



POSSIBILITY

By

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For me, as for many, Ohio University is a second home. It is the place that I came to after growing up in a small town. It is a place for learning in the classroom, but also about life, other cultures, and other people. I still remember the day I moved into my dorm on the East Green freshman year and the colliding emotions of excitement and fear that filled me. Over time, this unfamiliar place became familiar. The trees, the college green and the beautiful brick buildings became a different type of home.

For others, as for my mother, it is a place to accomplish lifelong dreams, as she did when she received her bachelors' degree from the Chillicothe branch of Ohio University at age 48 and was the class elected speaker at graduation.

Regardless of the circumstances, Ohio University is a place where people work hard and establish memories and achieve goals due to the possibility that Ohio University promises.

Twelve years ago I was a member of the pilot group of Cutler Scholars, which included two freshmen, a sophomore, a junior, and a senior. Today, the program has over 60 alumni and there are nearly 40 students on campus. The Cutler Scholars Program is one example of the kind of possibility that is offered by Ohio University, with the weekly colloquia, internships and study abroad, it has broadened the scope of possibility for dozens of Ohio University students and in doing so strengthened the University and Athens community.

The Konneker Cutler Scholarship allowed me, a young girl from a small community in rural Ohio, to achieve goals that were once unimaginable, to travel the world, and to dream even bigger dreams.

While I was at Ohio University, I studied science and business in the first class of Cutler Scholars to complete four years of study under the program. This is particularly fitting as Manasseh Cutler, who we are celebrating today, was known as a writer on various scientific subjects, and was particularly known as a botanist. The tradition of strong scientific research and teaching has continued at Ohio University, and has nurtured amazing scientific discoveries.

These include, but are not limited to Tom Wagner, who while at Ohio University was the first scientist to introduce foreign genes into a higher species generating the world's first transgenic animal. And John Kopchick, currently the Goll-Ohio Eminent Scholar and Professor of Molecular

Biology whose studies on growth hormone have resulted in a new class of drugs to treat acromegaly and may have implications in diabetes and cancer as well. And of course Wilfred Konneker, who received a master's degree from Ohio University and a doctorate in nuclear physics from Washington University and has been described as "the ideal combination of scholar and entrepreneur", a research scientist who has been successful in making people's lives better, promoting scientific discovery and commercialization, and developing innovative programs at this university.

Ohio University also has had the foresight to foster entrepreneurship by promoting the growth and spinoff of companies with a technology focus. Dr. Ping and Dr. Konneker believed strongly in the obligation of the University to promote economic development in this region of the state. Diagnostic Hybrids, my current employer, is a shining example to all institutions across the state of creating economic value through university-based innovation centers. Diagnostic Hybrids was founded in 1983 by successful biomedical entrepreneur Wilfred R. Konneker, in collaboration with Ohio University Professors Joseph Jollick, and Thomas E. Wagner. Dr. Konneker and Dr. Ping were very active in starting DHI in the early 80's. Their vision and dedication to education and enterprise is beyond reproach.

Over the last 26 years Diagnostic Hybrids has grown to a multimillion dollar company operating here in Athens and employing more than 200 people in the area. Our core focus is manufacturing products for diagnostic virology, including respiratory viruses and enteroviruses. Through licensing and internal R&D, Diagnostic Hybrids continues to innovate and develop new products that aid in viral detection and save lives around the world.

I began a business internship at DHI in 1998, as part of the Cutler Program when DHI had little more than a dozen employees. I had the opportunity to learn about a start-up business through performing a cost analysis of DHI's manufactured products and developing an inventory control system. It is hard for me to believe, even to this day, that I was a small part of building this company when dedication and drive and a few key customers were the main indicators of success.

DHI then allowed me to gain experience in the R&D Lab and further sent me work with a partnering lab in Italy for my Cutler "study abroad". DHI continues to offer internships to Cutler Scholars, and has sponsored two scholarships from Athens and surrounding areas, thereby giving back to the program in appreciation for the many interns and employees that have come to DHI from the Cutler Scholars Program and Ohio University.

After graduating from OU, I went to Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland to begin Ph.D. studies. My degree was to be in pharmacology, but I had to choose an advisor and an area of study, and I deliberately sought out professors in Infectious Disease with the hopes of returning to Diagnostic Hybrids one day.

At Case Western, one of the premier medical research campuses in the world, Dr. Eric Arts has a reputation for outstanding research, providing a positive work environment, and being a really good person to learn from and know, and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with him during my time at Case Western. My Ph.D. research was focused on the evolution and drug resistance of HIV-1 strains, with a particular focus on strains circulating in Uganda and sub-Saharan Africa.

I had the opportunity to learn the medical science behind HIV infection, but was also exposed to the social issues surrounding HIV, which is distinct from other healthcare topics in that it touches every demographic issue including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and social status. It has implications in science, medicine, politics, and law, and research and medications for HIV have been so heavily impacted by social activism.

After earning my Ph.D. I returned to work for DHI and later learned of an assay system that Dr. Arts was developing for monitoring drug resistance in HIV patients. Now, over three years later, DHI has sponsored further research at Case Western and is working with Case to commercialize the technology that Eric developed. DHI now has a full HIV program in Cleveland with more than twelve employees at DHI North and Case Western who are dedicated to this effort, which was recently funded by a \$5M Biomedical Research and Commercialization Program grant. All of this is part of the Diagnostic Hybrids World Headquarters here in Athens and resulting from the dedication of Ohio University to promote growth of companies and technology at the Innovation Center.

Beyond the economic impact of the creation of the Innovation Center and the scholarship programs that exist and grow here at Ohio, we must consider the impact on the individual. Many Cutler Scholars Alumni share my perspective regarding the Cutler Scholars program and the education we received at Ohio University. The people and experiences offered here have touched so many lives deeply and profoundly, and in many cases, changed lives forever

For current and future students the opportunities for at this university are limitless. You must take advantage of internship opportunities and study abroad programs and take your coursework seriously and work hard to shape your future.

Having Cutler Scholar internships allowed me to form relationships with a growing company and has shaped every step in my career path to date. As part of a growth strategy for Diagnostic Hybrids, I am working to commercialize products and services for the pharmaceutical industry, and I am working toward a personal goal of leading the division and this company into a new market. The tools and connections that I gained and experiences I had during my time at Ohio University will enable me to do that.

As stated by Plato and quoted in Dr. Konneker's biography, "The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life."

This has certainly been true for me and my classmates while at Ohio University, who are living around the world and are successful in various disciplines, due largely to the education and direction they received during their undergraduate education.

This Founder's Day Celebration is the result of the culmination of many years of many people all working towards a common goal – making the world a better place through education, thoughtfulness, and strategic action, and through believing that we can have an impact by starting here at Ohio University.