



Environmental
Program



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

Featured Stories:

Sharon Johnson's Upcoming Retirement: *Admin Sharon Johnson will be retiring this June*

New Hire: *Dr. Charlotte Gabrielsen joins the EV team*

Department Updates



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A few of our seniors sitting socially distant in the Tutt Science lecture hall during their capstone course in 7th block!



Sharon Johnson is Retiring

After 20 years with Colorado College, Administrative Assistant Sharon Johnson has announced her retirement

Sharon Johnson, the Environmental Studies Program administrative assistant, will be retiring this summer after 20 years at Colorado College. She has become an integral part of the program, supporting its development from less than 20 majors per year when she first started to the popular, interdisciplinary program it has become today. From making sure that students have all the credits required to graduate to organizing class schedules, major budgets, and events, Sharon has ensured that what is now the second highest enrolled department on campus ran without a hitch.



She consistently provided support that allowed faculty members to focus on their teaching and research, while she took care of almost all the daily details of administration, outlasting the six different program chairs whom she assisted. Her diligence and organization have kept the department running smoothly, and her love for discussion and debate has allowed her to develop lasting relationships with students, faculty, and even featured speakers. These relationships, she says, have affected her life greatly, opening opportunities to discover new and global viewpoints. Her attitude of openness helped contribute to a sense of equality in the department, where staff and faculty worked as equals.

Sharon's career at Colorado College began in Development in 2001, but she soon realized that she wanted to work with students and faculty members when she moved to the Environmental Program in 2002. At the time, the EV Program was much smaller, with only one major track, three full-time faculty members (Howard Drossman, Phil Kannan, and Sharon Hall) and about 20 declared majors per year. Between moving from the basement of Barnes to the newly constructed Tutt Science Center in her first year, adding a second track to the major in the next five years, and expanding its course offerings, it wasn't long before she was administering a department with six full-time faculty, many more associated faculty, and more than 100 declared majors at the end of each year.

After retiring from CC, Sharon intends to spend time with her family, especially her children and grandchildren. She also hopes to volunteer at her library. When the pandemic abates, she is looking forward to traveling to natural wonders such as the Grand Canyon and the San Juan Islands.



Sharon Johnson is Retiring

After 20 years with Colorado College, Administrative Assistant Sharon Johnson has announced her retirement (Continued)

While she is ready to move on, she has truly enjoyed her time at CC. As she put it, “The years have gone by fast.” She will be greatly missed by those who have worked with her during her 20-year EV career. While EV will certainly find someone who can take over Sharon’s work, she really is irreplaceable. We wish her the best in her journeys and travels!

(Thank you to Sharon Johnson and Howard Drossman for your time and insight)

New Hire

Introduction to new EV science professor Dr. Charlotte Gabrielsen

Would you tell me a bit about your academic background?

I have been lucky to cover a lot of ground during my studies, both academically and literally! After college, I earned a master’s degree in Natural Resources and the Environment (Wildlife Management) at the University of New Hampshire. I studied wetland-dependent species (amphibian) gene flow, and had the opportunity to gain training in geospatial and molecular approaches. From there, I spent about 5 years at the University of Wyoming, where I earned a PhD in Ecology. UW has an incredible interdisciplinary Program in Ecology, and alongside



New Hire

Introduction to new EV science professor Dr. Charlotte

Gabrielsen (Continued)

my own research (exploring how climate change will affect regional wetland dynamics and associated ecosystem services and biodiversity in the Great Plains), I got to take a broad range of fascinating courses and make many life-long friends. From there, I moved to Alaska, where I completed a 2.5 year postdoc in the Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit within the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. My project explored how climate and land use change will impact species movement between protected areas, and the goal was to identify candidate corridors for future conservation. While the project was great, the time in Alaska was especially impactful, and a particular highlight was the opportunity to work with the Northwest Boreal Partnership (a network of government, tribal, NGO, and academic stakeholders), which broadened my understanding of conservation challenges and opportunities considerably. From there, it was just a few very long plane rides back to the Front Range, and I'm grateful to have landed here at CC!

