Terry finds inspiration in summer internship

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Four years ago, Jasmine Terry ’22 joined several of her Shakopee High School classmates for a National Signing Day photo, proudly wearing a sweatshirt with the University of Minnesota Morris emblem on it.

An athlete through her high school years, Terry had never heard of Morris until the track coach invited her to tour the campus and potentially compete at a collegiate level.

The prospect of being on the Cougar track team was significant, as Terry said that meant she would automatically have friends. This was important, since she had never heard of UMN Morris before the invitation from the track coach, and she didn’t really know anyone else on campus.

But athletics wasn’t her only motivation to attend UMN Morris. She also found that the tuition was the cheapest of any of the schools she was considering. Furthermore, she felt that based on the enrollment, she would have small class sizes and more one-on-one with her professors.

Now the captain of the women’s track and field team, Terry is grateful for her teammates as well as the support she found among her peers in the Black Student Union.
“There was a little culture shock when I first got here,” Terry admitted. “But then I found my people. There are a lot of one-of-a-kind people that I’ve met.”

One of those people is Teresa Kittridge, founder and executive director of 100 Rural Women, a non-profit organization committed to building leadership through networks, mentorship, education, and civic engagement.

Terry and Kittridge connected through the Center for Small Towns (CST), a community outreach program that serves as a point of entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. CST gives small towns and non-profits access to UMN Morris talent and resources while providing students opportunities to apply the skills they’re learning in the classroom, strengthen their bonds to greater Minnesota, and develop as professionals.

Kittridge had an opening for a summer intern to help advance the organization’s mission to serve rural women by identifying, connecting, and creating relationships, models of networking, leadership, mentorship, and civic engagement.

Terry has a double major in psychology and sociology, and she hoped working with 100 Rural Women would give her some practical research experience.
Throughout the summer, Kittridge held 30 focus groups with women in each region of Minnesota. Terry was intimately involved in these events, initially working to collate the data collected in the meetings, then stepping up to facilitate breakout discussions.

“Within my research methodology courses, I was able to learn the methods of research, ethics, a little about the Institutional Review Board, different types of research, and I was able to put these skills I learned to practice in my internship. I also found statistics to be important while conducting research.”

Kittridge was impressed by the methodology and design Terry created for capturing the wisdom the participants shared during each session.

“Jasmine was a big part of rolling up the research, analyzing the information captured on JamBoards,” Kittridge explained.

“This project opened my mind to what qualitative research could be,” Terry stated. “On top of that, my sociology of gender and sexuality as well as my psychology of women and gender classes helped me understand the women we interviewed and how society, stereotypes, gender expectations/norms, hierarchy, et cetera, may shape the way society and a woman may see her role and herself, especially when it comes to leadership.”

Often, Terry noted, the women who participated in the meetings didn’t realize their impact on their communities.

“Their stories inspired me. I now have a different view of rural communities and what it takes to be a leader.”

In addition to providing Terry with a supportive learning environment, Kittridge invited Terry to participate in a national panel discussion held during the Rural Assembly’s ‘Rural Women Everywhere’ conference. The conference was held virtually in October.
Terry is thankful that she found “such a unique and amazing internship experience” that allowed her to pair her academic training with the needs of a group such as 100 Rural Women.