

**WESTERN COLLEGIATE  
HOCKEY ASSOCIATION  
FOUNDED 1951**

**Bruce M. McLeod**

Commissioner

**Carol LaBelle-Ehrhardt**

Assistant Commissioner of Operations

**Sara R. Martin**

Associate Commissioner

**Greg Shepherd**

Supervisor of Officials

**Administrative Office**

Western Collegiate Hockey Association

2211 S. Josephine Street, Room 302

Denver, CO 80210

p: 303 871-4491. f: 303 871-4770

email: clabelle@wcha.com

**Doug Spencer**

Associate Commissioner for PR

**Public Relations Office**

Western Collegiate Hockey Association

559 D'Onofrio Drive, Ste. 103

Madison, WI 53719-2096

p: 608 829-0100. f: 608 829-0200

email: dspencer@mailbag.com

**HOME OF A RECORD 36 MEN'S  
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS**

1952, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958,  
1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964,  
1965, 1966, 1968, 1969, 1973, 1974,  
1975, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981,  
1982, 1983, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1997,  
2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

**HOME OF A RECORD NINE WOMEN'S  
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS**

2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005,  
2006, 2007, 2008

**MEN'S WCHA MEMBERS**

University of Alaska Anchorage

Colorado College

University of Denver

Michigan Tech University

University of Minnesota

University of Minnesota Duluth

Minnesota State University

University of North Dakota

St. Cloud State University

University of Wisconsin

**WOMEN'S WCHA MEMBERS**

Bemidji State University

University of Minnesota

University of Minnesota Duluth

Minnesota State University

University of North Dakota

Ohio State University

St. Cloud State University

University of Wisconsin

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May 9, 2008/For Immediate Release

**LAURA FAST OF ST. CLOUD STATE, ANDREW THOMAS  
OF DENVER NAMED RECIPIENTS OF WCHA  
POST-GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2008-09**

MADISON, Wisc. – The Western Collegiate Hockey Association today (May 9) announced that **Laura Fast** of St. Cloud State University and **Andrew Thomas** of the University of Denver are the recipients of the annual WCHA Post-Graduate Scholarship Program for 2008-09.

"We are both tremendously pleased and extremely proud to announce the latest WCHA Post-Graduate Scholarship winners," said Commissioner Bruce M. McLeod and Associate Commissioner Sara R. Martin in a joint statement. "Together, Laura Fast and Andrew Thomas represent the very best of collegiate athletics – both on and off the ice – and the entire WCHA membership joins us in congratulating both of them.

"We are fortunate to have had both of them as student-athletes playing hockey in the WCHA and earning their degrees from Association-member institutions. We thank them for all they have done for the betterment of college hockey and we wish them all the best in their future endeavors. No question, both of them will be very successful in whatever they choose to pursue."

An advocate of excellence both on and off the ice, the WCHA announced the annual post-graduate scholarship program in April of 2003, with the first recipients named after the 2003-04 school year. The post-graduate scholarships are two grants of \$10,000 each that are presented annually to a male and female student-athlete for post-graduate studies.

Fast, a senior forward from Calgary, Alberta, is graduating from St. Cloud State this month with a Bachelor of Science degree. A three-time honoree of the prestigious WCHA Scholar-Athlete award and a three-time member of the All-WCHA Academic Team, she carries an undergraduate grade-point average (GPA) of 3.72 on a 4.0 scale, with a major in Elementary Education and a minor in Special Education. To earn recognition as a WCHA Scholar-Athlete, conference member student-athletes must have completed at least one year of residency at their present institution prior to the current academic year and must also have a GPA of at least 3.50 (on a 4.0 scale) for the previous two semesters or three quarters or an overall GPA of at least 3.50 for all terms at their present institution.

"Laura has been a two-year captain for our hockey program here at St. Cloud State and she is an outstanding student-athlete and top performer on our team," said head coach Jeff Giesen. "A very strong leader both vocally and by example, she also serves the community in a variety of



**LAURA FAST, SCSU**



**ANDREW THOMAS, DU**

roles and is always willing to go above the regular demands of our team to reach success."

As team captain in 2007-08, Fast played in 37 of the Huskies' 38 games overall and contributed 13 scoring points (4g, 9a), helping them to one of the most successful seasons in program history with an overall record of 18-15-5 (.539) and to a fourth place finish in the final WCHA regular season standings. St. Cloud State, which went on a 12-1-2 tear from Nov. 3-Jan. 19, won their first round league playoff series over Ohio State and also earned a trip to the 2008 WCHA FINAL FACE-OFF in Duluth, Minn. Over her four-year collegiate playing career, Fast took the ice in 146 games, scoring 32 goals and adding 45 assists for 77 points to rank seventh on the all-time Husky scoring list. She was also selected to participate in the third annual NCAA Frozen Four Skills Challenge this past April 11 at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colo.

"Laura's athletic ability is of the highest level and she contributes to our team in a variety of capacities, playing on the power-play and as one of our top penalty-killers," said Giesen. "As an outstanding student, she goes above and beyond the requirements of community service for our team. She will complete her Bachelor's degree in Education, including her student teaching, with is rare even among non-athlete students. She has directed floor hockey clinics at local elementary schools and also participated in 'I Like to Read Month' with elementary schools. Laura is of the highest of character and someone I hope that my own daughter would follow her lead on how to be a student-athlete. Her leadership has helped establish a culture that will carry on for time to come."

