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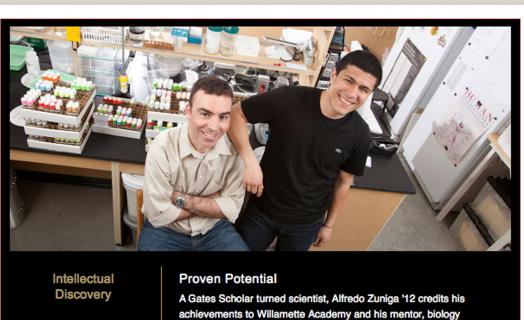


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achievements to Willamette Academy and his mentor, biology professor Jason Duncan. 💿 «
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Highlights

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WEMS marks 15th anniversary on campus Alumni reveal how the student program helped shape their medical

C-SPAN's digital bus visits Willamette The network's technology is probed by passersby on April 10.

Two students earn NSF graduate fellowships Tyler Starr '12 and Kaeli Swift '09 will get paid to continue their science

research in graduate school. Prestigious scholarship awards announced Two

Willamette students earn Udall awards for helping to better

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Music: Distinguished Artists Series

APR 11 - 25 [Details] Theatre: "Adding Machine: A Musical"

Art: Student Exhibition APR 14 - MAY 13 [Details]

APR 12 - 28 [Details]

their community.

Festival: Wulapalooza APR 21 [Details]

Lecture: Nick Kristof APR 23 [Details]

Music: Jazz Collective

APR 24 [Details] Lu'au: "Surrounded in Love"

APR 28 [Details]

Commencement MAY 10 - JUN 16 [Details]

Presidential Connections Follow President Steve Thorsett's inaugural year.

Inaugural Address

President Thorsett focuses on the connections that define Willamette's community.

Galleries Schedule



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WILLAMETTE STUDENTS

PEOPLE OF PASSION AND PURPOSE

Willamette University senior overcomes obstacles to pursue his education

There is a moment in a man's life when he knows he's stumbled onto something

"I don't think I would have started at a four-year school without having gone to Willamette Academy," Zuniga says. "Neither one of my parents finished middle

For Alfredo Zuniga '12, that moment came when was accepted into Willamette

school. No one in my family knew what college was about." That was nine years ago.

Since then, Zuniga enrolled at Willamette University, became a starting

Academy as a seventh-grader.

goalkeeper for the men's soccer team and presented his clinical research on fruit flies at the Genetic Society of America's 2012 annual convention in Chicago.

Next fall, the biology major will continue his studies at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where he plans to earn his master's and doctorate degrees in

neuroendocrinology. "I've always liked the idea of asking questions and being able to answer them,"

Zuniga says about his career choice. "Science has always clicked with me."

Scholastic ambitions

Zuniga moved to Salem from Mexico when he was 8 years old, spurred by his parents' quest to give their children a quality education. Several years later, Zuniga seized the opportunity to attend Willamette Academy, where he received academic support in reading, writing, math, science and technology until he graduated from high school.

and Melinda Gates Foundation, which paid for his education at Willamette and will continue to pay for his education at the University of Colorado. "It was a really well-rounded program," Zuniga says about the nonprofit

organization. "It helped me get into school, not just any school, but the school I

With the academy's help, Zuniga was awarded a full scholarship from the Bill

Now in its 10th year, the academy's achievements speak for themselves. Ninety-nine percent of its participants have graduated from high school, and 94 percent have gone on to attend college.

To Program Director Josh Bilbrew, Zuniga is one of the academy's many success stories. When they first met, Bilbrew says Zuniga was a quiet middle school student. But in time, the young man grew to become a leader and a role model.

leadership positions he had, the less afraid he was to step into the spotlight," Bilbrew says. "When I met him, he had outstanding potential. He was highly motivated. He deserves full credit for his accomplishments." Inspirational mentor

"One of the catalysts for him opening up was helping others. The more

As a Gates Scholar, Zuniga could have attended college anywhere in the nation. But for him, there was no choice. He wanted to go to Willamette.

a teacher himself one day.

"I've been a part of Willamette since I was 13," Zuniga says. "It's all I know. It's been a second home to me."

Attracted by its small size, reputation for academic excellence and winning soccer team, Zuniga knew Willamette would make a good fit. It was here that he met his mentor, biology professor Jason Duncan, who inspired Zuniga to become

"I want to teach at a small school like Willamette," Zuniga says. "Jason taught me what I needed to know and let me go. He's been so influential. I know we will stay good friends after I graduate."

Duncan, too, is impressed by Zuniga's commitment to scientific discovery. To that end, Zuniga has carried out extensive research in Duncan's laboratory during the past two years — both by completing research for his senior thesis

and by working as a summer research student in Willamette's Science Collaborative Research Program. "Alfredo gave up his entire Christmas break - over two successive years - to come into the lab to work on his project," Duncan says. "Alfredo enjoyed

participating in the research, and he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to his

Pursuing excellence

project."

Ready to embark on his next adventure, Zuniga credits his achievements to the help he's received from Willamette Academy, his university professors and others who've believed in him.

Because of that support, Zuniga says he's finally ready to leave Salem and delve into new research projects. Up first is discovering the role serotonin plays in depression - a project that will consume his time while in graduate school.

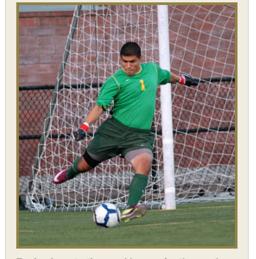
"One hormone's affects on the human as a whole is very interesting to me,"

Zuniga says. "It's an exciting time to do this kind of work."

04-19-2012



Thorsett discuss science with Salem-area primary students during Darwin Discovery Day April 19.



Zuniga is a starting goal keeper for the men's soccer team at Willamette University.



at Willamette Academy in 2006.

Willamette Academy Science Collaborative Research Program

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