I have always been fascinated by the natural world. Living in California, Vermont and Massachusetts during my youth gave me a wonderful insight into the environmental diversity we enjoy in this country. I spent much of my childhood collecting and observing the organisms that lived in my backyard, and began keeping bees at the age of eleven. My love for nature continued in high school and as a zoology major at the University of Vermont. It sometimes seems as though curiosity fades with age. However, I believe that mine has strengthened. More than ever, I feel drawn to a life of asking questions. I know that acceptance into UVM’s accelerated master’s program would give me the opportunity to learn from a group of very influential biologists who have already achieved many of my future goals and aspirations. Completing this program would allow me to continue to exercise my imagination and curiosity, while at the same time, better prepare me to pursue a career in a field that I love.

I believe that I am well suited to this program. As an older undergraduate student, I am very committed to my studies. I take every opportunity to earn high grades in my coursework, and attempt to gain as much experience in real-world biology as possible. In the summer of my junior year, I worked with Ph.D. candidate, Samantha Alger, as a field assistant. I am currently learning many different techniques used to study viruses such RNA extraction, DNA purification, and qPCR. I am also conducting my own undergraduate research in parasite prevalence throughout Vermont bumblebee species. I hope to continue this research for the remainder of my time at UVM, and eventually look at indirect interactions between RNA viruses and common parasites in bees.

I am currently working in Dr. Alison Brody’s laboratory and would love to continue to study with her as my advisor. Her work in plant-pollinator interactions is closely related to my interest in bumblebee pathogens, and her experience with pollinators coupled with her ability to give wonderful advice has been invaluable. I would be honored to work under her guidance for the remainder of my time at UVM. After graduating, I hope to work outside of academia for a short time, gaining real life experience within a variety of different ecological systems. I will eventually pursue a Ph.D. in biology. I hope to continue to study the decline in pollinators, especially bumblebees, for the foreseeable future.

I know that pursuing a graduate degree is not an easy path to take. My experiences working in the field and in the lab have already shown me how difficult the research process (and the many responsibilities that go along with it) can be. I understand that many situations do not work out as expected or hoped. I have come to embrace the problem solving that comes with working in an ever-evolving field where the questions always seem to outweigh the answers. I also understand the difficulties associated with completing two degrees simultaneously. However, I have also seen and felt how rewarding overcoming a challenge can be. I believe that I am up to these future challenges, and I hope to be given the chance to test that hypothesis in the coming years.