Petit ’26 Earns NOAA Hollings Scholarship

Rising junior seeks career helping to make seafood systems more resilient to the effects of climate change

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Working as a research assistant during the spring semester in the lab of Michael Chambers, research associate professor in UNH’s Center for Sustainable Seafood Systems, Elisabeth Petit ’26 was able to tap directly into interests she hopes will carry her well beyond UNH.

She relished every minute there – she just wished there were a lot more of them. Her busy schedule, crowded with a heavy course load and campus life commitments, conspired to limit her availability.

“I enjoyed being able to participate in aquaculture research for a couple of hours each week, but I want to be able to do more,” Petit, who is known to most as Ellie, says.

Wish, granted. Petit was recently announced as a recipient of the NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship, an award for sophomore students that includes academic assistance (up to $9,500 per year) for two years of full-time study and a 10-week, full-time paid ($700/week) internship at a NOAA facility during the summer.

Petit will take on her internship in summer 2025 and hopes to work in a NOAA fisheries lab. She would love to focus her internship on shellfish aquaculture but says she is open “to studying any aspect of sustainable fisheries of aquaculture.”

Regardless of the destination, the internship will provide her with precisely the opportunity she was looking for – more time to dive in to research she is passionate about.
"I applied for the Hollings Scholarship because I am passionate about how sustainable food production can improve ocean health and decrease the impacts of climate change," Petit says. "It’s my goal to find innovative solutions to make seafood more sustainable, and I need more technical training to do so. My research internship will give me the resources and opportunities to gain more experience and help make that goal possible."

Petit, a marine, estuarine and freshwater biology major with a minor in sustainable agriculture, recently took part in a sustainable fisheries course at the Isle of Shoals, where she was able to begin exploring NOAA fisheries programs she would be interested in taking part in.

She hopes to pursue a career in the fisheries and aquaculture field, potentially as a researcher in a lab or consultant for aquaculture companies, and intends to work in the field for a stint after earning her undergraduate degree before pursuing a master’s or Ph.D. Her professional goal is to help make U.S. seafood systems more resilient to the effects of climate change.

"I am particularly interested in studying how ocean acidification will play a role in shellfish production and the impact invasive species will have on the viability of certain fisheries," Petit says.

Petit is just as passionate about education as she is research. She says she would like to find a way to serve as a community educator in her future roles, participating in research seminars and potentially becoming a professor later in her career.

"I believe educating people on where their seafood comes from and how it is impacted by climate change has great benefits," she says. "It mobilizes the public to change their behavior and make informed policy decisions."

The Natick, Massachusetts, native has been heavily involved in student life since she arrived on campus, serving as a trip leader and office manager for UNH’s outing club – she has led several day and overnight trips involving camping, surfing and hiking, including a week-long journey to Arizona during spring break this year – as well as a member of the Slow Food Club and Oriza, the womxn’s ultimate frisbee team.

Those opportunities are important to her because of the connections she’s been able to make with peers throughout campus, she says. She is hopeful that the Hollings Scholarship will provide similar opportunities, which is a big reason why one of the things she is most excited about is the chance to expand her professional network.

"I’ll get to work closely with individuals in my field of interest and participate in research symposiums," Petit says. "That will allow me to find additional undergraduate and post-graduate research opportunities and expand my knowledge of what is being done globally to make fisheries more sustainable."

Interested in pursuing a Hollings Scholarship? Learn more about this and other opportunities available through the Office of National Fellowships [https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unh.edu%2Ffellowships-office%2F&data=05%7C01%7CKeith.Testa%40unh.edu%7C7C6e7bf4b36fc420dfab808db37868067%7Cd6241893512d46dc8d2bbe47e25f5666%7C0%7C0%7C%7C].

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