

Six seniors, six stories

Every program at the college is filled with remarkable students.

With 2,999 exceptional undergraduates enrolled at Hope, how could it be otherwise? And so, it was easy to identify six outstanding seniors in our effort to help show how lives are touched by the Hope experience—to demonstrate the central, human dimension of the college's newest, and largest-ever, construction project.

In addition to photographing them, we asked each of the students the same three questions: "What about Hope—particularly the science program—drew you to the college?"; "What has been a highlight of your experience in your major program?"; and "What are your post-Hope plans?"

Here's what they had to say.

Diana Castanon

chemistry and philosophy
Holland, Mich.

Drawn to Program Because: As a native Hollander, I initially refused to consider Hope College. It was just too close to home. However, parental encouragement—to state it modestly—helped me to change my mind... During my visit, I also learned about the research opportunities, Hope's record for MCAT preparation, and medical school acceptance rates. These were all impressive, but what clinched it for me was walking through Peale and observing faculty members who were open to answering questions and working closely with students. I knew that at Hope my efforts would be supported and my achievements would be recognized."

Stand-Out Experience: "Summer research in the chemistry department was the highlight of my college career. The lab was the ideal learning environment. I learned some practical science, how to trouble-shoot an experiment gone wrong, the importance of team-work, how to prepare myself for Dr. Peaslee's and Doc Williams's grilling questions at the end of a presentation, and (most importantly) the duck-and-cover maneuver to avoid Dr. Peaslee's volleyball serve at the weekly picnics. Because my experiences were so memorable, I am biased toward research. I think every science major should get involved."

Post-Hope Plans: Will attend the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor.

Brian Flickinger

geological and environmental sciences
Traverse City, Mich.

Drawn to Program Because: "I became interested in geology because of the practical nature of it. I could walk outside and see everything I was learning about. I wanted to learn what processes were responsible for the things I saw."

Stand-Out Experience: "As a geology major I had the opportunity to take many field trips for classes. It would definitely be those experiences and friendships that I will take away from the geology program."

Post-Hope Plans: Will enter the world of work after graduation.

Jessica Hanba

biology and psychology
Reed City, Mich.

Drawn to Program Because: "Several of my teachers recommended Hope to me because of its excellent reputation as a science-oriented institution. After visiting the school and seeing the facilities first-hand, I realized that Hope was the place for me. As a student here, I majored in both psychology and biology and I feel both departments prepared me well for what's yet to come."

Stand-Out Experience: "I think the highlight of my experience as a psychology student at Hope has to be the personal relationships I have formed with faculty. The professors truly take a personal interest in their students and help them in any way possible. I have felt both respected and understood. At Hope, I have learned volumes from the faculty in educational terms, as well as life skills such as how to make decisions and how to persevere. Without their support and challenges, I doubt I could have come as far as I have."

Post-Hope Plans: Will pursue a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology, focusing on memory and suggestibility with respect to eyewitness testimony. Hopes to become a professor at a liberal arts institution.

Curt Mejeur

nursing
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Drawn to Program Because: "When I came to Hope as a freshman, I knew nothing about the nursing program—I didn't even know that Hope had one! My mind was set upon becoming a doctor, and majoring in either biology or chemistry—both programs at Hope that had an excellent reputation among schools nationwide. However, through many events and circumstances, I found myself changing my major to nursing, also a very strong, reputable program at Hope."

Stand-Out Experience: "As a result of my experiences in the nursing program at Hope, I have been able to develop my own standards of nursing care centered around my faith in Jesus Christ. The highlight for me has been the opportunity to care for patients while simultaneously being a witness of Christ's love. I truly believe that this mindset can turn something as simple as a job into a vocation—something that one is called to do."

Post-Hope Plans: Will work as an RN in the Trauma Care Burn Unit at Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo. Plans to attend graduate school in nurse anesthesia.

Matthew Nehs

biochemistry (biology and chemistry)
Traverse City, Mich.

Drawn to Program Because: "First, they had the top pre-medical reputation of the five [liberal arts colleges in Michigan I visited]... Second, Hope's science program is perfectly tailored for undergraduate research. I was not particularly interested in research, but I joined a physiology lab and have had a positive experience, particularly in better understanding the scientific



The new science center will touch students throughout the college, majors and non-majors alike. The strength of Hope's program in the sciences has been an important consideration to students like these six seniors, a tradition that the new science center will enable to continue. Pictured clockwise from the top left are Curt Mejeur, Brian Flickinger, Emily Schwartz, Matt Nehs, Jessica Hanba and Diana Castanon.

method... Last, from the janitors to the president, the people of Hope were a different caliber from other institutions. They made me feel at home when I visited, and that sealed the deal for me."

Stand-Out Experience: "I had the once-in-a-lifetime experience of traveling to the Galapagos Islands with Dr. Harvey Blankespoor and 45 others... Visiting the Galapagos Islands was an opportunity to "live" the classroom experience. In addition to the unique biology I learned there, my visit to Ecuador was a lesson in cultural relativism. [Also,] my opinion matters... When Hope was hiring new faculty, the department asked two other students and I if we would take the candidates out for lunch and write an evaluation of them. This was used in the hiring process. There are several faculty members who I feel like I helped pick. The department took me and the other students seriously."

Post-Hope Plans: Is choosing which medical school to attend among multiple acceptances. Long-term plans include a surgical specialty and perhaps academic

medicine, the latter reflecting his enjoyment of teaching.

Emily Schwartz

biology
Palos Heights, Ill.

Drawn to Program Because: "As an incoming freshman, there are lots of statistics thrown at you about the school and its academic programs specifically. Hope's pre-med and research programs have the strongest numbers hands-down of any undergraduate school I considered."

Stand-Out Experience: "The close interaction with the faculty and staff really makes the education process that much more fulfilling. Professors make a strong effort to get to know their students as well as listen to their ideas and opinions regarding ways in which courses can be changed and improved."

Post-Hope Plans: Accepted into the University of Utah biological chemistry PhD. program. Also considering a career in law specializing in intellectual property. ✍️