So how do students majoring in the natural and applied sciences at Hope feel about the experience? Hope earns high marks for its emphasis on collaborative faculty-student research and the opportunity that working closely with faculty mentors presents to learn to think and to do science, not just memorize what others have discovered. On these pages students active in each of the division's eight departments share reflections concerning their college choice, their time in the program and their preparation for the future. Additional insights from each are available online.

Rebekah Sexton ’07
Hometown: Kalamazoo, Mich.
Majors: nursing (May ’09 graduation) and religion
Future Plans: a career in nursing with an emphasis on women’s and children’s health

“I really liked that the computer science department was small and personal. The professors knew every student by name and knew them on a personal level. I did not like the idea of huge classes and more impersonal schools. I also liked how much emphasis was placed on undergraduate research. With the small size of Hope College, I had a better chance of trying out research in different areas than I did at bigger schools.”

Julian Hinson ’10
Hometown: Eagan, Minn.
Major: chemistry
Future Plans: medical school, hoping to combine his interests in French and his West-African heritage with some overseas work.

“I have learned that research is rarely a stereotypical guy in a lab solving the world’s issues solo, but rather a team of dedicated people with their own slice to add to the pie. Watching the debates on the numerous problems with our medical system, I rub my hands together hoping, waiting, until I have the opportunity to dig into an ‘impossible’ situation with a group of other doctors.”

Dirk Van Bruggen ’09
Major: computer science and mathematics
Future Plans: a Ph.D. in computer science and a career involving research

“I really liked that the computer science department was small and personal. The professors knew every student by name and knew them on a personal level. I did not like the idea of huge classes and more impersonal schools. I also liked how much emphasis was placed on undergraduate research. With the small size of Hope College, I had a better chance of trying out research in different areas than I did at bigger schools.”

Sarah Dean ’09
Hometown: Nashville, Tenn.
Major: geology
Future Plans: graduate school in structural geology and a career in geology

“One of the things I appreciate most about the geology department is its summer research opportunities. I have done research under Dr. Hansen for three summers, and they include some of my best memories from Hope. Conducting research has helped me learn more about what doing geology is like outside of the classroom, and helped me determine that I would be very happy to do similar work after college.”

Chris Hall ’09
Hometown: Pataskala, Ohio
Majors: physics and mathematics
Future Plans: a Ph.D. in medical physics and conducting research in that field

“They emphasize student involvement in research and have a phenomenal ability to relate classroom and design projects at every level of the curriculum model real-world engineering challenges. Moreover, this philosophy is more evident than in the host of student research opportunities. My own research in sustainable structural reinforcement options has allowed me to gain vital understanding of the role of science in everyday life.”

Caitlin Rios ’09
Major: biology
Future Plans: medical school or a joint M.D./Ph.D. program and eventually biomedical research

“At a biology major, I have found the integrative and interdisciplinary approach utilized in the courses really helpful in making me approach problems with the critical thinking skills required of a research scientist. Most of my classes have stressed higher levels of learning that require analysis of concepts to solve real scientific problems.”

Dan Liibis ’09
Hometown: Downers Grove, Ill.
Major: engineering and mathematics
Future Plans: graduate school and then a career teaching at the college level and conducting research

“Completing research in mathematics has taught me to think originally and critically about problems. Lectures and homework are also important, but the mentoring I have received from Hope faculty during each of my research projects has been the most important factor in my development as a mathematician.”

Joel Blok ’10
Major: geology
Future Plans: a graduate degree in civil or structural engineering and a focus on the sustainability of global infrastructure solutions

“The engineering department stresses that the role of science in everyday life.”

More about what doing geology is like outside of the classroom, and helped me determine that I would be very happy to do similar work after college.”

News From Hope College
April 2009