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## NON TRADITIONAL STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

Authored By  
Matthew Baier, x1296, [baierme01@uww.edu](mailto:baierme01@uww.edu)

### LISA GRIFFIN

Undergraduate research has been an invaluable tool throughout my academic career. I was extremely fortunate to have started early on and continue research through to graduation. As a wife, mother of three children, commuting, and holding down a part time job, additional course work may not seem realistic. Being a non-traditional student, there are additional challenges that need to be balanced with classes and learning, but this shouldn't restrict anyone in considering making research a part of their resume. It can be done. When you have an opportunity to focus on something you love, with a knowledgeable guide to help you along, the sky is the limit.

As a non-traditional student, finding the time to get everything done that life asks of you can be challenging. But I found that we always make time for things that we enjoy. I was able to do hands on learning when I was on campus. Looking up information was done at home or when I had a few quiet moments to myself between classes. I made friends with fellow students interested in the same areas and thoroughly enjoyed brainstorming ideas and problem solving with their help. I became passionate about the research I conducted, and found time to work it into my schedule.

I was able to learn hands on skills that wouldn't have been possible in a classroom setting. I enhanced my understanding of researching tools and techniques. The one-on-one attention with my mentor meant I had a knowledgeable guide to help me when I got stuck. Working independently and as a team prepared me with skills needed for college and in the workforce. I was able to attend regional and national conferences, making contacts that have lead to collaborative efforts and potential job and graduate school opportunities. Research has allowed me to enhance my resume to show that I can not only handle my life and outside responsibilities, but that I also took the initiative to focus in a particular subject I was interested in.

Conducting research allowed me to delve deeper into a subject area I was passionate about. It allowed me the freedom to focus on a particular area, and with the help of my mentor, explore those interests as far as I wanted to take them. It became the fuel that propelled my other studies. I was able to link my research to subjects I was learning about into other classes I took. In many instances, I was better prepared for other classes because of the research I had conducted. Please consider research as a way to better prepare yourself for the goals you want to accomplish, not only in academia, but in the life you want after you complete college.

### DONN EDWARDS

My undergraduate research experience was certainly the most enjoyable and rewarding aspect of my undergraduate experience. No other experience or course during my undergraduate days had a greater impact on my time as an undergrad or on my success after graduation. I particularly enjoyed the interaction with students and faculty from a wide array of disciplines throughout and beyond the UW Whitewater campus. Those that share in the undergraduate experience share a unique camaraderie and relationships that extend beyond life as an undergrad.

Applied learning and skill development were two aspects of undergraduate research which I appreciated most and have had the greatest impacts. Undergraduate research provided me with the opportunity to develop skill sets and tools which have significantly contributed to my successes.

From a science perspective, research conducted as an undergraduate provided me with the opportunity to better understand and apply the scientific method, experimental design, and biological concepts introduced in a classroom setting. From a general perspective, I developed skills such as grant writing, applied statistical analysis, and manuscript preparation, which are all critical skills necessary to success for any student pursuing a research career.

Participation in the undergraduate research program solidified my career path and provided the opportunities for advancement of my career goals. I believe that my experience was a critical component in acceptance to an outstanding graduate program and the success I currently enjoy in my research and funding as a graduate student.

In March 2009, I presented research at the Midwest Chapter of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry annual meeting. Both my research and travel to the conference were funded by UWW URP. My participation and presentation at this conference directly resulted in recruitment to The Institute of Environmental and Human Health at Texas Tech University, which ranks as one of the top Environmental Toxicology departments in the nation.

Participation in the URP promotes and encourages the development of professional relationships through interaction with UWW faculty and interaction with students and professionals at regional and national conferences. During my time at UWW, I attended conferences and events such as the National Conference for Undergraduate Research, the annual meeting of the Midwest Chapter of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, UWW Undergraduate Research Day, and Posters in the Rotunda. Participation in each of those events resulted in many professional contacts and relationships, most of which still exist today.

The most critical relationships I developed were through interaction with UWW Department of Biology faculty and mentors. My undergraduate research mentor, Dr. Elisabeth Harrahy encouraged me to pursue my areas of interest, provided me with every opportunity to succeed, and certainly sacrificed much of her personal time to ensure my success. Her mentorship lead me to a better understanding scientific concepts and a deeper appreciation for the field of environmental toxicology. To this day she still remains a trusted mentor, collaborator, and friend. It's relationships such as this, and those with other faculty members, that make undergraduate research at UWW a very rewarding and worthwhile experience.

