

# Inspired to make an impact

**Harris engages in sustainability practices through internship**

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Inspired by one city's commitment to address climate change, Jackie Harris '23 served as an intern this summer in Keene, New Hampshire on a team aimed at reducing the water and energy usage in its municipal buildings.

Harris, a Londonderry, New Hampshire native who is a dual major in Earth sciences and women and gender studies, secured the paid internship through the University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute's fellowship program. It pairs UNH students with municipal, educational, corporate and non-profit partners in New England to work on transformative sustainability initiatives designed to make an immediate impact.

"I value protecting the environment, and this position provided the opportunity to turn my beliefs into action," says Harris. "I also wanted to learn more about sustainability and work on my data collection and analysis skills."

Harris used the science skills she learned as a UNH student to assist in the development of a benchmarking program aimed at creating methods for reducing water and energy usage in the city's municipal buildings. To do so, she researched best practices, conducted interviews with other municipalities about benchmarking programs and collected energy and water consumption data to enter into an online benchmarking database for the city.

The learning experience was one that Harris says will have an impact beyond this summer.

"I gained a lot of knowledge about municipalities and how important communication and collaboration between different groups are to achieve a project," she says. "Being able to reflect on the progress of a project allows for improvements to be made, ensuring the results will fit the needs of all those impacted by the work."

The experience is one that has fortified her commitment to sustainability. She plans to seek additional internship opportunities while at UNH before pursuing a career in either environmental consulting, environmental justice, sustainability or social justice.

"I love exploring all the different types of jobs available and meeting people who can share wisdom from their own experiences," says Harris.

Her advice to current and future students is to pursue internship opportunities and do the research to ensure they are a good fit.

"The experience will teach you so much," says Harris. "You can explore career paths you are interested in and use the experience to find out if you really want to pursue one of those careers. Go with what genuinely interests and excites you. The goal is always to find what makes you passionate."

Harris originally chose to attend UNH because it offered many of the things she was looking for. Since walking on to campus, she's been actively involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including the United Asian Coalition, the Earth Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee, and the Hamel Scholars Green Team Task Force, which plans, hosts and participates in events that promote sustainability and green living. She also previously served as treasurer for Jessie Doe Hall.

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