

NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2025](#) / [February](#) / Faculty-Student Collaboration Strikes Gold with CoinsFACULTY-STUDENT COLLABORATION STRIKES GOLD
WITH COINS

SUMMER SCHOLAR RESEARCH MAKES HEADLINES.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | February 28, 2025*Read time: about 2 min*

Dylan Frederick came to CNU expecting to major in political science.

But then he took Dr. Frank Garmon Jr.'s "The American Experiment" class in his first year and his entire perspective changed.

He knew then that he wanted to major in American Studies.

Ever since that class, Garmon, an assistant professor of [Leadership and American Studies](#), has played a key role in Frederick's educational trajectory.

He has mentored him, advised him, and immersed him in interesting research that has informed his understanding of and appreciation for American Studies.

Most recently, Frederick partnered with Garmon to conduct historical research on Indian Head gold coins. The research landed them on the cover of [The Numismatist](#), a premier magazine for coin collectors that has 25,000 subscribers.

"It's my first cover story, and I am really proud of it," said Garmon. "My father collected coins all of his life, and it is pretty neat to publish an article in a magazine that I grew up reading."

The cover story is just the latest success in Frederick and Garmon's collaboration. Frederick also helped Garmon do research that provided the foundation for [Garmon's recent book](#), "A Wonderful Career in Crime: Charles Cowlam's Masquerades in the Civil War Era and Gilded Age." When Garmon stumbled upon letters referencing the Indian Head gold coins while doing research at the Library of Congress, he knew exactly who to turn to help decipher and flesh out the newly uncovered documents.

To make the project happen, Frederick successfully applied to be a [Summer Scholar](#), a CNU program that allows students to get paid for doing research while living on campus during the summer. Frederick and Garmon then got to work combing through the letters, learning much about history, the coins and the artist. They are among the first to interpret the tucked-away letters.

The documents shed light on the interesting history of the coins, the \$5 half eagle and the \$2.50 quarter eagle, minted between 1908 and 1929. They were designed by world-famous sculptor Bela Lyon Pratt at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Pratt was challenged to fashion a coin that not only sported an Indian's head, but also used recessed features, which meant the art and letters on the coins were sunken, a design element inspired by Egyptian sculpture that made it easier to stack them and less prone to wear.

While Pratt worked on the coins, he wrote his mother letters. He tells her in one letter that he is "making some designs that are the handsomest ever."

For Frederick, the coin research, along with the other Garmon-inspired endeavors, have added depth and dimension to his CNU experience and provided him with "tangible" takeaways. "It is so, so important when in college to work on research," he said.

"Everything I have done at CNU and everything I will do after CNU has been guided by people I've met here," said Frederick, who will work as a Fellow in the [Center for American Studies](#) after graduation and before he sets his sights on law school. "This is the college experience people should be aiming for. I am so appreciative."

Garmon, an '09 graduate of CNU, strives to pay forward the positive impact his history and economics professors had on him many years ago. He knows firsthand the difference relationships and collaboration with faculty can make in a student's life.

"I love to be able to make these connections. It's really meaningful to me. I'm very proud of my students," he said. "Student-faculty research is one of the things that makes CNU unique and sets it apart."
