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UMN Morris Was Just Right for Gunter to Get Her Degree in Three Years

Communications and Marketing

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UMN Morris was just right for Gunter to get her degree in three years

(Feb. 29, 2024) As a student at Shakopee High School, Sydney Gunter '24, took several College in the Schools and advanced placement courses. In fact, by the time she graduated, she had nearly one full year's worth of college credits. That head start means Gunter will earn her bachelor's degree in biology in three years.

Most of the credits she earned in high school were through the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, so Gunter felt like it was just the logical next step to attend UMN TC as a pre-med student. She felt that it was the best known college in the state and had the prestige of being a Big 10 institution.

But one day, while struggling to pay attention in class, she decided maybe she could have a better undergraduate experience somewhere else.

"I took an organic chemistry lecture and that was kind of like my breaking point. It was in a huge lecture hall where the professor would just read off a PowerPoint and then do little problems and I cannot learn that way."

Gunter decided to take a look at the other campuses in the University of Minnesota System.

“I visited Duluth but I didn’t really like it. So I looked at Morris and Crookston. Crookston is just a little too far [from home]. Morris seemed like the perfect middle ground.”

There were other factors that weighed in her decision to transfer.

“Morris is a lot safer and just has a lot more opportunities to meet with professors and actually get a grasp on your learning. Instead of being in a 200-person lecture hall and just trying to pay attention as best you can and adjust your learning to that, it’s the other way around in Morris. It’s also easier to fit in a visit to a professor’s office at Morris, because it’s a short walk from one building to another.

“It’s also easier to get to know your classmates here. I’m familiar with the other biology majors here, which means I have someone to rely on for notes, or to study with.”

Gunter admits that the three-year pathway has some challenges, and some semesters have been harder than others. But she credits her advisor and professors for helping her stay on track and thrive in the upper level classes. She took an average of 16-17 credits per semester and is proud to point out that she is on the dean’s list.

In addition to her studies, Gunter also found time to explore her options at UMN Morris—joining the University Choir, playing intramural soccer, and volunteering with the Red Cross blood drives on campus. Off campus, she works part-time at Stevens Community Medical Center and volunteers at the Stevens Community Humane Society.

“I definitely had some nights where I couldn’t work out or do something extra because I had to study. But that was probably one day in three weeks.”

Gunter is looking forward to graduating, and plans to become a physician’s assistant.

