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## ANALYSIS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY EARNS K-STATE SENIOR SCHOLARLY RESPECT

MANHATTAN — Sarah Trabert was handed 6,455 fragments of pottery this summer, and she has used them to piece together a bright future in graduate school.

Trabert, a Manhattan senior in anthropology who's also pursuing a minor in history at Kansas State University, won the undergraduate paper competition at the 65th recent annual meeting of the Plains Anthropological Society in Rapid City, S.D. Her topic was prehistoric pottery found at the Scott site in Leavenworth County, the only fully excavated Steed-Kisker habitation in Kansas.

"Sarah was presenting before professional archeologists who could really judge the quality of her work," said Brad Logan, K-State research associate professor of anthropology. "She just came across very confidently, and she'd obviously done her preparation well." Her work eventually will be published in the society's journal, *Plains Anthropologist*.

Logan was Trabert's mentor during her summerlong McNair project devoted to analyzing hundreds of fragments. He also led the original excavation of the Scott site starting in summer 2001, when it was partly exposed by a flood.

The federal McNair scholarship program is devoted to preparing first-generation college students for a future in graduate school.

"With Steed-Kisker, ceramics are the designating factor," Trabert said, because of the lack of other distinguishing features in sites found so far. The name of the group, or "phase," derives from the owner and the tenant of the land in Platte County, Missouri, where the first such site was unearthed back in the 1930s. "We also wanted to see what was unique to the pottery at this site and bring that to light," she said.

Among the more interesting items Trabert pieced together were half of a coconut-shaped bowl and a water bottle with incised lines. "It's the only one of these found at a habitation site," she said, "as opposed to a mortuary site." Other fragments indicated contact with outside influence, a rarity among known Steed-Kisker sites.

(more)

Trabert's work will add to archeologists' knowledge of a people who lived from A.D. 900-1400 in what is now the Kansas City area. Current thought places Steed-Kisker within what archeologists call "the Central Plains tradition," Trabert said, but earlier researchers forwarded the theory that the group is part of middle Mississippian tradition.

That seeming contradiction is one of the frustrations of archeology, said Trabert, who now is compiling "a huge timeline" of available publications on the Steed-Kisker culture.

"Archeology has a problem with site reports and other unpublished 'gray literature,'" she said. Researchers who excavate sites often report their findings at meetings without formally publishing in journals.

"It's totally different from research that I've done for any of my other classes," Trabert said, but Logan and Lauren Ritterbush, K-State associate professor of anthropology, have guided her toward little-known papers.

Such work should help Trabert as she applies to graduate schools. She knows of seven universities where she could pursue her interest in Plains archeology, but she's leaning toward the University of Iowa.

While at the Rapid City conference, Trabert had the chance to meet Iowa's Margaret Beck, an assistant professor who is considering some projects close to Dodge City, where Trabert went to high school and community college. Beck is also ceramics specialist.

Those sorts of connections are another benefit of fostering undergraduate research, Logan said.

"It's what we're in the business of doing," he said. "Not only guiding students in their research, but also guiding them toward a career."

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