



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY STANISLAUS
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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StanGrad: Thriving Economics Grad Keeps Her Focus

Note: This article is part of the StanGrad series, highlighting CSU Stanislaus students who will graduate at commencement ceremonies May 30 and 31. [Click here](#) for more.

Earning a college degree in four years while balancing the realities of life can be a challenge for even the most accomplished student. Despite two transfers and three changes in major — all while working as many as three jobs at a time, participating in several church activities and planning for her August wedding — Apryl Hekman will graduate on time this month with a bachelor's degree in economics.

If that wasn't enough, Hekman's also about to publish her first research paper.

A Ripon native, Hekman studied architectural engineering for a year at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. She found herself uninspired by a potential career in architecture but enjoyed math, and she returned home to find her calling in economics during a year spent at Modesto Junior College.

She transferred to CSU Stanislaus as an economics major and was approached by Professor Daniel Deisenroth — who has studied the management of recreational fisheries — about a research project in January 2012.

"He said I could do pretty much anything, as long as it had something to do with recreational fisheries," Hekman said. She began looking into the subject and soon found her research focus.

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Catch rates reported at lakes and other fishing destinations are often used to predict when and where people will choose to fish, but Hekman wanted to understand whether people's own expectations about catch rates were better predictors of their behavior than the reported catch rates. So she created a survey and administered it at seven lakes in Mono County.

"I found that people's expectations about catch rates were significantly different from actual catch rates," Hekman said, "which means reported catch rates are an inaccurate tool for predicting behavior or modeling demand."

The implication — that research methodologies can lead to flawed results — applies to more than just the recreational fisheries industry. Hekman's paper, "An Empirical Approach to Directly Accounting for Expectations in Behavior Models," will soon be published in the *Applied Economics Letters* journal, a rare feat for an undergraduate student.

After graduation, Hekman hopes to pursue a career as an actuary or data analyst.

"CSU Stanislaus has given me the opportunity to get experience in researching and professional writing, which are very valuable skills in these career paths," she said. "I also have built some very valuable relationships with the economics faculty members, which has benefited me by providing networking opportunities."

#StanGrad File

Name: Apryl Hekman

Hometown: Ripon

Degree/Credential: Bachelor of Science in Economics (with a minor in mathematics)

What memories stand out most from your time at CSU Stanislaus?

"I enjoyed working with many of the CSU Stanislaus economics faculty members who helped me with my research, presentation and writing skills. The willingness and eagerness of these faculty members to work so closely with me allowed me to be successful in many areas."

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Which faculty or staff member had the greatest impact on you, and why?

"Daniel Deisenroth has had a huge impact in motivating me to succeed at CSU Stanislaus. He is constantly presenting me with new opportunities to develop my skills through participating in events like the Student Research Competition and the Western Agricultural Economics Association Annual Meeting."

What advice would you give to current and future students?

"Take advantage of the unique opportunities and resources available to you as a student, and get to know your faculty members. You will be surprised at how willing they are to help you succeed."