As a soon-to-defend MSc student in ocean physics, I should have had ample experience at sea, by this point. However, due to the restrictions of pursuing a graduate degree during COVID, the research cruises I was scheduled for were either cancelled or the roster reduced to ‘essential’ – graduate students not included! This is fair, but also very inconvenient when working towards a career in observational physical oceanography. Leg 1 of line P-2, for GO-SHIP in 2022, offered me the experience I needed, and more. Much of my research deals with velocity data obtained from acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCP), and up to this point I had only dealt with the software and data. As the focus of my position onboard, I operated and performed QC for the lowered ADCP instruments, of which there were two attached to the rosette. Working directly with the instruments provides an understanding that you just don’t get at your desk. Additionally, I gained experience as the off-shift operator for the Underwater Vision Profiler (UVP), and assisting with CTD watch procedures, sampling, and deployment/recovery of the rosette. Not to mention the immersion of eight weeks of ship-life, in general. The scientists and crew were kind and incredibly helpful, and there was no shortage of fun to be found between processing and casts. And the food was ‘chef’s kiss’! The hands-on experience gained from this research cruise more than makes up for the gap in my education, and I feel I now have the practical knowledge to move confidently into a career in physical oceanography.