

I grew up in a white, middle-class Christian household in a small town, where I was surrounded by many people who looked and acted similarly to me; however, I think that I have chosen to live a life atypical of many females in the same situation. In high school, I was known for my accomplishments both as the only female on the varsity golf team as well as the ‘science nerd’ who had won big awards at the International Science and Engineering Fair. Continuing to differ from my fellow classmates, I chose to attend a university that was not only out-of-state but was also non-sectarian.

During my first couple years at UR I adjusted socially and academically and began to find my niche. My proclivity for UR was further deepened after my sophomore year when I was awarded a competitive grant so I could spend a month in Moshi, Tanzania as a volunteer with Cross-Cultural Solutions. For quite some time I had been passionate about working with a health-related volunteer program in Africa, having entertained the idea of making a career out of humanitarian/international scientific research

In Tanzania, I met and exceed my goals to experience cultural immersion and increase my knowledge of the HIV/AIDS crisis. I worked at a women’s clinic in the poor suburb outside Moshi where I assisted doctors on home and clinical visits, and taught English classes to a group of widows suffering from HIV/AIDS. Listening to the women’s stories of suffering, despite the language barrier, left a lasting impression on me, knowing how too often their voices, as women, were ignored in their society.

When I returned UR that fall, I was excited to engage in new experiences that were reflective of the lessons I had learned in Tanzania. As an RA, I raised my residents’ awareness to social injustice both in Africa and in Richmond city. Socially, I intentionally befriended minority students and tried to understand what it was like to be a non-white student at UR. Out of these friendships came the desire to become an International Orientation Adviser, rise from simply being a member of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship to being the Multi-ethnic Ministry Coordinator, and to serve as a representative for the Diversity Roundtable—where leaders from different groups discuss how to make UR a more diverse and inclusive community.

My academic interests were shifted as well. I tenaciously pestered professors to offer both independent Swahili courses and introductory African history courses. Additionally, my research efforts were more focused: my new aspirations for international humanitarian-based

research and gave new motivation for the laboratory research I did, knowing the foundation it would provide.

As I am nearing the end of my college education, I find myself excited to move on to the next stage as I pursue a career in humanitarian-focused research in an international context, and I know the education I need lies in graduate school. University of Michigan's Program in Biomedical Sciences is attractive for multiple reasons, perhaps the most prominent for me being its statement that "diversity makes better science." I believe that the PIBS would be a great fit for me as I work towards my Ph.D. so that I can engage with, contribute to, and learn from the global scientific community as I pursue a career in medical research.