Utah native chooses UC-Beckley for school and sports

by Sandi Lilly

Jordan Johnston had initially decided to go to college in Iowa. She was about to commit to a volleyball program there when she received an email from UC-Beckley Coach Kelsey Eby. Jordan was invited to visit UC-Beckley that same week, and never looked back. After graduating from Snow Canyon High School in May of 2013, she made the trip to southern West Virginia to attend school. She mentions, “I was expecting it to be very close-knit, and that there would always be something new, interactive and fun to do.”

UC-Beckley’s volleyball team is a recent addition to the university’s sports lineup, and is coached by UC-Beckley Volleyball Coach Kelsey Eby. The team has high hopes for the 2013 season, and is working hard to make the community aware of both the volleyball team and the university itself. According to Eby, the team is young but has great potential, and coach and players alike are working to build a strong foundation.

When asked to comment further on her college experience at UC-Beckley, Johnston said, “I like to travel and get out of my comfort zone and try new things and this was a pretty big step. I was, and am still, very excited to be here. I’ve enjoyed every minute of it and I love being around new people. I chose here over other offers that I received because it had my program. I wanted to go to school in a small town and be able to play volleyball.”

Johnston was born and raised in St. George, Utah. She grew up living with her parents, an older brother and a younger sister. Her father was a teacher at her high school, and she was able to work closely with him as his teacher’s aid. “He was able to hand me my diploma at graduation, which I thought was really cool,” said Johnston. She credits her success in life to this close relationship with her family, and describes herself as “a daddy’s girl.”

When asked what she liked and disliked about the high school experience and if she still keeps in touch with friends at home in Utah, she said, “High school wasn’t the best time for me, but I had some really close friends that I am still very close to today. One lives in Texas, one was going to come here with me but broke her hand and stayed at the University of Utah and my other friend is still a high school senior. It’s weird making friends here because I’m still very close to those three but I definitely have made some awesome friends here!”

continued inside
Online learning - a student perspective
by Sandi Lilly

In today’s competitive job market, higher education is more important than ever. Not everyone has the time or ability to attend in-seat classes, but this doesn’t mean that they cannot work toward a college degree. The University of Charleston is currently authorized to provide online learning services in more than thirty states, allowing students throughout the nation to earn both undergraduate and graduate degrees. According to UC-Beckley Business Professor Melissa Farrish, online courses are especially beneficial to returning or non-traditional students. The coursework can be completed at the student’s own pace, making the programs an excellent option for parents who want to complete a degree or full-time employees who need to hone their skills. The courses provide an advancement opportunity for many students who would otherwise be unable to attend college classes.

Farrish has a unique perspective on online education, as she is both an educator and a student. She teaches various course concentrations at UC, including Introduction to Business, Principles of Management, Principles of Accounting, Business Software and Business Writing. While working as an instructor, she is also completing her third year of a doctoral program.

Farrish was born and raised in Beckley, and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School. She earned a bachelor of business administration in finance and master of business administration from Marshall University. When asked about her experience in the educational field, she said, “I graduated on a Saturday, and started working for Mountain State University the following Monday.” Farrish has 16 years of experience in the higher education field, and has been actively teaching since 2002.

Farrish explained that many of her students prefer online education, as it provides them with the ability to complete coursework when it’s convenient for them. Online education overcomes geographic and scheduling constraints, as well as other issues that may make it difficult to attend traditional classes. This type of learning is often a good option for working students, students who are parents or students who are caring for a loved one. Farrish says that as a first-generation college graduate herself, one of her favorite things is helping her students achieve their goal of a higher education.

Each student taking online classes completes a detailed, web-based portfolio as they complete their coursework. Farrish explained that this is beneficial to students because after coursework is completed, they have a unified portfolio package to include with a resume or show to potential employers. College can be a busy time, so an online portfolio is one way to keep progress and achievements organized, without needing to file papers or create a paper portfolio.

Farrish’s students tell her that one drawback of online learning, for students, is that it can be easy to procrastinate and fall behind. For this reason, students who intend to complete an online degree program must be self-starters and highly motivated, as these character traits will allow them to succeed. With focus and dedication, earning a higher education degree from home is possible.

For more information on UC-Online’s programs options, visit www.ucwv.edu/online.

Jordan Johnston also mentions that the weather in Utah is quite different from the weather in West Virginia, and that she’s slightly concerned about spending her first winter in the Mountain State. “I grew up in summers that were 110 degree weather and extremely dry, and the winters were maybe 30 degrees on a really bad day. I’m pretty nervous to spend the winter here.”

Johnston is working towards a degree in Diagnostic Medical Sonography. When asked about her reasons for choosing this major, Johnston said, “After having medical problems myself and having to get ultrasounds, it really grabbed my attention because it looked so cool to be working with technology that was so advanced. I really want to help people whenever I have the chance and going into the medical field and being able to possibly detect medical issues inside the body, I think it’s a really awesome way to help people. My neighbor is a sonographer so I had plenty of opportunities to talk to her, too. I want to be around technology and around people so I’m very excited to get my degree.”

She has plans to complete her degree, while participating in the volleyball team, and then travel for a few years before settling down in Oregon to work full-time as a sonographer. She enjoys travel, and hopes to have the chance to backpack across Europe after graduation, “I love to travel. I had an awesome opportunity to play volleyball in Australia this summer and I got to go to Canada a few years back so I’m very passionate about traveling and learning about new cultures and trying new foods and meeting all kinds of people.”

The inaugural volleyball season at UC-Beckley is off to a wonderful start. With dedicated players like Johnston working under Eby’s strong coaching, we’re sure to see great things. The team will certainly be one to watch this fall, so keep your eye on them, and on Jordan Johnston, to see just what develops.

A note from Dr. Forster

Dear Alumni & Friends,

I am happy to report that the 2013-2014 academic year has gotten off to a busy, but exciting start on our regional campuses. Some students are already halfway through the fall semester, while others in our new online programs may be just preparing to start their coursework for the year.

In this newsletter, we introduce you to Melissa Farrish, one of our faculty members in the online business program, as well as new UC-Beckley student-athlete Jordan Johnston. Their excitement about UC-Beckley and the new athletic programs are infectious. Our students and faculty are extraordinary, and I am proud to share their stories with you.

I’d also like to tell you about how UC-Beckley is collaborating with the Office of Advancement this year. By now, I hope you have seen the “myUC” logo on information you received from the University. MyUC is all about bringing together the UC family, past and present, and we are celebrating that through fundraising as well. Rather than emphasizing the Annual Fund this year, the Office of Advancement is focusing on building support for our Schools, including UC-Beckley, the UC campus in your area.

We want you, our alumni and donors, to see exactly where your support goes and the effect it has on the University. You have the opportunity to give directly to students, faculty, and projects at UC-Beckley.

Not only are they students like Jordan and faculty like Melissa Farrish, they are students like you once were and faculty like those you had at the University of Charleston. I hope you’ll take the time to read through this newsletter and get to know these members of the UC family. I also encourage you to read through the letters from the Office of Advancement you are receiving and visit www.ucwv.edu/myUC to find out more about the myUC effort and how you can support UC-Beckley. At UC, we’re Golden Eagles for life!

That’s myUC, what’s yours?

Dr. Jerry Forster
Regional President

UC-Beckley Culinary Arts Program

Our Culinary Arts students spent the day representing their school in community activities on Saturday, October 5th. First, they prepared breakfast for the Beckley buddy Walk to benefit the Down Syndrome Network of West Virginia. Then, they served traditional, chicken and cowboy-style chili at Chili Night in Uptown Beckley. Stay tuned for your next chance to meet our students and taste their creations!