



Congratulations to Elizabeth Barnes, this week's Distinguished Graduate Community Leader Award winner!



**Elizabeth Barnes** is a fifth-year doctoral student in the Department of Biological Sciences. Her work focuses on competition and community interactions at multiple levels in a plant-insect system. Her research primarily takes place in the field along several popular trails in the Rocky Mountains where she frequently has the opportunity to show and explain biological experiments to the public.

Elizabeth is passionate about finding ways to connect the wider public with scientific discovery. Since her arrival at DU, she has been involved with both on- and off-campus events to engage students as young as pre-K with research. For the past four years, she has worked with a pre-K teacher at a lower-income school to develop projects that teach students to ask thoughtful questions about their environment.

Elizabeth also has had the opportunity to work with several DU undergraduate students on experiments that are now in the process of being published. Elizabeth finds these types of interactions extremely rewarding because they are similar to the types of programs that inspired her to pursue a career in biology.

Elizabeth strongly believes it is vital for scientists, and graduate students in general, to be engaged in programs that work toward broader social change. To this end, she currently serves as a board member for the Graduate Women's Council. This organization works to stimulate critical discussion and promote women's issues on campus. Elizabeth became involved with the GWC because she wanted to work on women's issues on campus and become more engaged with the larger DU community. She attended a liberal arts college as an undergraduate and it taught her

that no field of study can exist in isolation. By becoming more involved in the DU community, she feels she has not only been given the opportunity to contribute to important projects and social change on campus, but has made connections and gained deeper insights into her own research.

**How you see yourself as part of the DU community?**

The Graduate Women's Council and other interdepartmental organizations on campus have had a profound effect on my sense of place in the DU community. These groups provide a venue to discuss common challenges that we all face and encourage connection between students that would otherwise never meet. Interacting with these students has shown me that many of the graduate students at DU share a common drive, not only for the pursuit of knowledge, but also to make a positive impact on both our school and our society in general.

**What is your favorite thing about DU?**

I love that so many of the professors and graduate students at DU find ways to connect with the public. I feel passionately about the need to engage the public with academic research. I am thrilled to find myself in a place where so many people are open to opportunities to share their research with people outside of academia.

*The Graduate Student Government selects two graduate students to receive the Distinguished Graduate Community Leader Award (DGCLA) each month. These students display exemplary leadership skills and are actively engaged with the community (whether here on campus or outside of DU). They demonstrate excellent work ethic as well as dedication to their research and role as a graduate student. Finally, they also exhibit good character, hard work and inclusivity. DGCLA winners are selected through a peer-nomination process. To nominate a colleague, email [du.qsq@gmail.com](mailto:du.qsq@gmail.com) with a 250-500 word statement describing why the nominee deserves to be an DGCLA winner. We will interview the winners and publish feature stories on the DU website and an email blast. We will also celebrate the award winners at different events throughout the school year.*