

Psychology Major Samantha Noonan Secures Career Before Graduation

Monday, March 9, 2015

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Samantha Noonan knew what she wanted to study as a result of a class she took at Pinkerton High School. "I took a psychology class my senior year, and it was just captivating," says the 2011 high school graduate. "I couldn't get enough of it."

At UNH Manchester Noonan not only found her major, she discovered an ally in her [psychology](#) department faculty advisor. "[Alison Paglia](#) was really helpful in trying to cater to my work schedule needs, as well as my major and class requirement needs. She did a lot of work with me to finagle the hours around and still find classes that I would enjoy," Noonan says. "I don't know how she did it."

Noonan's work was an important factor in choosing to attend the Manchester commuter school. While she applied to four universities, she says, "When all was said and done and I got my acceptance letters, I realized that I didn't want to go away to school and part with the jobs I had and the steady money I was pulling in. UNH Manchester was close enough to my family's home, the price didn't scare me away, and I was able to continue working."

Her work as a cashier and then as a manager at a local shoe store soon became her second job when she took an internship class her junior year and found herself working in an adult day care program. "It wasn't talk therapy in its most stereotyped form," says Noonan, who hopes to one day work as a talk therapist. "It was more hanging out with the elderly and observing their behaviors, but also talking through things when I had to."

Noonan took that experience and turned it into a full-time job at the end of her junior year working for Easter Seals, where she does similar support work with adolescents at a residential treatment facility in Manchester. Months before graduation, she was promoted to supervisor. "I've already found my position in the field," Noonan says proudly.

While taking classes outside her major, Noonan discovered another interest. "I took a few communication arts classes and I ended up liking them," she says. "I found myself kind of putting together a minor on accident, so I put it together on paper. I think it fits well with what I'm ultimately trying to do with talk therapy."

Noonan reflects on what she likes about her minor. "I would say that my classes in [communication arts](#) were probably my favorite because they had more of a group-discussion setting. I found that I was gaining a lot more valuable information that way; it expanded my knowledge in a way that made me think and wonder instead of a traditional textbook learning style."

She points to one class that she particularly enjoyed. "There was a gender class I took that was interesting. It broadened my understanding of the way other people think of gender, and the way that we perceive the world through our own gender."

In contrast to Pinkerton where Noonan notes that some of the classes were large and there wasn't much time to interact with each student, she says of UNH Manchester, "the class sizes are small, so you get more attention, help and personal interaction with the professors and with classmates. I appreciate that about UNH."

Noonan also appreciates the professors at UNH Manchester. "The professors are motivating. They want to see you be happy with your dreams; they're not trying to push anybody else's dream on you. I think the best part for me was how motivating the professors were, how open they were to listen, and then how they were ready to help."

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