ALLISON WOLD—MAKING AN IMPACT AT UNI

Allison Wold is a Junior at the University of Northern Iowa. Allison studies Biochemistry and Biology. “In junior high I was in an after school STEM program, The Iowa Excellence Program, and I had a lot of fun doing science experiments and playing math games. In high school I really enjoyed biology and chemistry, so biochemistry seemed like the perfect fit.”

Allison knew UNI was going to be a good fit. “I have always considered UNI to be a ‘Cinderella’ school. It’s big enough to have a lot of opportunities and experiences, but it’s small enough that all of the professors know you by name and truly care about how you are doing in their class. UNI has given me the opportunity to get to know all of my professors in the chemistry department very well, and also participate in research as an undergraduate student.”

Her favorite course so far at UNI had been undergraduate research in biochemistry. “My undergraduate research in biochemistry was actually the research I did with a professor. I participated in the summer undergraduate research program and I received class credit in the course ‘Directed Research.’ The goal of the research was to make a model of a complex protein that could be used to understand its function. I felt like I was making an impact, and I had a lot of fun doing it!”

Allison’s future plans are to earn a PhD. in biochemistry and continue doing research. “I’m not sure what I want to do with research. I know that I want to go into the field of microbiology or biochemistry. Initially I was thinking about oncology research, but after some of my classes I’ve become interested in neurological disorder and viruses.”

Last year Allison was able to attend the National American Chemistry Society meeting in Dallas, Texas to present research she had done over the summer. “I presented research on thiolate-ligated heme proteins. (It was the research that I did over the summer.) The department sends students who do research to the national meetings every year. They help us submit our abstracts and prepare our poster for the meeting. For example, I just submitted my abstract for the 2015 meeting in Denver, and I’m waiting to hear back if it was accepted. At the meeting I was able to talk to other undergraduate students from around the country. I also was able to talk to potential graduate school that I was interested in. I don’t keep in touch with anyone specifically, but I get occasional updates about the graduate schools.”

On top of being a student at UNI, Allison works as a student assistant in general chemistry labs and a student assistant at the Iowa Academy of Science. She is also an active member in UNI’s Student Affiliates of the American Chemical Society. She is the Chemistry Department STEM Ambassador, and has volunteered with Family Experience at Prairie Lake’s Church. “I am not really sure how I manage all of my activities. It’s usually about prioritizing what events are more important. The best advice I could give to students would be to figure out what is important to you and go for it!”

When Allison finds time to relax she watches the Big Bang Theory and plays the piano. “I’ve been playing piano for 10 years. I only get to play the piano when I go home, but I find it very relaxing. One of my favorite pieces in is the first movement of Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata.” Her advice to a future panther is, “Get involved in your department. The staff and faculty really care about helping you, and it’s a great way to make friends.”

Story by Stefani Keller, UNI STEM Program Associate, Communications