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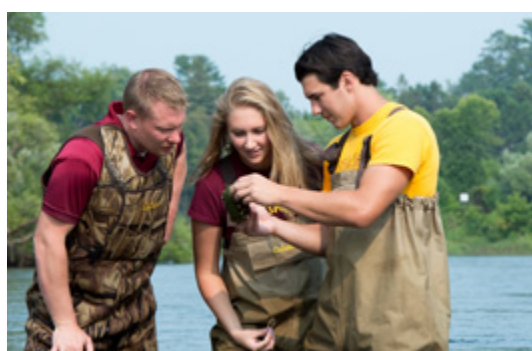
Wading Deeper: the Quest for Discovery

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Monday, October 15, 2018

What piques the interest in undergraduate research for senior health sciences major Michaela Lano, Chaska, Minn., is her drive to discover new information. Curiosity literally takes Lano wading into the rivers and lakes of Minnesota in search of freshwater sponges.

Always inquisitive, she came to the University of Minnesota Crookston with an extra year of high school science classes. "My high school had a great science program, and I took all the classes I could because I enjoyed them and knew they would prepare me for college," Lano says.

"I grew up riding and showing horses so originally I thought I would major in equine science," she continues. Assisting with the Nature of Life class at the University of Minnesota Itasca Biological Station led to the submission and funding of a research proposal for Lano with classmate Trevor Long.



She keeps meticulous records on her research projects including documentation of the work on freshwater sponges. When Assistant Professor Anthony Schroeder had her read over some of the research papers being submitted to journals for review, Lano found herself drawn to editing first and then into the research itself. This experience sparked the idea of combining two things she loves—science research and writing and editing.

She will put those writing and editing skills to use when it comes time to publish the research she has been an integral part of. Meanwhile this focused young woman hones her leadership skills as president of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Club on campus.

A bigger school may not have given Lano the opportunity to work on multiple projects with faculty and being involved is important to her. "Students need to find something on campus that brings them here, and then, something that keeps them here," she says. "At a small school you can take advantage of all kinds of opportunities. Research keeps me here and makes my student experience rewarding while preparing me for the future.

"The highlight of my undergraduate career has been the chance to work closely with the science faculty," she says. "I know I can approach them when I have questions, or someday perhaps, ask for a letter of recommendation."

What excites her most, however, is the chance to be part of the possible discovery of a new species of freshwater sponge and Lano is willing to go deep to find it.

Top photo: Seniors Trevor Long and Michaela Lano search the river in Thief River Falls for evidence of freshwater sponges.

Bottom photo: Assistant Professor Tony Schroeder with Lano (center) and Long (right).

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