

Student Q&A: Austin Armon, plant enthusiast extraordinaire



"You're never done learning": Austin Armon, senior biology student. Submitted photo/Austin Armon

Ashley Etter
aetter@css.edu

This week's student profile features Austin Armon, a senior biology major and Spanish minor who hails from West St. Paul, Minn.

What are you involved in on campus?

I'm involved in Plant-Based Club and the CSS Sun Delegation. In Plant-Based Club, we aim to educate people about plant biology, and we also like to swap plants and that kind of stuff. We do a bingo event, which is really fun. You can win a houseplant or a pot or whatever. We do a smoothie social, too. The Sun Delegation has been working on making sure the SGA solar money gets used the way that students want it to get used, and we try to get a broad range of perspectives there. I just passed my last bill in SGA. We are essentially making sure that the \$105,000 that rolled back from the COVID relief fund went

into the renewable energy fund. And then that [money] is going to be used on the solar project. Students are going to have a say in the contractor that's chosen, [...] and generated revenue from the solar project is going to be put in student-led sustainability initiatives.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

You're never done learning.

Any advice for other students--freshmen, underclassmen, other biology students?

Try to make the most of your time while you're here because it doesn't last forever.

Any particular classes that you're fond of?

I love "Plant Systematics," "Microbiology" is really fun, and "Genetics." I also really like "Music as Environmental Activism" in the global, cultural and language studies program.

What are some of your hobbies?

Some of my hobbies are running, yoga, gardening and plant-based cooking.

What are your post-undergraduate plans?

After my undergrad, I'd like to apply for jobs in research, and after I get some experience, apply to physician assistant school. One of the criteria is to have a lot of clinical experience, so I want to get some more of that before I apply.

Anything else you'd like to add?

My favorite spot on campus is the greenhouse, and my favorite department is the Biology Department [laughs].

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Opinion: Halloween is a time for fun, not cultural appropriation

Ashley Etter
aetter@css.edu

The air is chillier, the leaves are falling and frost appears most mornings. We're quickly reaching the end of October. At the time of publication, Halloween is two short days away.

Halloween is a time for candy and tricks and treats and creating memories. But it's no secret that the holiday is plagued by cultural appropriation, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the practices, customs, or aesthetics of one social or ethnic group by members of another (typically dominant) community or society."

A Google search of the term conjures images of Kim Kardashian West in cornrows, Katy Perry donning "Egyptian" garb in a music video and white men wearing faux Native American headdresses at Coachella.

Of course, the rich and famous aren't the only ones who engage in cultural appropriation. It's an issue that's close to home. It's your friend, your cousin or your sibling dressing up like Cleopatra or in a poncho and sombrero or as a geisha or as a Maori "warrior."

In an interview published in *The Script's* Oct. 15

edition, Director of Native Studies Jennifer Niemi commented, "If I had to give one piece of advice as we move closer to Halloween, please don't parody [Indigenous peoples], it is so disrespectful and hurtful."

That's what cultural appropriation comes down to: parody. Intentions are ultimately irrelevant.

St. Scholastica's administration has made this clear, too. On Oct. 21, Dean of Students Megan Perry-Spears sent out an email to the student community with the subject line "Halloween, Our Values and Not Being a Jerk."

In her email, Perry-Spears said that "[w]e are called to love all our neighbors and ourselves, and engage in relationships with profound respect for the other."

This calling means that uphold and uplift each other, and cultural appropriation isn't uplifting. Quite the opposite. It's derogatory, insulting and disrespectful.

There are plenty of fun costumes that don't require the "unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the practices, customs, or aesthetics" of another group. Before you don your costume, ask yourself whether it's appropriate.

Have opinions? Want to express those opinions publicly? Write a letter to the editor!
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Crossword ANSWERS

Puzzle on Page 5

1s: u
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