



Eldon J. Gardner Research Scholarship

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A few things about me:

I am now completing my third year at Utah State University as a major in Biology and participant in USU's Honors program. I am excited to begin my senior year. My experience at USU over the last three years has been fundamental in building towards who I am today.

I knew relatively early on which direction I wanted to focus my studies towards. In high school I was inspired by my AP Biology teacher, Larry Litizzette. His passion for all aspects of biology and life were exceedingly contagious. Driven by this passion to learn all that I could, I found myself as a lab assistant in Dr. Gilbertson's laboratory focusing on the mechanisms behind nutrient processing. Much of my experience in the laboratory has come from the opportunity provided by Dr. Gilbertson's research.

The following year I became a Resident Assistant at USU's Living Learning Community. Although this position did not directly influence my education, the skills that I have learned, and the people that I have met through USU's housing and residence life program have undoubtedly provided one the largest source of knowledge and support that I could have ever asked for during my undergraduate career. I wasn't used to the amount of responsibility required by my position as a resident assistant on top of being a student, though by the end of the year (and continuing into this year as well), I have grown immensely in my ability to manage my time and myself.

This year I have begun working with Dr. Gompert, asking a multitude of questions regarding evolutionary biology. What I've learned through my experience working with Dr. Gompert is that it is extremely frustrating to individually clean, crush, and prepare hundreds of very tiny insects for DNA analysis, but very rewarding to be able to create preliminary insights towards the mechanisms that drive molecular evolution. I hope to continue the same line of work in the following year while formulating and executing my own research questions.

I will always look upon the last few years fondly. However, I must also be looking towards the future. I will continue working with Dr. Gilbertson and Dr. Gompert, while focusing my efforts towards graduate school. I would like to continue working in Evolutionary Biology with models and mechanisms of evolution. It would also be a possibility to focus on personalized health-care based on individual patient genomes.

Although I feel as though my research is still in its infancy, The Eldon J. Gardner Research Scholarship will allow me to focus on my academic and personal goals for the remainder of my undergraduate career. I am presenting my first research poster this semester, and it has been a wildly insightful experience. I greatly appreciate the opportunity presented to me to put forth all of my energy into the research that I am passionate about.

