

# FISHER today



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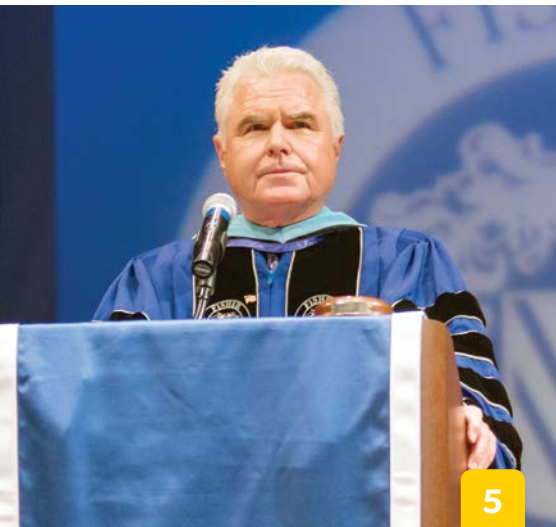


## Fondness and Friendship

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# Psychology Rocks for This Fisher Grad

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*Time at Fisher opened doors  
Ryan Koch '16 never considered*

BY CHRIS LEBLANC

**W**hen he picked up the saxophone and guitar during his formative years, there was no question: Ryan Koch was going to be a rock star. He spent the better part of his adolescence jamming as a member of a few garage bands.

"We weren't very good," he confessed, in retrospect. "But we always had a good time."

Despite the admission, Koch was determined to hone his craft and applied to the Berklee College of Music. Fate had other plans, however, and when Koch didn't get accepted, he forged ahead with his Plan B. But while Koch may have abandoned what he thought to be his one true love, he was well on his way to becoming a rock star, in a manner of speaking.

A 2016 graduate of Fisher College with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, he is looking forward to continuing his education and earning his master's degree in applied experimental and human factors psychology. Koch credits Fisher for propelling him in a new direction, which has included work as a research assistant at MIT for the past two summers.

"When I started out, I expected I would end up working in a clinical setting," he said. "I had no idea [working toward a

master's] was even an option, and without Fisher, I'm not sure I would have been able to take advantage of the opportunities presented to me."

Koch is now looking to participate in a post-baccalaureate program in computer science until he enters grad school, which will give him the technical training he needs to achieve his goals.

"Post-baccalaureate programs are equivalent to a minor in some cases," he explained. "These programs are designed to take people from a liberal arts background and provide fundamental technical training to allow them to go into a more technical field."

Koch spent two years working on the Fisher campus as a research assistant for the Fisher College Center for Leadership in Public Service, under the guidance of Director Alex Wagner. He secured that position after participating in a faculty-led research project on social media, through which he co-authored a report with Fisher College Assistant Professor Dr. Tunde Turi-Markovic: "The Effects of Social Media on Psychopathology."

While a student at Fisher, Koch participated in four conference presentations, received an award for outstanding research, and was eventually promoted to senior research assistant. It was that experience that caught the eyes of folks at MIT's Lincoln





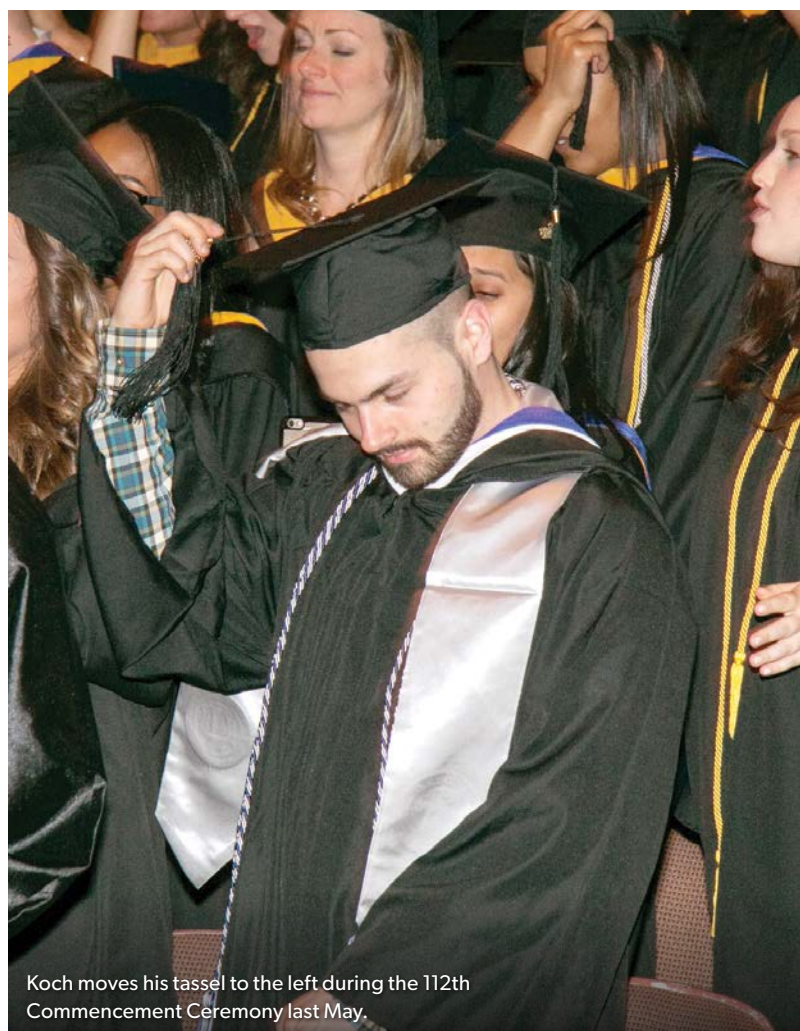
Photo: Christina Martin

Laboratory, where Koch was hired to work on video analytics research projects focused on health and law enforcement. That is where he was introduced to human factors research, and he hasn't looked back.

Simply stated, human factors refers to "the marriage of psychology and engineering: the application of a scientific body of knowledge about human strengths and weaknesses to the design of technology," according to the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society. Fascinated by the discipline, Koch said his immediate goal is to acquire as much experience as possible, which will enable him to tackle his longer-term goal of "inventing things." Beyond anything else, Koch would describe himself as a creative person, so there is little surprise that he has embarked on his current journey.

"The work in this area is tangible. You can see how you can help people on a broader scale," he explained. "There is an opportunity to have a much bigger impact through my work."

Although Koch is looking forward to making his mark, he isn't certain what that impact will be. In January 2017, he took



Koch moves his tassel to the left during the 112th Commencement Ceremony last May.

an internship with Nuance Communications, conducting human factors research on automotive technology and web tools. He also has an opportunity to work with Charles River Analytics in a temporary six- to nine-month position in which he will be performing human factors research on social robots in their "human effectiveness group." Following completion of that assignment, he'll move forward with the Charles River Analytics internship. But although he is careful not to point to one particular opportunity or area of specialization, he is focused on gaining as much experience and making as many professional connections as possible.

"I'm trying to acquire a diverse set of experiences in the field to discover what really interests me the most, and to help guide me toward an appropriate program of study and creative outlet to accomplish my goals," he said.

The rock star Koch envisioned himself becoming so long ago is different from the one he is becoming. The future is now brighter than ever as he continues to learn, grow, and experience the world of psychology.