



PROGRAM IN THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

# Crossroads

Volume 16

Summer 2017

# Student Engagement

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PitE student Rachel Walton  
with wolves from  
Mission: Wolf, Westcliffe CO

[www.lsa.umich.edu/pite](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pite)



# Letter from the Director

**Dear Members of the PitE Community,**



**P**itE is known for its strong and vibrant student community. During the past academic year, PitE has hosted various successful events for both prospective and current students, faculty, and staff. Our events welcomed potential students, nurtured the community of current students, and continued to engage PitE alumni who are invested in the success of the program. Participation at PitE's social and academic events was consistently strong throughout the year, with over 450 students in attendance. This number continues to increase each year as the interest in PitE's major and minors also continues to grow.

PitE works with a number of groups seeking to advance the diversity, equity, and inclusion goals of the College and the University. For instance, PitE is a sponsor of the SEEDS (Strategies for Ecology Education Diversity and Sustainability) annual BioBlitz educational outreach event to be held May 6, 2017 at D-Town Farms in Detroit, a cost free science education event for youth from Detroit. PitE works with faculty in PitE and other UM units to promote and advance a wide variety of numerous courses and educational opportunities connected to DEI goals (e.g., supporting students and faculty doing research in Ghana on the disposal of e-waste, supporting students and faculty working on food and environmental justice issues, and providing funding to underrepresented students seeking to take advantage of an array of field courses and internship opportunities).

This year PitE launched a new residential community for first-year students on campus. Based at Oxford Houses, this new theme community called the "Sustainable Living Experience" (SLE) introduced resident students to interdisciplinary learning and leadership opportunities related to sustainability. SLE provides an exceptional learning community, and contributes to increasing visibility of an overall campus culture of sustainability.

As the Program continues to grow and develop, we expect to find new challenges and new opportunities. I am confident that PitE students will rise to the occasion as they always do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregg Crane".

**Gregg Crane**

**Professor and Director,  
Program in the Environment**





# Student Feature: Practical Experience

## Rachel Walton- PitE Major, Class of 2017

"I'm Rachel, and I'm a PitE student who is specializing in Law & Policy. Some of my interests include water law and natural resource law. Within natural resource law, I am especially interested in the law surrounding the reintroduction of species, especially wolves. In order to learn about the behavior of wolves and participate in the education of the public on the importance of wolves in the environment, I ended up working at "Mission: Wolf" this summer. My favorite part of my experience was being able to release two of our wolves into a 20-acre playpen, the biggest wolf enclosure in the country, a structure we spent all summer building for them. Not only did I learn a lot about environmental education and wolves, but I also got to learn a lot about living in a sustainable community. Overall, this experience was not only beneficial for my research on wolf reintroductions, but also for my general environmental education.



