

Student Stories Project: Shannon Renfrow

Audio version available at:

<http://www.alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/students/renfrow.shtml>

[IU fight song]

Welcome to the Indiana University Student Stories Project, a production of the IU Alumni Association. I am your host, Alana Salata. In this series, you'll get an insight into what it takes to be a student leader here at IU, from the perks –

“The Alumni Association here at South Bend had selected me to go to IU Bloomington’s annual LeaderShape training program for a week.”

– to the hard work –

“Time management: it’s hard because I love the group so much and I want to volunteer for everything and I want to do everything.”

– to the memories that will last a lifetime.

“I’ve met so many people that have touched my life in so many ways.”

Join me on this journey through the lives of IU student leaders.

[IU fight song]

SALATA: Today we’re at IU South Bend speaking with Shannon Renfrow of the Student Alumni Association.

RENFROW: Hi, my name is Shannon Renfrow. I’m a senior this year at IU South Bend. I’m majoring in biochemistry and I live in Nappanee, Indiana, and I am a vice president and ambassador with the Student Alumni Association. I don’t have a lot of free time since I’m married and I have two children. When I do have free time, I just like to spend it with my family. We love to go on bike rides, and drive-in movies are fun. Just things like that, just spending time with the family.

Why did you choose to attend IU South Bend?

Well, to be honest, I chose to attend IU South Bend sheerly out of geography. It was close and it seemed reasonably affordable, and it was really the only option I had – but I’m just so grateful that it worked out, because if I had it to choose over I’d choose it a hundred times again.

Tell me about a meaningful or enjoyable experience you have had at IU South Bend.

Probably the most significant experience I've had here at IU South Bend would be my research experience in the lab of Dr. Gretchen Anderson. It was an experience I never imagined that I would have, you know, at a regional campus and being just an undergrad, but she invited me into her lab and I was able to work on real, live, important scientific research and then able to go present it at a national conference. That was a really exciting experience and something that really taught me more than I ever could have learned in a classroom. Being able to actually put into practice and apply principles and see how long research actually takes – it really was an eye-opening experience. We worked on an enzyme called arsenite oxidase, and it's an enzyme that's active in a bacteria that's able to live in really toxic levels of arsenic. So there's hope that someday the technology will be able to harness the same mechanisms that are used in this enzyme to detoxify arsenic.

What advice would you give to incoming freshmen and other students just starting out at IU South Bend?

Wow, advice to incoming freshmen. I would say get involved, but be yourself. Don't try to be something you're not. If you are here and you're really focused on your academics, then don't try to get into some social network just because someone told you so. There are, you can get involved in any interest you have. I mean, I've been involved in the Student Government Association, but I've also been involved in the Biology/Chemistry Club. There really is a group for everything. We even have a nap club at IU South Bend. Whatever your interests are, just find a way to plug into them and just be yourself – you'll find a niche.

Tell me a little about the Student Alumni Association at IU South Bend.

Oh, the Student Alumni Association at IU South Bend is great. We've got Jeanie Metzger and Cyndy Searfoss, and they're just wonderful. They keep the students involved in the community and involved with the alumni making good connections. It's really exciting to see how the alumni stay in touch with the university after they graduate – that there are so many people that didn't just get a degree and they're done with us. They really stay connected and really invest in the students and the future alumni, and that's just been really meaningful to see that and make those connections.

How did you find out about the Student Alumni Association, and why did you decide to become a member?

Well, I found out about it from Jeanie Metzger. I just happened to just get involved with some of the activities that were already planned by the Student Alumni Association before I was even a member and I just really enjoyed the things that they were doing and so she said, you know, "Would you be one of our vice presidents next year?" And I said, well, sure, you know, because I'd appreciated what they were doing and so it was great to be able to be an official part of it.

Tell me about a Student Alumni Association event or program that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of.

Well, I'd have to say the one that sticks out in my mind is "Get on the Bus," the Hoosiers for Higher Education event down at the statehouse every year. It's been really exciting to go down, and we've lobbied for huge events, you know – first it was this building, and then it was the Associates Building which we just got this year, and it's just really exciting to see the impact the students can have and that alumni continue to invest in this university and this campus. And it was really neat that IU South Bend, being only a regional campus and one of the ones further away from the statehouse, three years running has had the biggest busload of kids come. So it's been really fun to be a part of that and to see it grow and just see the effectiveness of the Alumni Association.

What challenges have you faced during your participation in the Student Alumni Association?

To be honest, I really haven't faced a lot of challenges in my participation. Well, number one, because our administration is really understanding and it is the *Student* Alumni Association and they recognize that you need to be a student first. And so I just try to keep that a priority – that my academics need to come before my activities – and they've been really sympathetic to that and really supportive of the fact that my studies are very important to me. It's really been great for me to be able to be involved when I have time and when I have the ability to be involved in an event. They're always very inviting and welcoming and excited that I can be there. If I'm not able to, they're very sympathetic to that as well.

How have your leadership skills developed over the course of your participation in the Student Alumni Association?

Well, probably I've learned just more about time management and just being able to make priorities and say, "Okay, you know, I have this family commitment and this school commitment, but this is still very important for me to take this leadership role," and just learning to make priorities and not overcommit to things that I won't be able to do a good job of and just learning to say no, to be honest.

What other organizations are you a part of here at IU South Bend?

Well, I've been part of the Student Government Association for the past three years. I've served as a senator and also as a secretary, and I'm currently on the judicial council, so that's probably my biggest organization that I'm committed to, but I've also served as the president of the IUSB Biology/Chemistry Club, and that was an important commitment too.

What are your future goals, and how do you think IU South Bend has helped prepare you to meet those goals?

Well, I aspire to be a physician someday. I'm actually in the process of applying to medical school right now. I'd like to work in the mission field. I actually just got back from Romania, and so it's very exciting as I look to my future and think about the prospect of being able to go – and I loved on a lot of children while I was over there, but to think about the fact that someday I'll be able to go back as a doctor and minister to their needs physically as well – that's really exciting to me. And I really feel that IU South Bend has been a phenomenal foundation to that educational path because I've had so much interaction with professors one-on-one. Like I mentioned earlier, my research experience was really just amazing for me to be able to step in as a undergraduate and have so much hands-on experience, so I'm really exceedingly grateful for the education here at IU South Bend.

What will you miss the most when you graduate?

Oh, I don't know, to be honest, because I have no idea what will happen when I graduate. I know one thing I'll miss if I'm at a huge university in medical school is the one-on-one interaction with professors. I'll miss that a lot, because I've been really grateful for it, but I'm looking forward to my future too.

We've been talking with Shannon Renfrow of IU South Bend's Student Alumni Association.

[IU fight song]

This series was produced by the Indiana University Alumni Association, with special thanks to the IU Marching Hundred and director Dave Woodley. I'm Alana Salata.

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