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Where are they now? MSU's child geniuses found

By [DAN SMALLWOOD](#)

The State News

Walking on campus for the first time in 1977, Kam Hunter was a bit shorter than the rest of the freshman class.

He didn't worry about shaving, dating or many of the average freshman problems. That's because Hunter was far from an average freshman - he was 11 years old.

Hunter gained national recognition as a child genius when he breezed through high school. But during his sophomore year of college, at age 12, he was quoted by Newsweek as wanting "to be treated like any other college student." But he knew leading a normal life was unlikely.

Despite his young start, Hunter spent most of the next 20 years in school as his young fame faded and he adapted to life in college.

Now Hunter is 34, and is just getting started in his career as a family physician in Phoenix, Ariz. - an esteemed but somewhat normal life.

At MSU, however, his age didn't seem to affect his extracurricular schedule. He was student manager of the football team and a ball boy for the MSU basketball squad which featured Earvin "Magic" Johnson during the 1979 NCAA Championship.

"Because I was young, I got opportunities that no one else got, and everything (the older students) did," Hunter said.

After completing his first bachelor's degree at age 16, dual-majoring in zoology and physiology, Hunter still was able to have a normal college experience. As a 17-year-old, he started a psychology degree and eventually shared his first kiss with his future wife - who he later asked to marry him on campus.

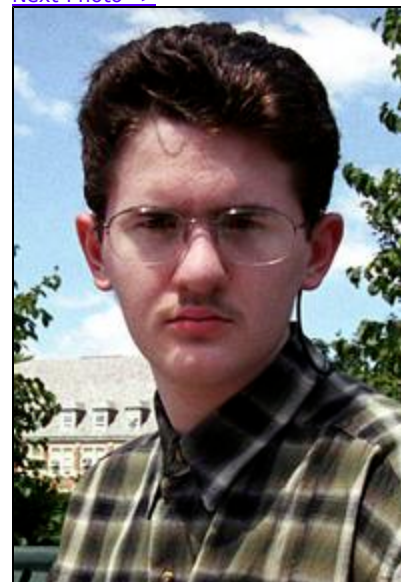
"I really grew up (at MSU)," Hunter said.

Though his parents were generally in favor of Hunter going to college at such a young age, he said he was probably "a hard kid to raise" because of his curious nature.

"I always had to know why," he admitted.

Now, after attending medical school at the University of Michigan for 10 years and completing his

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STATE NEWS FILE PHOTO

Taraz Buck

Freshman Year: 2002

Age at enrollment: 14

Major: computer science and chemistry

residency, Hunter is starting to raise his own family.

Married with two young children, Hunter is now a father himself. When asked about the state of education today, he shrugged off the question.

"I don't really have to worry about that just now," he said.

While Hunter might be the most famous, he isn't the only surprisingly young student to attend MSU.

Michael Grost was only 10 when he began at MSU in 1964.

Grost declined comment for this story, but in a 2002 interview with The State News, the Southfield resident described his life in college as similar to having "40,000 brothers and sisters."

Grost held his first job on campus working with computers his freshman year, which propelled him into software design after his 13-year college career - five of which were spent at MSU. He also attended Yale University and U-M, earning a doctorate degree in mathematics at age 23. Grost currently is a system architect at a computer company in Detroit.

"I really owe (MSU) a lot for the huge chance they took on me as a kid," Grost said in the 2002 interview.

High schools are the institutions that move students to college early in most cases, said Pam Horne, MSU's director of admissions.

Although the Office of Admissions and Scholarships doesn't have different admissions requirements for younger-than-average applicants.

While Hunter and Grost are now working in the real world, at least two more MSU students are hitting the books as teenagers.

Fourteen-year-old freshman Paris-Lapazelle Moore and 17-year-old senior Taraz Buck are two Spartans that continue to broaden the meaning of the college experience.

These newer prodigies of the university face their own challenges. Moore and her mother moved to East Lansing so she could attend classes at MSU, where she is in the preveterinary medicine program.

Buck, who also started at 14, said he finds that, for him, the "academics haven't been too hard, but still challenging (and) well constructed."

He works at MSU's M.I.N.D. or Media Interface and Network Design Lab, which researches human and computer interaction. His employers were surprised to learn of his age, he said. Buck is extending his stay at MSU, and will be here for another two years while he finishes his dual major in computer science and chemistry.

While he isn't sure what he will be doing, Buck, like other younger students, will be entering the career world while the average Spartan is just starting to get into college. But he does know one thing:

"I feel it's my duty to advance civilization," he said.

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