Katherine Timms i nterview with Ann Duong (4th year BCMB Honor's student)

Katie: Give me a brief summary of your research
Ann: I am currently involved in two research projects. One is trying to detect, quantify, and remove a toxin that is released from cyanobacteria in eutrophic waters. The other is trying to determine whether a stem loop modified RNA molecule can inhibit KRAS protein expression which is a protein that is overexpressed in many cancers including colon, lung and pancreatic cancer.

Katie: How has research impacted your life/career?
Ann: Let me give you an analogy. Research is like a child. It starts out like this weird pink slimy ball of weirdness, but the more effort you put into it the more you get out. Sometimes you get attached to it when you shouldn't. It takes a lot of your time and you might forgo some opportunities and sever some friendships to be with it all the time, but at the end you look back at all the chromatograms and graphs you've made together and you realize that it is all worth it. You never know what its like unless you have experienced it.

Katie: How did you first get involved in research?
Ann: I got involved in my first year, by volunteering in the lab. I attended one of those Chemistry/Biochemistry Welcome Barbecues at the beginning of the year for the food but stayed for the interesting conversation and to be inspired by all the amazing research at UNBC. Let's just say that there was a lot of food for thought. And I stuck around ever since.

Katie: Why is research important to you?
Ann: One word. Patience. Research also helps me understand that it's not so much about getting the answers but finding the important questions. If you don't question everything that happens in this world there won't be any progress. Research is important because it can solve so many issues like climate change, discrimination, and racism because it forces us to ask the why rather than take something at face-value. It is something we need more of, but first we must get rid of the perception of research as an impenetrable ivory tower. Everyone can do research, it's just we have fancier expensive tools and wear these white coats that do everything but make us look more attractive.

Katie: What is the best thing you have gained from doing research?
Ann: They say that if there is no pain there is no gain. The best thing I've gained from research is friends and colleagues that I get to learn from every day. And that was worth all the pain for sure.

Katie: What advice do you have for those wanting to get involved in research?
Ann: Best advice is don't have any expectations. You will most likely not receive a Nobel Prize or have people bowing down to you because you discovered the cure to cancer. And to be honest, the cure to cancer is not simple at all. So be ready to have your ego crushed. My supervisor once told me that it is not about being the best. You should never compare yourself to others, but only to yourself. Because no one is the same. That's why the world is beautiful. I thought that was a great point.