

Before I knew about the importance of public health, I always wanted to be a doctor. As a sophomore, I was content with my biology major, but I knew I wanted more. Although I did not know what “more” looked like at the time, I knew that I wanted to apply my knowledge during my undergraduate experience. After taking an introductory public health course, called “Health and Wellness,” I became intrigued with disease prevention and how this concept could be implemented as a future physician.

Shortly after declaring my double major in Public Health, B.A.Sc. (community health education/promotion) and Biology, B.S. (genetic, cell, and development), I interviewed for the SOPHE Collegiate Champion position at my school, University of Minnesota Duluth. In this role, I act as a liaison between SOPHE and UMD and I promoted health education via social media campaigns and events. Through my involvement with SOPHE, I have planned a panel titled “Arts in Health and Graduate Schools,” which was recognized by MN SOPHE and National SOPHE. I also created a nutrition campaign, which consisted of a cooking class, dietary panel, food art, and diet enrichment tips.

Fast forward to this year, I am currently serving as the SOPHE Collegiate Champion Mentor, where I advise this year’s collegiate champion and assist in event planning. Additionally, it is my forth semester working with my research advisor, Dr. Jessica Hanson. I had the opportunity to be a partner in the development of an app (focusing on contraception and alcohol use in American Indian/Alaska Native women) modeled after the CHOICES intervention. Additionally from my research, I had the opportunity to be a co-author on two peer reviewed papers, “Adaptations of an RCT during COVID: case study in one rural American Indian Community” and “Alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic among women with an existing alcohol-use disorder” (in press). I also presented this research at the MN SOPHE Conference this fall.

Deciding to add a second major came with a cost. As a student, I have been fully responsible for all costs associated with tuition and living. Additionally, I have been subjected to semesters of 20-22 credits in order to make my passion for public health a reality. Unfortunately, my mother also lost her job of 23 years to COVID-19. While my father is still working, this job loss presented a new hardship for my family. This scholarship would support the costs of my tuition as completing a second major added an extra semester onto my undergraduate education.

I am very thankful to learn about the importance of public health within our society. I have two semesters remaining in my undergraduate career, I plan to graduate in fall 2022. After I complete my undergraduate degrees, I will apply to medical with the intent of earning my MD/MPH. My ultimate goal is to be public health physician within American Indian/Alaska Native communities because I have grown to be extremely passionate about disease prevention within this population. No matter where I go, my ultimate goal is to impact others lives and health and inspire others, the way I was inspired by my experience in the Health and Wellness course.