A Young Scientist Discovers her Passion for Undergraduate Research

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Eun Jung Shin, originally from South Korea, came to the U.S. in 2011 with her mother and her sister, Hyo Jung. The family settled in Flushing, Queens, and in the fall of 2012 Eun Jung decided to enroll at Queensborough to study the biological sciences.

Born and raised in Seoul, Eun Jung attended Hong Ik University from 2008-2009. She noted that because schools in South Korea were crowded and very competitive, it was often difficult to get to know people; but, all that changed when she came to QCC. Eun Jung noted how helpful the faculty and students are at Queensborough by stating, “The professors here are so supportive, and my classmates are friendly and eager to share their ideas.”

Still, Eun Jung faced obstacles, and one of the more difficult obstacles was the fact that she would have to learn the English language.

Fortunately, Eun Jung took advantage of Queensborough’s language immersion tutoring workshops in the Department of Academic Literacy. She also qualified for the Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP), which is designed to help students earn their degree in three years or less. One of the outstanding features of the program is the ASAP staff, who regularly advise students about on-campus academic concerns as well as external problems that may be affecting their academic performance.

She was delighted by the fact that her ASAP advisors encouraged her to do well and that she often heard them say, “You can do it!”

During her first semester, Eun Jung took classes with Drs. Paris Svoronos and Jun Shin, professors in the Department of Chemistry. At the time, she was interested in biology; however, she began spending time in the chemistry labs and eventually switched to chemistry.

Eun Jung explained what motivated her to switch to chemistry: “I realized that everything is related to chemistry--without it, organic structure and theory have no real foundation.”

Her passion for undergraduate research led to long hours in the chemistry department labs, and that hard work paid off by giving her opportunities to apply for summer internship programs.

During the summer of 2013, Eun Jung and her sister, Hyo Jung (also a second year chemistry student at Queensborough), conducted water analysis research during a New York City--Department of Environmental Protection (NYC-DEP) Internship. Their abstracts were accepted for presentation in the upcoming spring 2014 Columbia Undergraduate Science Journal’s Symposium (April 20) at Columbia University. She earlier presented her DEP findings, as well as the research data she obtained under Dr. Shin’s mentorship, at the American Chemical Society—Northeast Regional Meeting (ACS-NERM) hosted by Yale University on October 26, 2013.
Upon obtaining her Associate Degree in Biotechnology (STEM Academy) from Queensborough in May 2014, Eun Jung will be joining the 2014 Summer Hope Academic Research Program (SHARP) at Hope College in Michigan, where she will begin research in organic synthesis, photochemistry, electrochemistry, ion radical intermediates and polymers. In the Gillmore Research Group at Hope College, newly acquired instrumentation in the group and in the department will allow interns to better explore unique structures and differential photochromic vs. electrochromic rearrangement.

“Eun Jung has the patience, discipline and focus that helps her stand out as an exceptional research student,” said Dr. Paris Svoronos. “She also has had the benefit of outstanding guidance under Dr. Jun Shin. Additionally, to apply for the Hope College internship, she was required to write a lengthy essay and obtain several references that spoke to her many excellent qualities beyond her excellent academic career here at Queensborough.”

Eun Jung said of her professors, “I know that deep inside, without all of your sincere care, concerns and commitments, I would not have been able to make it this far.”

In fact, Eun Jung says that she is naturally shy and not fond of speaking-up. Knowing this, both Drs. Paris Svoronos and Jun H. Shin took every opportunity to ask her to explain theory and mathematical formulas in front of the class. “It was difficult, but it further instilled my confidence to be more assertive and express myself.”

Eung Jung is Senator of the Research Club for the spring 2014 semester. She will graduate in May of 2014 and plans to pursue her Baccalaureate and master’s degrees, and eventually her doctorate. “I want to further my knowledge in the area of combining biology and chemistry so that I may synthesize more than one polymer.”