
Meet Your Departmental Student Advisor!

Lindsey Gaston

Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

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Hometown: West Bloomfield, MI

Major: Biology

Concentration: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

Study Abroad: Quito, Ecuador (Environment and Ecology Program)

Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Chocolate Peanut Butter

Best Adjective to Describe You: Smiley

In 10 words or less, why should someone want to be a part of this department?

Interesting, interdisciplinary subject with hands-on lab experiences and engaging faculty.

When did you know you wanted to study this area? What pathway led you to this department?

By the end of freshman year, I knew I was interested in the sciences, but since I had placed out of Introductory to Chemistry I, didn't take my first chemistry course until that spring quarter. I found that I really enjoyed chemistry and began to worry that I'd have to pick either Biology or Chemistry for my major. I then realized that part of the reason I found chemistry so engaging was that the professor for the course, Dr. Truss, was a biochemistry professor, and I really enjoyed examples in class in which she'd apply chemical concepts to biological systems. I enjoyed seeing this same principle in some of my other classes the following year, such as Organic Chemistry and Cell and Molecular Biology, and I suppose I just really grew fascinated with how elegant it was that something as complex as the human body could be explained with such fundamental reactions and processes.

What is the best way to get (and stay) connected to this department?

I've found that the laboratory component seems to be a huge part of this discipline, so really get involved in your lab based classes. Try and make a point to really understand the principles behind what you're doing at the lab bench, and work to apply it in a way that interests you. I feel that holding a research position was also a great way for me to get involved with this department. In addition to the research skills that I obtained from this experience, I had the opportunity to get to know my PI (Principal Investigator) really well and learn more about not only her field of study but also the subjects of many other professors' research.

What would you miss the most if you were no longer a part of this department?

I would miss a lot of the opportunities that I've had in lab to kind of figure out real science in a trouble-shoot, "get your hands dirty" kind of way (while of course with safe laboratory practices that involve glove wearing, so that expression may not work so well here). I've had the opportunity to really get to know professors in this department as well, so I would definitely miss those connections.

What are your career aspirations/next steps after K?

I just applied to medical school, so hopefully I'll be starting that in the fall after graduation. I'm not entirely sure what type of medicine I'd like to pursue (and I hear that even if I did know, I would change my mind hundreds of times more in medical school), but I've found that I'm pretty interested in neurology. After that, my life plans are always changing as to where I want to live (maybe out West somewhere?), what type of career I want to have (research or clinical? large hospital or small practice?, etc.), but I can tell you for certain that I'm definitely going to have a Golden Retriever, so that's a start.

What has been the biggest surprise you have encountered at K?

This may sound incredibly cheesy, but I was actually very surprised to see how much the school really does function as a community. Around campus, everybody seems to know one another and you can count on a pretty wide collection of greetings wherever you go, which is always a huge mood booster. Classmates are also genuinely interested in helping their peers, which I've heard from friends at bigger universities is quite different than the cutthroat competition that they experience. I've also been surprised to see how seamlessly faculty integrate with students in the K college community; professors really don't seem interested in flexing power or anything and are really interested in getting to know their students.

How does your department connect to your other interests and activities?

Since my career aspirations and interests lie pretty heavily in medicine, the Biology and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology departments have been key in giving me a solid academic basis for the subject and connecting me with several opportunities in the field. I'm also a diver for the Kalamazoo College Women's Swimming and Diving Team, and aside from the fact that it seems that about 90% of the swimmers tend to be Biology or Chemistry majors, these departments have let me begin to understand the science of what my body is doing athletically.

What has been your favorite class at K? Why?

I have two: a sophomore seminar titled Rethinking the Mind and my freshman seminar, Crossing Borders: Autism and Other Ways of Knowing. Both classes were really unlike anything I had ever taken before and forced me to think in really unusual, challenging ways. Every reading from Rethinking the Mind seemed to shatter some preconception that I had about the world and I still really regularly bring it up in conversation, and my freshman seminar let me apply a very human component to a more clinical issue. I also really enjoyed how that class got me involved in the community my very first quarter at K.

What is your SIP?

I'm working in a trauma research lab at the University of California San Diego with the Department of Surgery. I'm doing research on traumatic brain injury and investigating whether administration of the hormone ghrelin following mechanical trauma reduces neural cell death by upregulating the mitochondrial uncoupling protein UCP2.
