

UNH Student Wins Third Place in Science Competition

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A first-year student at the University of New Hampshire is a top-three United States finisher in an international science competition. Sarah Kremer '15, an ecology, evolution, and behavior major from Bozrah, Conn., was the third-place undergraduate winner in the U.S. zone of the Alltech Young Scientist competition.

The global competition, sponsored by the animal health and nutrition company Alltech, honors student scientific papers on agriculture topics. Although she is a science major, Kremer wrote her winning paper for an interdisciplinary class in the kinesiology department called "Amped Up: Social and Psychological Perspectives on Adventure." In her paper, called "Is Adventure Unique to Humans?", Kremer explores whether animals display adventure-seeking behaviors.

"This research has implications in human and animal psychology and mental health, captive animal care and housing, and explaining why organisms take risks," she writes.

Kremer says she was shocked to learn of the award. "I'm really excited that I won because I have always loved science, and I'm thinking about doing science writing as my career," she says, adding that the process was educational in many ways. "When I was writing the paper I learned a ton about animal behavior and sensation seeking. I also learned that I need to get better at time management and not procrastinating!"

"Amped Up" explores the role adventure plays in life and society. As part of the course, students plan and participate in adventure expeditions. It is one of UNH's Inquiry courses, experiential classes for first-year students that examine single topics from multiple perspectives. Part of UNH's core curriculum, the Discovery Program, Inquiry courses are designed to encourage students to reflect on their learning processes, to develop their own strategies to address questions, problems or subject matter in their

coursework, and to effectively convey and present the results of their inquiry. All first- and second-year students are required to take an Inquiry course.

“Sarah was a very engaged student throughout the class, participating fully in both the required class activities and the academic assignments. She truly embodied ‘adventure,’” says Jayson Seaman, assistant professor of kinesiology in the outdoor education option and professor for the course. Seaman calls her research topic compelling and original, and says she explored the topic thoroughly.

“She found research showing that animals pursue ‘sensation seeking’ behavior like humans do, but she wanted to explore the more complicated and interesting question of whether this rises to the level of willful pursuit of adventure,” he says. “Discovering ‘proof’ of this phenomenon was beyond the scope of the project, but it did put Sarah in touch with a compelling tradition of scientific inquiry.”

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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