

The Association for Women in Science Chicago Area Chapter (AWIS-CAC) is proud to introduce the first Female Scientist of the Month, Heather King. We hope to establish a monthly profile to recognize women in all areas of science at all points in their careers for their involvement and contribution to science in Chicago. Please submit nominations for inclusion in this monthly profile to Jessica Reimer (j-reimer@northwestern.edu).

July Female Scientist of the Month: Heather King, B.S.



Heather King is a first year graduate student in the Department of Organismal Biology and Anatomy at the University of Chicago. Jameela Jafri and Gabrielle Lyon nominated her in recognition of her involvement with the Project Exploration program Sisters 4 Science.

Heather King developed an interest in animals at a young age growing up in rural Washington state. An introductory science program at a local community college in which a biologist gave a talk on wolf populations further piqued this interest. She subsequently took more science courses at a community college while in high school and then moved to Chicago to attend the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). Collaboration across multiple science disciplines has always interested Heather and she participated in IIT's Interprofessional Projects Program with other scientists to generate an oscillator of protein levels to identify protein switches. At IIT, her mentor was a woman with a family and career who Heather admired for her ability to balance both aspects of her life.

After graduating from IIT with a Bachelor of Science degree in May 2007, Heather applied to the Department of Organismal Biology and Anatomy Ph.D. Program at the University of Chicago. She was drawn to the collaborative environment and learning opportunities the program offered. The faculty in this program cover multiple disciplines, providing ample opportunity for Heather to explore many aspects of organismal biology and animal behavior research in an interactive environment. At the time of this interview, Heather was rotating in the laboratory of Dr. Melina Hale. She was using a comparative interdisciplinary approach to study gait transitions in fish with high-speed videography.

Heather first became involved with Project Exploration at the suggestion of Dr. Hale. Heather is a mentor in the Sisters 4 Science program, which organizes science-based leadership activities for 11-13 year old girls in the Chicago area. Heather wanted to share her excitement about science with young women. She developed and utilized a project on the scientific method where the girls would set up an experiment to determine what you would want to know about an M&M candy if you had never seen one. Through her outreach activities, Heather tells girls that communication is key to learning and to never be afraid to ask a question. Her collaborators at Project Exploration, Jameela Jafri and Gabrielle Lyon, nominated her as scientist of the month for her work as a mentor with their organization.

Heather is excited about the opportunities available to female scientists in Chicago. She enjoys the "small" global community feeling of the city and the communication fostered because of this diversity. In terms of her career advancement, Chicago provides a lot of resources for evolutionary biologists that are not available in other areas including access to Lincoln Park Zoo and Field Museum zoologists. We wish Miss King the best of luck in completing her Ph.D. and in all her future endeavors.



Heather King working with young women from Sisters 4 Science on a project using M&Ms to explore the scientific method.



For more information or to submit a nomination for AWIS-CAC Female Scientist of the Month, please contact Jessica Reimer (j-reimer@northwestern.edu).

For information about Project Exploration and its programs, please contact Jameela Jafri (jjafri@projectexploration.org).

For information about the Association For Women in Science Chicago Area Chapter, please contact awischicago@yahoo.com