

What's Your StORy?

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What prompted you to enter this field? Why?

For as long as I can remember, I knew I wanted to pursue a career related to applied math. However, it was not until I was an undergraduate mathematics and physics major that I learned about operations research. In my senior year, I was a project manager for an OR course in which our class optimized the food-packing process for Feed My Starving Children and helped increase the number of meals packed by 45%. I loved seeing how valuable analytic skills can be in the decision-making process and felt empowered to use my skills to benefit society. I promptly applied to related PhD programs and could not be happier with my decision. I am now very passionate about raising awareness so that other students can learn about the field well before they graduate from college!

If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?

I have been very fortunate to have many excellent mentors already, including my undergraduate advisor, Patrice Conrath (who introduced me to the field) and my PhD advisor, Mark Daskin. I also participated in the Forum for Women in OR/MS (WORMS) mentorship program at the INFORMS Annual Meeting this year and had a great time discussing how to navigate the academic job search and the transition to life as a junior faculty member with Hiba Baroud, my WORMS mentor. I highly encourage anyone interested to get involved (either as a mentor, mentee, or both) in the WORMS mentorship program.

What has been your best INFORMS experience thus far?

The annual conferences are always a highlight of my year. I've enjoyed getting to know other researchers from around the world and being a part of the smaller communities within INFORMS, such as the Section on Location Analysis (SOLA), the Health Applications Society (HAS), and WORMS. Additionally, the WORMS luncheon and the student chapter officer breakfast are also favorites of mine.

What would you name the autobiography of your life?

I'm hoping I have a few more years left to think about this!

Tell us about your role as president of the UMich INFORMS Student Chapter.

The UMich INFORMS Student Chapter has been busy this year! As president of the chapter, I am responsible for coordinating our activities, considering new ideas, and finding funding for our activities.

This year we have been intentional about providing students with opportunities to network with industry professionals and academic researchers, increasing undergraduate and master's student involvement in the chapter, and developing a cohesive student community. I am particularly excited about the new PhD Mentoring program we started, in which all first year PhD students meet one-on-one with a senior PhD student on a regular basis to help with the transition to life as a PhD student. We have received very positive feedback thus far from everyone involved and we hope to make it even better next year!

Since our chapter has been very active recently, we are flooded with new event ideas from students and faculty! It is great to see so many people invested in the chapter and the IOE community at UMich. You can read more about our chapter in the "Student Chapter Spotlight" article in the Fall/Winter 2015 issue of *ORMS Tomorrow*.

What is your favorite OR application?

Combating human trafficking has been a passion of mine since I was a young girl. As such, I've recently taken an interest in learning how operations research can be applied to anti-human trafficking efforts. Despite the fact that human trafficking is universally recognized as a growing problem, little quantitative analysis has been conducted in this area. Thus, as operations researchers, we are uniquely positioned to help answer questions related to evaluating the effectiveness of anti-trafficking policies, scheduling fair trade inspections, understanding the composition of trafficking networks, balancing differing objectives in multiagency collaboration, and many other topics.

If you had to work on only one project for the next year, what would it be?

Since I am graduating this year, I would have to choose the last portion of my dissertation (which focuses on methods of mitigating the hard capacity constraints in traditional facility location models to better reflect operational reality).

When I graduate, my perfect job would be...

One in which I can collaborate with others on theoretically challenging problems arising from real-world applications that have the potential to benefit society. The perfect job would also allow me the opportunity to teach and mentor a new generation of scholars.

What is your spirit animal?

An online "spirit animal" test said mine was Olaf from Disney's *Frozen*. I'm not sure a snowman can be classified as an animal, but I do admire his positivity!

First Appeared in the online discussion form on INFORMS Connect- January 2016:

<http://connect.informs.org/communities/community-home/digestviewer/viewthread?GroupID=469&MID=6591&tab=digestviewer>

An abbreviated version also appeared in the February 2016 OR/MS Today magazine:

<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/8110e079#/8110e079/12>