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# Senior Melanie Hart completes a ten-week Research Experience for Undergraduates program

August 28, 2012



Criminal Justice senior Melanie Hart recently completed a ten-week National Science Foundation funded Research Experience for Undergraduate program operated by a multidisciplinary team at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Melanie was one of only ten students from across the country selected for the program. She worked with the Center for Applied Behavior Systems on their “Hands-On, Minds-On: Understanding and Preventing Societal Violence” initiative. She and others on the team worked on research evaluating anti-bullying programs that utilize a pro-social and proactive approach called the Actively Caring for People (AC4P) program.

Their research is expected to help AC4P leaders refine the program and reduce bullying behaviors. Melanie took a lead role in designing studies focused on emerging adult populations. Her research design includes the implementation of the AC4P program at Virginia Tech by University employees, determining whether public accountability affects bullying behavior, and determining whether AC4P helps to increase perceptions of belongingness and decrease bullying in the University setting.

Melanie has described the experience as “fantastic.” She noted her pride in working with a multidisciplinary team that was passionate about their work. She went on to say that the program was a “wonderful opportunity to expand my research skills and create publishable research articles. I was thrilled to be a part of something that will continue past my own involvement. I would highly recommend this program to other students looking to be immersed in the research field to develop their skills.”

Melanie will be graduating in December with degrees in both Justice Studies and Psychology. Prior to working with the “Hands-on, Minds-on” program, Melanie served as a Research Assistant for Dr. John Stogner working on the “Substance Use and High-Risk Behaviors” project. She is currently working with Dr. Laura Agnich on research exploring popular media’s influence on substance use. More specifically, she is evaluating the relationship between exposure to certain forms of media and use of ‘Purple Drank.’ She will be presenting her research at the Southern Criminal Justice Association Conference in September and applying to graduate programs in the spring.

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