Fast was nominated for the WCHA Post-Graduate Scholarship by St. Cloud State Faculty Athletics Representative Bill Hudson. According to Hudson, Fast plans on pursuing a master's degree in secondary education, has aspirations to eventually complete a Ph.D. in the field of education, and pursue a career in elementary education.

Thomas, a four-year competitor for the University of Denver, is a senior defenseman from Bow, N.H. He is set to graduate from DU in June with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. He was honored as a WCHA Scholar-Athlete this past season (2007-08), is a three-time member of the All-WCHA Academic Team, carries a GPA of 3.81 in his Management major, and has an overall undergraduate GPA of 3.37 (on a 4.0 scale). He hopes to pursue a Masters of Science in Business Intelligence, which is a program unique only to Daniels Business School at DU and eventually accept a position at an upper level management consulting firm.

As team captain in 2007-08, Thomas saw action in all 41 of the Pioneers' games, helping anchor their nationally-ranked (9th) scoring defense and leading Denver to an overall record of 26-14-1 (.646), a third place finish in the WCHA regular season race, the Broadmoor Trophy as team champions of the 2008 Red Baron™ WCHA Final Five held at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn., and to another berth in the NCAA Div. 1 Men's Ice Hockey championship. He led the team in plus/minus statistics with a +14 rating.

"Andrew Thomas has made an outstanding contribution to the University of Denver Pioneer hockey program," said head coach George Gwozdecky. "During his four-year career, he became one of the best defensive defensemen in the WCHA and was constantly matched up against our opponents' top offensive units. He played a vital role on our number one penalty-killing unit and led our team in hits and blocked shots. His strength, courage, character, intelligence and personality made him not only one of our greatest team leaders but also one of the most respected student-athletes on our campus."

Over his 161-game collegiate career at Denver, Thomas was a defensive regular all four seasons, contributing 26 scoring points and playing on the Pioneers' 2004-05 MacNaughton Cup (WCHA regular season), Broadmoor Trophy, and NCAA Men's Frozen Four (national championship team). A 2005 fourth round draftee of the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals, he was also chosen to participate in the 2008 NCAA Frozen Four Skills Challenge this past April 11 at Pepsi Center in Denver, Colo.

"Andrew always set the example for his teammates with his mature and serious approach to his academics and to his hockey training," added Gwozdecky. "Throughout his four years at the University, he volunteered his time to many community activities including the Starlight Starbright Foundation and the University of Denver Youth Hockey Association. He also represented the hockey program at numerous other volunteer activities throughout the region. He is one of the finest student-athletes and leaders to have ever worn the Pioneer hockey jersey."

Thomas was nominated for the WCHA Post-Graduate Scholarship by Denver Faculty Athletics Representative Nancy Sampson. According to Sampson, Thomas demonstrated leadership by example on the ice, with his teammates off the ice, in the community and in class. "Those of us who have worked with Andy, whether in class, the community or with hockey know he will be a positive influence in whatever endeavors he chooses in the future," said Sampson. "He is a young man with charisma, depth and integrity."

### **History & Background of WCHA Post-Graduate Scholarship**

The original announcement of the WCHA Post-Graduate Scholarship program, in 2003, was made jointly by P.J. Hill, then Chair of the Association and current Faculty Representative from University of Alaska Anchorage and Commissioner McLeod. In announcing the post-graduate scholarship program, Hill said, "This represents another positive step forward for the Western Collegiate Hockey Association in the area and recognition of academic achievement. We are extremely proud of the excellent reputation our member institutions have in both athletics and academics, and this new post-graduate scholarship program will

only enhance that.”

The first two winners of the men’s and women’s WCHA’s Post-Graduate Scholarship in 2003-04 were Mike Colgan of Colorado College and Michelle McAteer of University of Minnesota Duluth. The 2004-05 recipients were Reid Goolsby of Colorado College and Emma Laaksonen of Ohio State University, the 2005-06 recipients were Jake Brandt of University of North Dakota and Kelsey Bills of University of Minnesota, the 2006-07 recipients were Ted O’Leary of University of Denver and Meghan Mutrie of University of North Dakota, and the 2007-08 honorees were Nate Raduns and Denelle Maguet, both of St. Cloud State.

Following is an outline of the WCHA’s post-graduate scholarship program: Criteria: 1. the nominee must graduate by the end of the academic year (or by the end of the summer) and must have earned at least a 3.0 grade-point average. 2. the nominee must have competed in the WCHA for at least three years.

Nominating Process: A student-athlete must be nominated by the Faculty Athletics Representative. Nominations are due April 15th.

Selection Process: Scholarship recipients and alternates will be selected by a vote of an Association Committee composed of five Faculty Athletics Representatives. The Association selection committee(s) will review and make the final selections. The committee(s) may select one male and one female winner annually to receive the WCHA post-graduate scholarship, as well as an alternate for each scholarship. Selections will be made by the committee by May 15th.

Process Following Nomination and Selection: Following notification, the award winners have until July 1 to accept, in writing, the scholarship. Announcements will be made at the kick-off event at the student-athlete recipient’s home venue, the following fall.

The winners must enroll in graduate school within two years of graduation. Designated full-time enrollment (post-graduate degree hours) shall be required and verification from the program director must be presented to the Conference office before the award shall be presented. The scholarship money will be sent directly to the post-graduate institution.