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Danielle Lavoie '18 Named an NOAA 2016 Hollings Scholar

Sophomore marine biology major selected for prestigious national scholarship and full-time summer internship in a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research lab



Danielle Lavoie '18 works on a course project inside RWU's Wet Lab.

April 13, 2016 | Jill Rodrigues '05

BRISTOL, R.I. – Marine biology student Danielle Lavoie is riding a wave of success as she concludes her sophomore year. Lavoie has been named a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Ernest F. Hollings Scholar – a highly selective national award that provides her an opportunity to conduct research alongside the nation's top marine scientists and a significant academic scholarship.

Lavoie, who hails from Willington, Conn., is among only 125 undergraduates across the U.S. to be named a 2016 Hollings Scholar; she joins a pipeline of dozens of Roger Williams University students to receive this prestigious award and NOAA internship in recent years.

In addition to \$19,000 in tuition aid, Lavoie will complete a 10-week, paid internship at her choice of a NOAA facility in the United States or U.S. territories during summer 2017, along with funding to present her research at two professional conferences.

“This is an incredible opportunity for me to gain hands-on research training and to experience the professional researcher’s world before embarking on full-time work,” Lavoie said. “I’m excited to put my foot in the door and see what research fields and job possibilities I might be interested in.”

In May, Lavoie will travel to NOAA headquarters in Silver Springs, Md., for orientation, where she’ll meet with scientists and learn about their cutting-edge work, tour research labs, and attend science fairs to begin identifying which field of research she would like to pursue as an internship.

Although it may be her first experience to train in an independent research lab, Lavoie says the marine biology program at RWU has prepared her well for this type of work. Her courses have taken her trawling for fish and algae species on Narragansett Bay, seining for shellfish and fish larvae along the shores, and conducting group research projects in the Wet Lab. During her junior year, she plans to engage in student-faculty collaborative research on a local marine science issue.

“The marine biology program puts a lot of emphasis on undergraduate research and the lab courses are very hands on,” says Lavoie, who is also a science tutor in the Center for Student Academic Success and a member of the TriBeta Honors Society and Marine Science Club. “If you have a question, the professor is always helpful, but you are encouraged to do your own work – and I think that’s really prepared me for working in a NOAA research lab.”

According to Assistant Professor of Marine Biology Koty Sharp, who mentored Lavoie through the rigorous application process, the experience that accompanies the Hollings Scholarship will provide Lavoie insight into opportunities she may want to pursue after graduation and connections in the professional world.

“This is the kind of experience that will get her another prestigious internship, admission into graduate school or a research technician job,” Sharp said. “And her professional training will benefit her classmates, when she returns from the internship with an advanced level of lab expertise and research comprehension, as well as being more polished at research presentation. This sort of stimulation among her peers is what we provide here at Roger Williams, educating our students to be fluent in research discourse, whether an internship like this off-campus or here with our scientists.”