Chris Glassman is having a banner year. This past winter, the senior trombonist was named a finalist in Lamont’s schoolwide Solo Honors Competition. Just one month later, his group, a trombone, piano and percussion trio, emerged on top in the school’s Chamber Honors Competition, edging out traditional string quartets and brass quintets. In May, as a result of Glassman’s musical and academic achievements, the Lamont faculty voted to present him with the Presser Undergraduate Scholar Award, the most prestigious prize for an undergraduate music major. Beyond recognition and bragging rights, Glassman came away from Lamont’s Awards Convocation with nearly $5,000 in professional development funds.

Growing up in a musical family in Littleton, CO, Glassman started playing drums – like his father and both of his brothers – at the age of five. Wanting to branch out, he started learning saxophone in elementary school and later switched to baritone horn. It wasn’t until high school that Glassman finally found his groove: playing trombone in the jazz band.

In both the jazz and classical realms, Glassman found early role models at Lamont, since his brother, Joey Glassman (BM ’13), had attended as a percussion performance major. Concerts by the Lamont Symphony Orchestra, Lamont Jazz Orchestra and others left the young Glassman very impressed. “I knew that Lamont had really incredible ensembles and a great reputation,” he said.

Besides participating in the same ensembles he admired as a youngster, Glassman takes full advantage of musical opportunities afforded outside Lamont. He teaches marching band in the summers at Dakota Ridge High School, his alma mater, plays in wedding and salsa bands, and records trombone quartets with such distinguished artists as, well, himself. He explains, “I’ve been arranging a bunch of trombone quartets and recording all the parts myself. I’ve overdubbed some pop tunes like ‘Paranoid Android’ by Radiohead.”

The combination of such performance experiences and expert instruction make up Glassman’s favorite aspects of studying at Lamont: “There’s no shortage of playing opportunities here, and the students and the faculty are really awesome. [Trombone Professor] Scott Bean has been absolutely crucial to my growth as a trombonist, musician and overall human.”

Asked what he plans to do with his newfound funding, Glassman laughed. “I’ve already spent it!” With the aid of Prof. Bean, he picked out a new trombone this summer by the French maker Courtois. “I liked it, and when I played it for Scott, he said, ‘It sounds like you, only better.’ I was sold.” Glassman believes the new equipment will be a boon for his upcoming final year at Lamont and beyond.

“Senior year,” he said, taking a deep breath, “I’m going to practice my butt off and get ready for graduate school auditions.” Glassman intends to focus this year more on jazz, which had taken a back seat to his classical studies. He plans to audition at big-name schools in California and New York. But for all the stars in his eyes, he’s grateful for his Colorado roots.
“My parents have been incredibly supportive — supporting me regardless of what decision I was going to make,” Glassman said with a smile. It’s this home base of support, along with his Lamont education, that makes him confident about his future.

“I want to play trombone,” he declared, “whether it be studio work, Broadway shows or anything in between, that’s great by me.” If the past year is any indication, the new Presser Scholar has plenty to look forward to.