

# Charting Her Own Course

Senior history major sets sights on competition, career

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Wednesday, March 2, 2016

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**LAUREN PERCY '16, A HISTORY MAJOR, IS DOING HER HONOR THESIS ON THOSE LOST AT SEA FROM NEW ENGLAND SEAPORTS.**

Growing up in the Granite State, Lauren Percy '16 was not convinced when her parents predicted that she'd go to UNH. That is, until she took a tour.

“Minute by minute, I looked at my mom, and I tried to hide my excitement,” she recalls, explaining she didn’t want to hear her mother say, “OK, you actually like it!”

But containing that excitement didn’t last.

“It got me at HoCo,” she says. “When we went out to lunch, I was like, ‘OK, I’ve been in love with it this whole time. Yes, I love it — I want to be a Wildcat!’ That’s how I ended up at UNH.”

Percy, who has a concentration in ancient history, credits part of her decision to major in history at UNH to a high school teacher who both inspired and challenged her. “I checked ‘history’ when I was applying,” she says, “and the rest is history.”

A positive history, at that: She describes UNH’s program as one of the best in the country. “This department is as strong as it is because of the faculty,” she says, explaining the professors “have gotten to know me, and I’ve gotten to know them and to build on that relationship ... If I start naming, I think I’m going to have to name all of them because they have had such a profound impact on me.”

For her honors thesis, Percy is focusing on New England maritime history and those who were lost at sea. One thing she has noticed is that many who were lost were previously recorded as being crewmembers on other ships. “I don’t mean to romanticize history, but for me it was sad to kind of get to know these men and then all of a sudden they were just gone,” she says, adding, “55 percent never came home ... I found some journals of different families that have had family members lost at sea, and they’re pretty moving.”



LAUREN PERCY '16 HOPES

TO PURSUE A CAREER IN STUDENT AFFAIRS.

Percy explains that when she was in high school she thought history was about memorizing dates and names, but now she says it’s much more than that — it’s about analysis. “You need to take off your glasses of modernity and really focus on the context of the time period that you’re studying,” she says.

During the lead-up to this year’s New Hampshire presidential primary, Percy got to experience history in the making.

“It’s exciting to me because this is such an important election, and if you look at where we’ve been in the past, historically, you know if certain candidates are elected, you can hypothesize possibly where our country might be going,” she explains.

As an assistant hall director at Christensen, Percy was able to help students get ready to vote in their first election. “It’s very exciting and it’s not just enthusiasm of ‘we get to vote’ ... they’re also interested in understanding the process and understanding the candidates’ issues,” she says.

Working for residential life inspired Percy to consider a future career in student affairs. “If I could help any student from here on out realize the power of their own potential, to empower them to stand up for themselves, then I think that I would have a successful career,” she says, adding, “The wonderful thing about working at a university is ... you never stop learning.”

If Percy doesn’t go to grad school, she’s considering spending two years in the Teach for America program. “I think that would be incredible, because I’ve grown up in a family of teachers and I’ve worked for the Boys and Girls Club. Working with kids is something I love.”

Percy is also preparing to compete for the title of Miss New Hampshire in April as the current Miss Portsmouth Area. The Miss New Hampshire program is part of the Miss America organization — one of the world’s top providers of scholarships, she adds.

“This is how I’m paying for school. Also, within the Miss America organization you have a chance to promote your platform. Mine happens to be about making higher education more accessible,” she explains.

If Percy becomes Miss New Hampshire, she will spend a year promoting her platform and will compete for the title of Miss America.

“This would be the opportunity of a lifetime,” she says.

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