“I think we had more drinks in the day than hours of sleep at night, so yeah I think they can provide us funding for one more year” a wise man I aspire to be one said. They say that to be successful you should find who you want to be five years and associate with them. Well, one day I would like to be a professor at a secondary state University with a geographic cardinal direction in its title. Therefore, I cannot think of a greater mentor/advisor to aspire to be more like than the director of the most prestigious University in the entire four corners area who will remain nameless. Known as the Harvard of Colorado Plateau, this fact will make our degrees even more valuable to put on our CV’s. However, that is still not enough for me to make an impact on geoscience alone. I need more than just the street creds and recognition of being in the top four of the geology graduate students in the Penn.-Perm Research Group (out of four) at the number one University in Northern Arizona. I need the financial means to do a great project and with that comes a great need for funding my research as well as life goals.

My main research objective to solve one of the major unresolved problems in western Northern American tectonics is no easy or cheap task. Currently there is no single structural explanation for the development of the Ancestral Rocky Mountains (ARM) and associated Pennsylvanian-Permian basins. Leading hypotheses consist of various deformation events with possible mechanisms coming from a south-southeastern Gondwana suturing event or an Andean-Arc style subduction model from the western Pacific margin with limited evidence to support or contradict either. This leaves NAU torn as one model comes from an esteemed Lumberjack Alumni and the other works at a company who is a major Sugar Daddy of ours. Therefore, to have completely unbiased research I need financial support from an independent semi-anonymous source such as the Friday Lunch Clubbe (FLC). As my co-advisor thinks I am on the 20 year plan and my research is important to provide new insight into enigmatic late Paleozoic geologic history, I need funding to continue. In order, to accomplish my research goals, my project will have a major component of field geology and laboratory analysis using cutting edge techniques of thermo-geochronology. As my project will be studying the regional scale, I will need ample funding to go out to the field to bring back samples across the greater ARM region. Then, to apply premier detrital zircon radioisotopic dating techniques to key formations across the southern Rockies creating an unprecedented dataset. By being able to pin individual zircon minerals to an ARM source while also assessing rates of uplift across the region, this research should in turn help to fill in many knowledge gaps in the timing and scope of the ARM deformation mechanism(s).

If the limited budget wasn’t already stretched thin enough just to get out to the field let alone pay for the costly high precision laboratory analysis, I need to be prepared to stand on my own when my hero advisor leaves to pursue other interests before I graduate. Meaning that when he retires to become the announcer for the Chicago Cubs and a writer for Portlandia (not to brainstorm new ideas, but just to share his own life experiences), I want to be ready to fill his shoes around the department. Moreover, my co-advisor (who also will remain nameless), has taught to ask for as much money as possible in case any is left over to further complement your research. However, what I think he may or may have not meant by that is for bad weather field days (more than 70° F), to spend at the local strip club in small
town Wyoming. Hey, Cinnamon has to pay her way through law school somehow and when your only companions are gastropod coquinas, working on Eocene lake sediments all day can get lonely. Therefore, there will be several things I need funding to be prepared for that can be added as an asterisk to my field budget to be more like my extraordinary advisor including: Funds to get a time machine every few months to go back to the 1990’s to get my haircut. The largest scorpion bolo tie known to man to make the Texas Oil Tycoons I schmooze with not think that I spent several years embracing the culture of west Hollywood as well as currently owning a place in Portland. All the tea in China pending a post-apocalyptic world following the November 8th 2016 election. I think this would be in everyone’s best interest in the Flagstaff area knowing that as long as he has his tea, the self proclaimed supreme leader of the separatist Nation of the Colorado Plateau should remain relatively stable. A Superman’s closet worth of entitled and elitist outdoor brand vests, one for every day of the week including leap years. A lifetime supply of boxed wine that will last one field season. To bring the Wisconsin State Fair to the Coconino County Fair Grounds so he doesn’t have to feel so out of place having an unhealthy obsession with mediocre at best sports teams. Also, as being the director of a School of Environmental Sustainability from a University who’s mascot is named after a proud eco-terrorist, I too would like to drive a gas guzzling SUV with personalized plates that let the world know I am compensating for other aspects of my life. My ideal license plate would say ARM-PP, of course translating to Ancestral Rocky Mountains Pennsylvanian-Permian (Hey the yearly ADOT fee for personalized plates does not grow on trees). If I could have enough extra field funding for just one of these things I think this would set me on the path to not only be mentored by one the legendary tectonicists, but to become one myself.

In all seriousness, I look up to my advisor very much and grateful to be working with him. Especially to learn from a legend who can come up with an idea crazy enough to think that the Baja Peninsula had moved over 1000 km in less than 30 million years up to British Columbia without identifying a clear fault line. If awarded the prestigious FLC scholarship, I would like to use the award to help my research career with that kind of thinking outside of the box leadership ingenuity that can only be learned from being more like the one I hope to be.

The top four (out of four) of the NAU Pennsylvanian-Permian Research Group as of August 2015*. From left to right: Danny Foley, Greg Burr, Mike Smith, & the Paul Umhoefer. Glenwood Canyon, Glenwood Springs, CO area. *There is now Liz Johnson and Ryan Leary who as much as we love them have thrown off our top four credentials. Image credit: Sarah Robinson