## Sofia Fall- PitE Major, Class of 2018

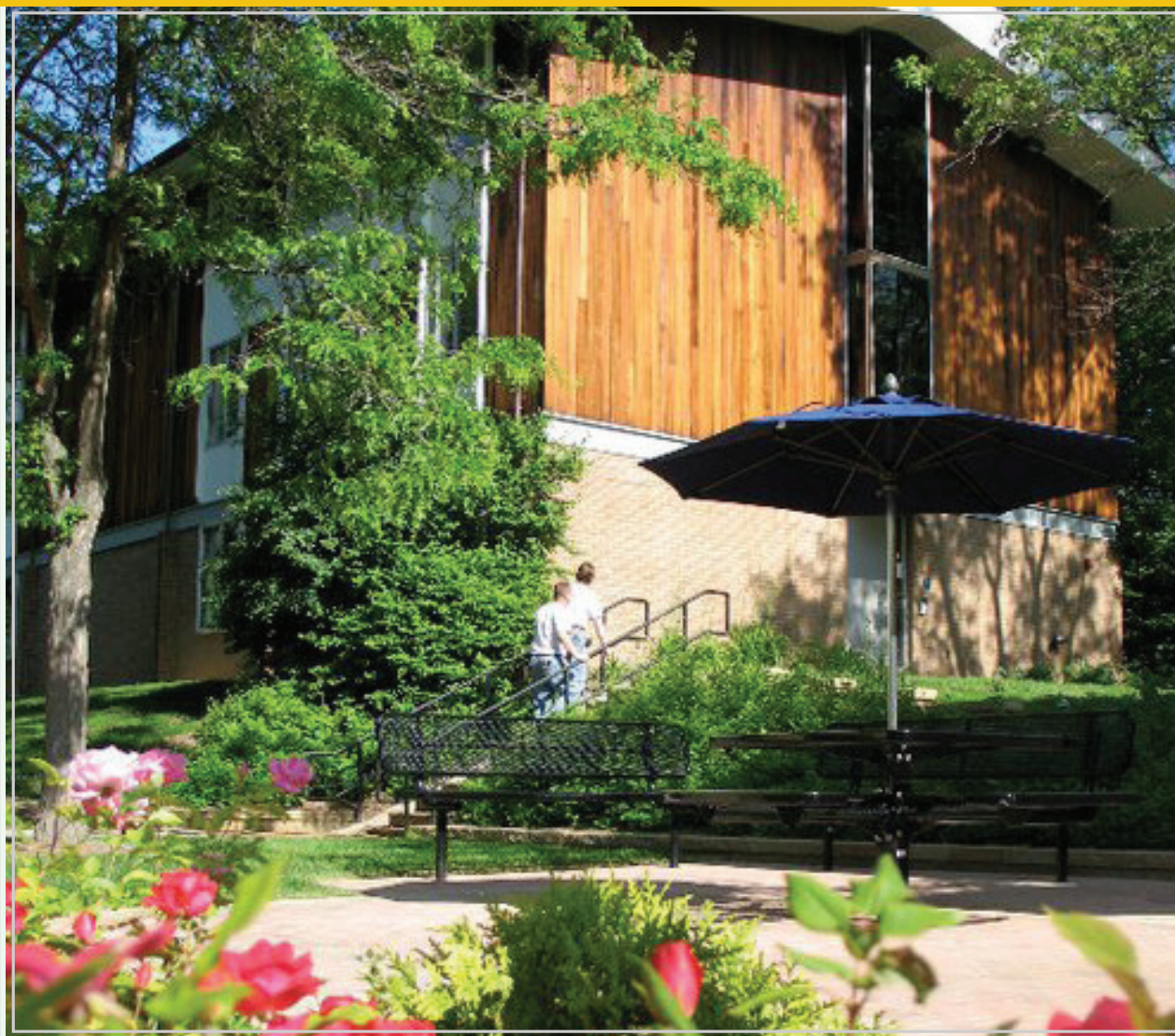
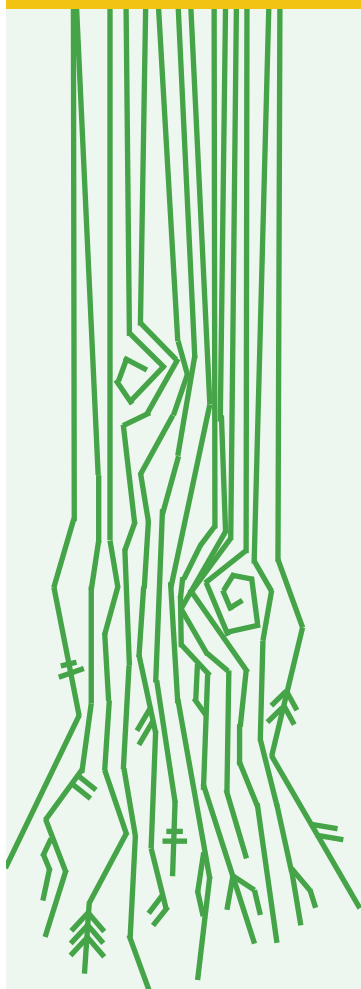
"I had an amazing time in Montana, and I can't wait to go back there someday. The Swan Valley Connections facilities are a historic 1920s homestead in the Northwest Rocky Mountains. I loved the program so much because, although it was based in the biology and ecology of our four species (lynx, grizzlies, wolves, and bull trout), it equally emphasized the importance of environmental policy, community support, and understanding in conservation. Our camping trip in the Rocky Mountains near Choteau, Montana was a highlight of the experience. In Choteau, we visited a ranch, learning about how the ranchers try to raise cattle ethically. I feel so lucky to have been able to do Wildlife in the West."

## Anna Veltman- PitE Major, Class of 2017

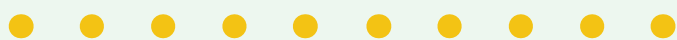
"I sought out my summer internship hoping to work in the field of wildlife rehabilitation. I got to spend three months of my summer working at International Bird Rescue, a non-profit in California that specializes in the rehabilitation of aquatic birds. This internship was a total immersive experience in animal husbandry. I learned everything from proper power washing technique to evaluating and treating very sick animals. IBR also operates as an oil response center, so I was exposed to the intensive care that goes into rehabilitating wildlife after a spill. The empathy and diligence involved in this kind of rigorous animal care was the most inspirational part of this internship. It was a community that I was honored to be a part of, even if it was only for a summer! I look forward to learning more about avian ecology this fall in my ornithology course, and hope to continue gaining experience in the field of wildlife conservation!"







## Sustainable Living Experience



In Fall 2016, Program in the Environment launched a new residential community for first year students on campus. Based at Oxford Houses, this new theme community, the Sustainable Living Experience (SLE), provides a gateway for freshman to engage in interdisciplinary learning and leadership opportunities related to sustainability. Funded as a part of campus efforts to reach its 2025 Sustainability Goals, the Sustainable Living Experience aims to not only provide an exceptional learning community, but also to contribute to an overall campus culture of sustainability.

This year our first cohort of students participated in activities such as planting a perennial food garden at Oxford Houses, a Fall Break retreat at the Biological Station, a trip to SLE Director Joe Trumpey's farm, a waste sort at the Michigan Stadium, applying for grants to make the campus more sustainable, service learning with Keep Growing Detroit and a visit to the Eastern Market. Ten students who have been involved with the community's first year will return in Fall 2017 as Peer Mentors to the next cohort of approximately fifty incoming students.





