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**Michelle Handlin '07 experiences the South Pole Station**

*Summary: Living on the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station is “like being in an episode of ‘Star Trek: The Next Generation.’”*

(May 5, 2009)-University of Minnesota, Morris alumna Michelle Handlin '07 says that living on the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station is “like being in an episode of ‘Star Trek: The Next Generation.’” She has just returned from an exhilarating Antarctica experience.

“The South Pole has two seasons,” Handlin shares, “summer and winter. I was there for four months during the summer, and the sun never set. It’s light all the time. There are 350 people on the station, a combination of airport, science research station, and construction zone.”

The Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station is located at the Earth’s axis on a shifting continental ice sheet nearly two miles deep. The site is one of the world’s most remote research facilities with scientists studying glaciology, geophysics, meteorology, upper atmosphere physics, astronomy, astrophysics, and biomedicine.

Handlin, who served as a prep chef, was amazed at the community created at the South Pole. She says: “I had the chance to go anywhere with anyone. A top physicist in the world and a plumber would sit together at lectures. We were all there to do work it’s all important. Without each other, you couldn’t get anything done.”

The South Pole, says the social science major, has a lot of commonality with her prairie experience in Morris. “The South Pole Station is flat. It is white. It is cold. But it is one of the prettiest places I’ve ever been. Like the South Pole Station, Morris is a small community, and you’re there as part of the community. Morris was the best preparation for me going down to the South Pole. It was just like college all over again— being away, but also doing anything I wanted to do. In Morris, you plan something, and it happens. The community is the same down there. You plan it and make it happen.”

The seed to travel to the South Pole was planted in Handlin’s imagination many years ago during a casual conversation with a woman who had just returned from Antarctica. While studying abroad in China as a University of Minnesota, Morris student, she was casually asked what she planned to do next in life. In a joking manner she replied, “I’m going to Antarctica.” And she did.

Handlin's four-month experience in Antarctica affirmed a life lesson: “You can do anything if you set you mind to it and if you have friends to help you get there.”

In addition to China and the South Pole, Handlin also lived in Australia during a study abroad experience. She currently makes her home in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.