James Boulger – Senior, Renewable Materials
College of Forestry

Emily Day – Junior, Natural Resources
College of Forestry

Ashley Grucza – Senior, Agricultural Bus. Mgmt.
College of Agricultural Sciences

Emily Kraxberger – Junior, Animal Sciences
College of Agricultural Sciences

College of Agricultural Sciences

Alex Powell – Junior, Agricultural Sciences
College of Agricultural Sciences

Erin Schenk – Junior, Food Science & Technology
College of Agricultural Sciences

Brianna Sempert – Senior, Fisheries & Wildlife
College of Agricultural Sciences

Briana Tanaka – Senior, Agricultural Bus. Mgmt.
College of Agricultural Sciences

Elli Vanderzanden, Junior, Agricultural Sciences
College of Agricultural Sciences

Brandon Zagratten – Senior, Forest Management
College of Forestry

Meet the CoF Ambassadors:

James Boulger
Senior
Corvallis, OR
Renewable Materials

Growing up in Corvallis, I have always been surrounded by majestic Douglas-fir forests and knew early on that I wanted a career in which I could interact with the outdoors. In high school I realized that I wanted to stay in Corvallis and become involved in Oregon State’s College of Forestry, but was still unsure which field I wanted to study. After meeting with a recruiter in the Wood Science & Engineering (WSE) department I became aware of the Renewable Materials degree, and was instantly drawn to the program. This degree fit my desires perfectly; it allowed me to be a member of the CoF while focusing on the sustainable aspect of product development.

OSU has provided educational opportunities that are more than I could have ever imagined. During my first year, while fully enrolled at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) through the Degree Partnership Program (DPP), I was able to get an internship at Flakeboard’s Albany based particleboard mill. This experience gave me hands-on practice with the testing methods and real-work application to my degree path.

Along with the work experience I have gained through my time at OSU, I have been granted the humbling experience to represent Oregon State University at two International Forestry Students' Symposiums. These symposiums have allowed me to travel internationally, to Turkey in 2012 and Spain in 2013, while also being able to communicate with a global network of forestry students. Through this experience I have learned different cultural practices and broadened my knowledge of forestry on a global scale.

As an Ambassador for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources, I hope to showcase the university’s wide range of opportunities and promote them to future students in hopes that their time spent at OSU is as diverse and productive as mine has been.
Emily Day
Junior
Corvallis, OR
Natural Resources

The fondest memories I have growing up are the many hiking and camping trips my parents took me on around Oregon. We spent many weekends out exploring the Cascades in the summer, camping next to rivers and swimming in their icy clear waters. These childhood experiences in nature fueled my love for the outdoors and have resonated with me throughout my entire life.

After high school, I attended Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) and realized that I wanted to travel and experience other places. After living in various locations, I moved to New Zealand where I spent a year working at farms and vineyards while hitchhiking around the country. During that time I met my husband, and later moved to Europe, where we travelled and volunteered throughout many countries. The experiences in new natural environments and cultures gave me valuable insights, new perspectives and made me who I am today.

After years of travelling, I discovered that I wanted to follow a career path that would help sustain the health of the environment. I wanted to start this path by pursuing an education at Oregon State University.

Ever since starting at OSU, I found focus and motivation that I never knew I possessed. Being a part of the university and the College of Forestry has given me the confidence and determination to be the best I can be. OSU is full of exciting opportunities and many ways to grow, both as an individual and as a professional. As an Ambassador, I feel honored to represent the Colleges of Agriculture Sciences and Forestry and to share my experiences with current and prospective students.

Ambassadors is a way to obtain leadership skills and professional development, and I enjoy being actively involved in the college and being a part of a team of highly motivated students achieving a common goal.

Brandon Ztraggen
Senior
La Pine, OR
Forest Management

I have always felt at home when I was in the forest. During my youth, I was constantly exposed to the outdoor environment. My love for the outdoors has been strengthened from the time spent on my grandparent’s cattle ranch to my time spent fishing, hunting, hiking and camping. As a student at La Pine High School, I participated in football, wrestling, the student council, the forestry program, and was a teacher’s assistant for the special education program. However, I was not sure if college was the right fit for me. After graduating, I spent my time fighting wildland fires and building houses. After five years of intensive labor, I decided that it was time to pursue a college education. I began the forestry program at Central Oregon Community College (COC) in Bend, OR, where I joined the logging sports team, the forestry club and received an Associate’s Degree in Forest Resources Technology.

My time spent at COCC only fueled my thirst for knowledge, so I decided to continue on and join the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. I have enjoyed the time I have spent at OSU and I look forward to expanding my knowledge and involvement with the college. I am excited to serve as an Ambassador for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources. I look forward to sharing my experiences with prospective students and helping them to learn about OSU.

For More Information on Ambassadors:
Phone: 541-737-2211
Email: CAS.Ambassadors@oregonstate.edu
Website: agsci.oregonstate.edu/ambassadors
Campus Offices: 137 Strand Agriculture Hall & 250 Peavy Hall