In 2017, residents of this program will all enroll in a one credit seminar course taught by Professor Trumpey, joint faculty in the School of Art & Design and Program in the Environment, which will introduce them to various issues related to sustainability as well as prepare them for success in their first year at the University of Michigan. The Environmental Justice Learning Circles will also return in the fall, offering discussion on a variety of environmental justice topics with several guest speakers. The Sustainable Living Experience will also offer a Student Council, a leadership board made up of residents and Peer Mentors who plan social events and other sustainability related projects and activities.



To learn more about the Sustainable Living Experience, visit our website at [lsa.umich.edu/sustainable-living](http://lsa.umich.edu/sustainable-living), and check out the blog by our Resident Advisor Elizabeth Ladwig. Ladwig received the Michigan Difference Award for Sustainability this year for her contributions to developing this new program.



# PitE Club: Join Today!



PitE Club works to foster a greater sense of community within the PitE program, incorporating student involvement. The group also serves as a sounding board for a PitE administration welcoming student input and feedback. In addition, PitE Club focuses on developing and maintaining the mentorship program between undergraduate PitE students and SNRE graduate students. The club also coordinates multiple volunteer opportunities in Ann Arbor for the PitE student body as a whole. PitE Club members attend and represent PitE at student events, such as the LSA Concentration Fair, Pizza with the Professors, Midnight Breakfast, and speaker series events.

## PitE Club Spotlight Event



BEAR is an annual event hosted by PitE Club that brings together graduate students interested in mentoring undergraduate students about courses, internships, career paths, and jobs. This event fosters further integration and collaboration between graduate and undergraduate students throughout the year, including career panels, class chats and shadowing opportunities.





# PitE Honors

These students completed and presented an honors thesis at the April 28 PitE Honors Symposium, and graduated with honors.



**Rachel Walton**

**Thesis Topic:**  
“Wolf Recovery in Colorado: Developing a Public Involvement Program for the Successful Reintroduction of Wolves”



**Melanie Kinnan**

**Thesis Topic:**  
“Exploring the Relationship of Green Exercise, Well-being, and Physical Activity Motives”



**Elizabeth Bedrick**

**Thesis Topic:**  
“Cutting Carbon from the Shopping Cart: Consumer Perceptions of a Carbon Label on Food Products”

## Let's Get Social!



**UM Program in the Environment**



**[environcomm.wordpress.com](http://environcomm.wordpress.com)**



**@pitenvironment**



**University of Michigan Program in the Environment Alumni**



**@pitenvironment**



**[pinterest.com/pitenvironment](http://pinterest.com/pitenvironment)**



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## Alumni Feature: Kathryn Thudium, Class of 2012



My journey in Ann Arbor began as an engineering student eager to tackle the sciences and their emerging and manifold applications. I envisioned a career path that was on the leading edge of technical advancement while focused on community betterment. The College of Engineering greatly developed my analytical skills, but as schooling progressed I felt a void, one that I could not explain to counselors, my parents or even myself. I was unsure what I was looking for, but I was willing to try any course to identify the missing element. As I researched PitE's mission it was as clear as day--my passion had found me. I would strive to be a leader in sustainability.



While it felt incredible to have come to this grand conclusion, my friends and parents were confused. Questions arose as I began to share with others my newfound career path. "What can you do with a degree in the environment?" "What kind of company invests in sustainability?" "Are you going to make enough money?" These questions spurred me to look at my choice critically and thoroughly, and, ultimately, they prompted me to come to my own conclusion that, without a doubt, PitE provides a holistic, balanced perspective that can be applied to any number of corporations, government entities, or non-profit organizations.



When I presented my final project in my senior capstone course, I knew I had made the right decision in selecting PitE. This renewable energy course had "thrown me into the deep end of the pool," or so I thought, as I showcased my final project on the development of bio-based jet fuel. I was shaking as I wrote out the chemical composition of the fuel as it transitioned through various environments. After I had concluded the presentation, my professor pulled me aside to praise what I would soon learn was one of my greatest assets. He expressed his appreciation for my ability to translate highly technical concepts into a language and a format a layperson could readily understand. I quickly scribbled his comment down. Little did I know, this gift would be my main talking point for many interviews to come.

As graduation approached, my job search expanded as I looked for positions that spoke to my interests, my specialization, and my resume. It soon became nerve-wracking, as I found myself wearing my cap and gown without a prospective job. It was then that I realized I needed to sell the skill my professor had identified, my ability to communicate how and why sustainability can be applied to any organization.

Currently, I work in the Advanced Manufacturing Research and Development division of Eagle Ottawa by Lear, an automotive leather company. When I began in 2012, the position seemed inherently ironic. I was attempting to bring notions of sustainability to an industry known for its poor environmental record. However, I reminded myself that sustainability is needed the most in the places where it is discussed the least. Five years later, I can honestly say my job is exactly what I envisioned. Not because I was offered my dream job, because PitE provided me the skills to turn whatever lies ahead into my dream job.