



2017 Department of Biology Awards

CHRISTENSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Cherish Christiansen-Cosman, Biology

It's a sense of peace, satisfaction, and pure joy. After years of effort with a shoulder slammed against a grindstone, suddenly having dreams realized all in a whirl and suddenly seeing all the distance you've travelled. And what a sight to behold! It's *this* amazing feeling of accomplishment that I live for. My drive began at a young age and persisted throughout my life.

I graduated high school as Salutatorian and having been in the presidency of nearly every club I joined- some 13-14 organizations ranging from athletics, to National Honors Society, to

speech and debate, I was ready to move on to something bigger.

I played volleyball for Southern Virginia University for a semester while majoring in political science. Those were days never to be forgotten. It was then my interest in health professions ignited when I grew close to my athletic and strength trainers who made science applicable and fun. But it was only one semester there before I decided I would impact the world through missionary service and was called to the Canada Halifax Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There I met, taught, and grew to love so many people struggling with health challenges I couldn't explain or begin to understand. At the same time, my mother and sister were diagnosed with rare diseases and I felt truly helpless. All my training in the political arena couldn't help me talk my way out of the problems I saw all around.

When I returned home in August of 2015, I resolved to at least try my hand at such an important field where my quick-learning capabilities could be put to good use and see if I could find solutions to the problems I had encountered before. Instead of returning to my beloved Southern Virginia University, I followed an academic scholarship to BYU-Idaho. What a great decision! The courses I took in that semester fed my spark of interest in biology into a burning flame. Professor Dredge and Professor Quirrel spent countless hours inside and outside of class answering my unending questions and challenging me with puzzles of their own. Their diligent attention to my education and fun-loving encouragement helped me realize that even if I am relatively new to the field and less experienced, growing and meeting new horizons is what life is for.

I married at the end of that semester and moved to Utah with my husband who is attending Weber State University while I am here at Utah State University, again following an academic scholarship. I changed matriculation to double-major in political science and biology, chasing my two passions. I hope one day the two will find a meeting point where I can legislate policies about medical issues and make deeply informed decisions about them. I look forward to the feeling I'll get when walking across the stage to receive my Bachelor of Science degree in both of them.

The next destination is field work in research for experience while I prepare myself for medical school where I hope to eventually become a specialist in cardiology or neurology. It is there I hope to have one of those moments of pure joy, beholding how far I've come and marveling at the support I've felt through the years. I thank all those who have helped me to get this far and those who continue to spur me onward.