What are your research interests?

I am a landscape ecologist, which basically means that I study how landscape patterns at broad scales affect ecological processes (like the production of biodiversity and movement of species). I've studied these questions in different places (vernal pools in New England, wetlands in the US Great Plains, and large tracts of land in Alaska and Northwest Canada). Across all these settings and our own backyard here in the Rockies, I'm really interested in studying how these broad patterns and processes interact with human dimensions, how ecological insights can be made practice-relevant and inform management, and how GIS & remote sensing can contribute to coproduction of knowledge and more inclusive decision making.

What environmental issues do you consider priorities?

Having spent time in Alaska, I gained an even stronger appreciation for just how important and far-reaching an issue climate change is. However, I am especially struck by the intersection between climate change and human land use/development-and just how challenging it can be to balance the many different factors and motivations at play.

Any fun hobbies?

Probably too many! I love doing anything crafty, I am always looking for a new recipe to try (I got through my PhD largely by stress-baking), I love gardening (outdoors and in), and I have a huge soft spot for animals. I'm currently building a chicken coop for our 6 newest family members, who I hope I can introduce to people from the department when it's safe to do so!



New Hire Continued

Introduction to new EV science professor Dr. Charlotte Gabrielsen (Continued)

What has been something positive you have found in this time- the Covid-19 pandemic?

While there have been many unexpected challenges this year, I've been grateful for the opportunity to share many memorable milestones with my now 2 year-old daughter (Linnea). Since the lock-down began, I've gotten to see her take her first steps, form her first sentences, read hundreds of books, and make lots of pancakes!

Alumni Spotlights

Sonia Klein '20

What inspired you to be an environmental science/studies major?

I studied environmental science for two reasons. The first is a deep love for the outdoors. I have always loved experiencing nature by hiking, skiing, climbing, or just going on a picnic. I wanted to pursue a degree that would allow me to get outdoors while gaining an understanding of it. The second reason I was inspired to major in environmental science is to combat the climate crisis.

Did you have any hobbies at CC? Was there anything that you were involved in, both connected to EV or not?

When I was at CC, I was a chair-member of our chapter of the Climate Reality Project. We used grassroots power in efforts to shutdown Martin Drake, the coal powerplant downtown. I also worked in the Ritt Kellogg Climbing Gym as a monitor. In my free time I played intramural softball and water polo, took art adjuncts, went skiing, or spent time with friends out on Yampa field!



Alumni Spotlights

Sonia Klein '20 (Continued)

What have you been up to after leaving CC?

After graduating from CC, I spent the summer quarantining in Connecticut with my family, became quite stir crazy, and went to the Sawtooth Wilderness in Idaho with my boyfriend! I am now settled down in Denver and work on land conservation issues for Green Corps, an environmental nonprofit.

How has Covid-19 changed your trajectory (if at all)?

Before the pandemic, I was planning on traveling for my job. With Green Corps, we work on four different campaigns to protect our environment in different cities and communities across the country. However, my entire year with them has been remote thus far, so I was able to move to Denver and live with my best friends.

What has been something positive you have found in this time- the Covid-19 pandemic?

I have found respite [from the pandemic] in my relationship with my family. In a year full of so much loss and pain, my parents and sister have been the greatest source of support, happiness, and light. I speak with them on the phone daily and have found so much appreciation for them. I have been re-connecting with various people throughout my life who I normally wouldn't have thought to reach out to. I am trying to take advantage of the slow pace during this time to really develop and connect with the people in my life and community.

What current environmental issues do you find to be priorities?

The environmental issues I think we need to prioritize are managing ocean plastic pollution, transitioning to renewable energy, and shifting to mainstream sustainable agriculture practices. We need to make addressing these environmental problems inclusive and equitable to all communities, especially those groups who are most affected by environmental problems.



