

Muriel Dumit

Seeing Connections and **FINDING HER PATH**

Muriel Dumit seems frequently to think in terms of connections. She connects interests to possibilities, experiences to her academics, and people to places. Now a senior, she looks back at her four years at SEAS and GW and at the experiences that helped shape her decisions, and she talks about some of these connections.

After her junior and senior years of high school, Dumit was nominated to be a student ambassador to Japan and Australia, respectively, through the People to People Student Ambassadors Program. It was during her trip to Australia that she had one of her “ah-hah!” moments: “When I was in Australia, we got to climb the Sydney Harbor Bridge,” recalls Dumit. “I was looking into civil engineering, and that was the first time when I was really impressed by what civil engineering was. Seeing the bridge sort of opened up my eyes to it.”

As she began to think about college, she already had a connection to GW and SEAS. Both of her older sisters studied at SEAS, and as Dumit explains, “They had such positive experiences and they were talking about it so much that I had to experience it myself. I came to visit, and people were so welcoming and I felt at home.” While she followed in the steps of her sisters in choosing to study at SEAS, she set her own course in selecting her major. “I was exposed to what my sisters did in terms of engineering, but I wanted to find my own path,” she remarks.

Her own path is civil and environmental engineering. “I want to go into international development, and I want to use water, water treatment, and waste water treatment as development tools. More than two billion people don't have access to clean water, and environmental engineers can help because they can



prevent diseases in the first place, rather than treating diseases. I'd like to go into research and come up with a concept that can help make a difference,” explains Dumit.

To help achieve her goal, Dumit took a summer internship with the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority under the guidance of her advisor, Professor Rumana Riffat. She was placed on a pilot project at Alexandria Sanitation Authority to examine the use of anammox bacteria in order to see if the project could be implemented in Alexandria. She was able to convert it into a year-round internship, and again found connections with her goals. “I found that I actually really enjoy research, and this clarified what I want to do in the future.” When prompted for an elaboration, she continues, “I wasn't just photocopying. I was involved and had actual responsibilities. Just the hands-on

experience that I got solidified my love for what I was doing and really convinced me that this is what I want to do. The fact that I was able to apply the classroom knowledge and see how it worked in the real world clarified it for me. It sunk in that what I was learning in school and at my internship reinforced each other.”

In addition to her research experience and academic achievement (she has made the Dean's Honor List every semester), Dumit has managed to find time throughout college for several outside activities, including the GW chapters of Engineers Without Borders and the Society of Women Engineers, the SEAS student mentoring program, and others.

Dumit plans to continue her studies at SEAS next year, enrolling as a graduate student. Perhaps down the road this will be one more connection for her.