The key to undergraduate research is "opportunity". Participating in the URP opens the door to a much wider array of opportunity for graduates, whether moving on to graduate school or pursuing employment. Needless to say, I'm a huge advocate for undergraduate research and I would encourage all students to take advantage of the outstanding opportunities that the Undergraduate Research Program at UW - Whitewater provides.

Thank you to the faculty, staff, and donors that make the UWW URP such a great success and provide the opportunity to excel to so many students. Your efforts are certainly appreciated by this University of Wisconsin - Whitewater graduate!

## **ROCHELLE DAY**

I was originally asked by English Professor, Dr. Elena Levy-Navarro if I'd consider doing an undergraduate research project with her, so without blinking an eye, I said "sure, what's that?" Not wanting to miss an opportunity to work side-by-side with faculty, I jumped at the opportunity, without fully knowing what I was getting myself into or what this process entailed.

As a Management Computer Systems (BBA MCS) student, I assumed that an undergraduate research had to be based upon my major, so when I told her I didn't think I could participate, she asked why not?

In my experience, people in the IT field are historically poor writers, and since I fell into that category, I wanted to grab onto this opportunity to work with someone who could elevate my writing skills, but also teach me how to research unfamiliar topics.

The topic of my interest was a poem I found in the Legacy's book (used in English 102), called "Peeling An Orange" by Virginia Hamilton Adair. It was here that Prof. Levy-Navarro noticed my interest and presented me with this once in a lifetime chance. By meeting with me weekly, and helping me learn how to understand poetry (an area I knew nothing about), I was presented with an opportunity to visit this poets collection at Cal-Poly Pomona University Library in California. During my visit, I was able to view original manuscripts, speak with other famous poets including Robert Mezey, and attend an Adair family function by special invitation from the poet's daughter Kappa Waugh.

During my research I had the opportunity to read unpublished works, talk with close friends and fellow poets who influenced her work, conducted long conversations with Virginia's daughter Kappa to understand the stories behind Ms. Adair's poems, and to challenge myself in ways I never thought possible.

So if you ask me how this experience has impacted me, I can declare with all confidence that this single opportunity has changed and challenged me in ways that no classroom or textbook alone could ever have. To read "Peeling An Orange" in the Legacy's book is one thing, but to understand the words, the tempo, the phrasing used, the time it was written, and the mind of the author, can only be really appreciated through undergraduate research.

This single experience has made me more confident in my writing (authored articles for the Royal Purple), empowered me to not be afraid to ask questions and dig for answers, and has taught me that 50-years old it is never too late to learn or explore new things.

I will be forever indebted to UW-Whitewater for giving me this opportunity and Dr. Elena Levy-Navarro for taking me under her wing.

## **JIM HERMANSON**

As a returning adult student I found participating in undergraduate research to be not only academically rewarding, but a great way to showcase your abilities. Let's face it, in today's society what you know, and who you know are more important today than ever. By participating in the URP you'll meet new friends and expand your networking opportunities and increase your chances of success. In addition you'll be able to test and apply theories, techniques, and concepts you learned in class in preparation for your new career, all while improving your marketable skills, and refining your resume.

Participation in undergraduate research provides numerous opportunities to grow, explore, and learn more about your chosen field. You'll be able to test and apply theories, techniques, and concepts you learned in class in preparation for your new career. At the same time improving your marketable skills, networking with others in your field and refining your resume.

## **NATHAN JOHNSON**

As a non-traditional student I am faced with a "non-traditional" climb up the hill of success. Undergraduate research was one of the best decisions that I have ever made. I believe the opportunity to conduct undergraduate research has strengthened my education and will continue to work for me into the distant future. Reading books and learning in a classroom is a great thing but there is so much more to be learned first-hand on the job. I was invited to join a research lab on campus which helped me to learn the practical application of the research method, from that point on I was hooked. Working as a lab tech allowed me to grow as a student researcher and also gave me the opportunity to develop my own research question and hypothesis. Working with my mentor in the spring semester, I applied for a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF), for the summer of 2012. When you apply for

something like this, you put a lot of effort into making sure it is right and waiting for the review board to make their decision seems like an eternity. I was notified on my award and found that I was only one of 15 that get accepted each year. From the beginning, I felt that it was my research and not my mentors. Working directly with my mentor I was able to receive guidance and direction in all aspects of my project. My mentor was and always will be a huge resource for me. Whenever I ran into a brick wall she was there to suggest alternate ideas, but she never dictated which path I should take. My decision to attend UW-Whitewater was for my education, and I feel that I will walk out of graduation on a career path that has no limits.