Christin Badylak-Reals ‘19 counts among her most significant influences Climatology and Climate Dynamics Professor Matthew Huber, Engineering Professor May-Win Thein, her own supportive family and friends, and of course, Amy Poehler.

Yes, that Amy Poehler, comedienne and actress who also has a strong online following for her Smart Girls organization, a youth-empowerment group whose motto is “Change the world by being yourself.” A friend of Christin’s shared the Amy Poehler quote ‘Great people do things before they’re ready,’ just as Christin was changing her major, which meant adding on a few more years before she would earn her diploma. The quote struck a chord with her — she feels like that’s what she’s been doing and hopes to continue to do during her time at UNH.

The Plymouth, N.H., native says the versatility and flexibility were what first drew her to her state university, even before she knew she would be making the shift from the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture to the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. Her goal for after UNH is to land a job communicating complex science to policy makers in the field of energy policy; she plans to work for a few years after graduating, and then return to school to pursue a master’s degree in public policy. She counts her connection with Professor Huber as a crucial factor in that plan. She took his Global Environmental Change class, which is where they first met. “What I learned the most from that class wasn’t even on the syllabus. I knew I wanted to get to know Professor Huber. I thought, ‘Here’s this smart person, who could be a great resource,'” she says of her professor. “I learned the importance of creating a relationship with a professor, and taking advantage of the guidance and networking that relationship can offer you. There are so many professors here with so many connections that could help students land internships or jobs, and students don’t seem to take advantage of that.”

Making that connection was critical, says Christin, because soon after the class ended, Prof. Huber presented her with an offer. He had gotten a call from a former student who worked at the Department of Energy in Washington, D.C., asking for a recommendation for an energy policy internship — Huber immediately thought of Christin. A few months after that, she was in the nation’s capital, working at the Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Policy and Systems Analysis, where she researched and analyzed the implications of state energy plans on national energy policy. It was a perfect continuation of her two years of experience as a college member of the New Hampshire Legislative Youth Advisory Council, where she promoted the issues of sustainable energy and energy efficiency to constituents, developed recommendations for state energy strategy and changes to existing legislation, and served as a liaison to the State Energy Committee’s Energy Efficiency Sustainable Energy Board.

When she first arrived in Hunter Hall freshman year, however, Christin admits she wasn’t so great at making connections. While her dormmates might be hanging out on Friday and Saturday nights, she was researching internships and courses she wanted to pursue. She cut herself off from the social aspects of college at first. “People might have thought I was somewhat stuck up … when I got here, I still had that top-dog mentality from high school.”

She doesn’t remember the specific moment that she “humbled up” but she remembers that soon after arriving in Durham, she realized, “I can learn a lot from the people around me, if I get off my high-horse and get to know them.” As a resident assistant in Congreve Hall during her sophomore year, she says she matured, and by the end of that year, she felt better connected to the university. She was still just as focused on her college and career goals, she says, but less solitary in that focus. She now had a sense of the greater community, and the benefits of being part of it.

Naturally inquisitive, Christin has spent time visiting “nearly every office” in Hood House and Smith Hall, asking questions, talking to different people about their areas of focus, from study abroad and research opportunities to student support. She’s been involved in the Student Environmental Action Coalition, helping to design T-shirts with the phrase: “Activism is the rent I pay for living on this planet.”

In October, she was one of four UNH students chosen to join the University Innovation Fellows, a global program that empowers student leaders to increase campus engagement with innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity. The students represent the first UNH cohort to be named to this program, run by Stanford University.

While she battles the rigors of the mechanical engineering degree, and is sometimes the only female student in the class, she also remains committed to her passion for the environment. “Even though the world is so big, I do feel that I’m part of the global community. I believe I have a responsibility as a person on this planet to do the best job I can with the talent skills I have to make a positive difference.”