Alumni Spotlights Continued

Cheristy Jones '20

What inspired you to be an environmental science/studies major?

Entering college, I was uncertain about my path. I was curious about the natural world, but I had a hard time picking just one subject to study. I also wanted to explore questions that were important to both policy decisions and primary stakeholders. The interdisciplinary approach to study the complexity of the natural world led me to become an Environmental Science major.

Did you have any hobbies at CC? Was there anything that you were involved in? Connected to EV, or not?

I played on the varsity women's lacrosse team for four years. I also served on the Student Athletic Advisory Committee. I was part of the Community Engaged Scholars program and volunteered with a variety of different organizations throughout my time at CC. During my senior year, I led Roots: The Colorado Springs Homeless Collective, a club that uses art-based projects to help bring the community experiencing houselessness and the broader Colorado Springs community together.

What have you been up to after CC?

After graduation, I worked as a laboratory technician in a soil biology and ecology lab at Michigan State University. I assisted on a few different projects that investigated carbon and nitrogen cycling in agricultural systems. I am currently back home in Utah working as an adaptive cycling instructor for Wasatch Adaptive Sports and coaching club lacrosse before starting a PhD program in Earth and Environmental Science at the University of New Hampshire this fall.

What has been something positive you have found in this time- the covid pandemic?

I think the best part of the pandemic has been finding different ways to connect with friends and maintain a support system. My friends and I have been keeping in touch by playing online games, doing Zoom study sessions, and virtual book club, to name a few. I'm excited to use these new activities to stay connected as we continue to move and relocate.

What current environmental issues do you think are priorities?

I think addressing environmental injustices should be a top priority. Climate change affects everyone, but low-income communities and communities of color face the greatest risks. All decisions on energy, transport, and land development should prioritize environmental justice.



Next Year's Paraprof

A short interview with the paraprof for the 2021-22 school year, Evan Foster

Where are you from?

Baltimore, MD

What's your major?

Environmental Science

What are your research interests?

I'm really interested in population dynamics, invasion ecology, tropical ecology, and how climate change will influence spatiotemporal distributions and interactions of species!



Commencement Plans

Class of 2020 and 2021 will have in-person Commencement Ceremonies

Commencement ceremonies will be held for both the classes of 2021 and 2020 this May. Colorado College has decided to hold in person ceremonies at the new Weidner Field in downtown Colorado Springs while following state and county COVID-19 guidelines. Each graduate will be permitted two guests. The ceremony for the class of 2021 will occur at 9 a.m. on May 23rd, and the ceremony for the class of 2020 will occur on May 30th of this year. Former Colorado College president and CEO of National Geographic Jill Tiefenthaler will be the class of 2021 speaker, and former president and CEO of the Field Museum in Chicago Richard Lariviere will be the speaker for the class of 2020.

See the pages for each ceremony on the Colorado College website for more information.



Fall Plan

Colorado College has released a hopeful plan for next fall

CC has announced that classes will be offered in person in the fall of 2021, as long as local, state, and federal directives allow. This will be reliant upon a decrease in Covid-19 cases, an effective vaccination rollout, and a continued understanding of the impacts of new variants. It is likely that mask wearing, social distancing, and testing will continue into the fall semester in some way. CC has recently required vaccination for all who are eligible and able in the community for the fall semester. No specific policies about campus visitors and on campus events such as Homecoming and Family and Friends Weekend have been released so far.

Department Updates

Two EV faculty have received tenure

Congratulations to Professor Lynne Gratz and Professor Jean Lee, who both received tenure earlier this year! Professor Gratz will be taking sabbatical next year, and Professor Lee will take sabbatical the following year. There will be one-years visitors during this time.

Office remodel

The remodel of the department offices has begun, changing the structure of the offices to accommodate another faculty office and lab. We anticipate that this will be completed by next year.

2021 Graduates

The class of 2021 has 41 seniors, 4 of which graduated in December and 37 of which will be graduating this May. We look forward to seeing all their upcoming endeavors!

