



Education at URMIC – Student Perspectives



Name: Ryan Dawes

Hometown: Belgrade, ME

Undergraduate Degree: B.S. in Biology from the University of Maine

Graduate Degree: Ph.D. in Neuroscience

Areas of Interest: the role of stress in brain-metastatic breast cancer.

Background Information

I'm originally from the small town of Belgrade, Maine, where I lived with my younger brother, mom, and dad. I went to high school at Messalonskee High School in the town of Oakland, Maine, where I played on the golf team all four years. After graduating in 2007, I attended the University of Maine at Orono, where I began as a Biological Engineering student, switching to Biology in my junior year. While at UMaine, I was a resident assistant for two years, as well as president of the Biological Engineering Club, and vice-president of the Biology club. I graduated from the University of Maine in 2011 and began here at the University of Rochester that Fall as a member of the Neuroscience Graduate Program.

Why did you choose The University of Rochester Medical Center?

When I was initially looking for graduate programs, I aimed to apply to programs that had a strong biomedical science emphasis, and had a highly interdisciplinary and collaborative faculty. The University of Rochester and the Medical Center were a great fit for these interests. After speaking with the current graduate student during my interview, I was sold on the wonderful atmosphere that is cultivated here- welcoming, open and student development-oriented.

Tell us about your program

I am currently a first year student in the Neuroscience Graduate Program, a highly integrative program here at the University of Rochester concerned with studying the nervous system in a multitude of scopes, from the protein and single-cell level all the way to complex behavior and various human pathologies. The faculty in the program are amazing scientists who provide great guidance for the graduate students here and are very open to new ideas and collaborations.

What are your career aspirations?

After completion of my graduate work, my hope is to remain in academia through post-doctoral fellowships and eventually become a research professor, myself. I can see myself being very content teaching at the undergraduate and graduate level while pursuing research in my selected field.

What are some of the things you have learned since you came to Rochester?

Outside of the material I have learned in our classes and the experience I have gained working in a few laboratories during my rotations, I have learned how to ask better questions, and how to think more critically about my work and about the work of others in the field. I have also learned how to better manage multiple tasks, including course/lab-work, committees and social engagements.

Any advice for prospective students?

I would recommend taking some time to consider what you are really passionate about pursuing in graduate school- the field, general phenomena or disease states, and the laboratories that take part in that research- and then contact the faculty that you may be interested in working with. I would also recommend remaining flexible to the prospect of becoming interested in a totally different line of research. I came into the University of Rochester with the goal of studying neurodegenerative disease, but became even more interested in studying the brain-metastatic process once I was exposed to the research. This is a wonderful place to be a student, and I wholeheartedly recommend anyone interested to check out our school.