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COLORADO SPRINGS NEWS, SPORTS & BUSINESS

A first at UCCS: Student to graduate from college before high school

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From UCCS' spokesman Tom Hutton comes this news: A Colorado Springs teen will earn a bachelor's degree on Friday from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs – two weeks before he graduates from high school or passes his driver's license exam.

With what he calls "faith, trust and pixie dust," Jacob Reichard, 17, will graduate Friday with a bachelor of innovation in computer security from the UCCS College of Engineering and Applied Science.

"My advice is to others is 'be unreasonable'," the precocious teen said recently when describing his college experience that began when he was 13. "Do something normal people aren't going to do, take that step and into the

unexpected and see what you come up with."

List: High school and college graduation schedule for the Pikes Peak region (<http://gazette.com/list-high-school-college-graduation-ceremonies-in-pikes-peak-region-in-coming-month/article/1551279#HhLDpLsfFVO20PgS.99>)

Reichard is the first to graduate from the UCCS College of Engineering while still in high school. In 2013, a student concurrently enrolled in high school and the UCCS College of Letters, Arts and Sciences graduated.

For Reichard and his mother, Hidy Fletcher, being unreasonable meant finding ways around hurdles that ranged from finances, admission processes, and group projects not designed for someone still in his teens.

"My first class met from 4:30 to 7:30 at night and most of the people were 20 or 30 years older than I was," Reichard said. "When we were assigned groups, they all thought we should meet at bar to discuss it. I had to be the one to say, 'um, how about Starbucks?'"

Reichard tried to have a normal college experience. He believes UCCS faculty members held him to the same – or higher – standards than other students. He worked as a research assistant in a faculty member's laboratory, adopted another faculty member as his mentor and tried his best not to miss class. When he did miss, his excuse was far different than those usually delivered to faculty.

"Because I was still in high school, I had to miss three classes because they conflicted with mandatory state testing days," Reichard said. "I'm pretty sure I was the only one with that excuse."

His dedication paid off. He will graduate with honors, indicating he achieved a grade point average in excess of 3.7 on a 4.0 scale.

Enjoy the ceremony, The Gazette will handle the photos

(<http://gazette.com/high-school-college-graduation-ceremonies-in-pikes-peak-region-in-coming-month/article/1551279>)

Even when his family's Black Forest home was evacuated, Reichard showed up for class. His entire family stayed in a campus apartment as part of the university's community support plans enacted during both the 2012 Waldo Canyon and 2013 Black Forest fires.

Like many his age, Reichard hopes to find a summer job following UCCS graduation and delivering the salutatorian address at the May 29 Colorado Springs Early Colleges ceremony. But instead of dipping ice cream or lifeguarding, he hopes to land an internship with a company and apply his skills in computer security. In August, he plans to move to California – his first time away from home – to pursue another college degree, this time in theology. Eventually, he hopes to earn a law degree and work in the computer security field.

"In one of my favorite classes, we had to do a video of us performing karaoke-style," Reichard said. "I performed my own version of 'I Won't Back Down' by Tom Petty. It came at a very challenging time so this seemed like a symbolic way to accept the challenge and press on."

UCCS will hold two ceremonies, at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Reichard will participate in the 2:30 p.m. ceremony for graduates of the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences, College of Business, School of Public Affairs, College of Education, and College of Engineering and Applied Science. More than a dozen family members and friends are expected to cheer as he crosses the stage.

A total of 1,322 students are scheduled to graduate from UCCS this spring, 360 will earn graduate degrees and 962 with undergraduate degrees. In December, 784 students graduated. The 2,106 degrees granted by UCCS in 2014-2015 is

the largest in the university's history.

To see a video interview of Reichard, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_81ol68j84s (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_81ol68j84s).

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