For this project, we will be looking at the Caspian Tern and its habitat in mainly the Columbia River estuary. My work will be to document our research and its results using scientific illustration and my own artistic expression and interpretation of what I observe. Art is the expression of what we see, and when I create art, I am usually drawn to things that relate to the natural world. Nothing is as important as the living things that exist around us and the impact we have on each other. The significance of this impact is only a reflection of the depth to which everything is intertwined. Animals themselves are measures of energy expressed through angles and shapes, their movement an echo of their species history and the conditions they have adapted to.

In my past work I have worked in many different fields including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, and pottery. My most powerful work done in the past year was in sculpture class, a lifesized leg made out of shoes. I used different parts of shoes for different leg features: shoelaces as the tendons and the shoe fabric for the muscles. The finished product was a sculpture that looked reminiscent of anatomy class, a testimony of scientific exploration and the miraculous workings of the human body. When I worked on scientific illustration, I drew a tern egg positioned on a shark vertebrae, using pencil to amplify the softness of the egg and its fragility. Another illustration featured a tern with one wing outstretched. I used a stippling technique on this image, so that the finished piece was the complete image of a tern, carefully engineered by more than a thousand tiny marks, echoing the cells that make up our world. Art is a tool to help reach out and connect with other people.

When I graduate, I hope to work as a field biologist, and help stop the declining rate of species all over the globe. I want to pay more attention to the coexistence of humans and animals, and how we can invent solutions to the many problems that have arisen. The Caspian Tern is a prime example of an organism that has coexisted with us for hundreds of years, their territory constantly changing over the years. I will use my art to expand research, both my own and others, and also to express my own feelings on the importance of all living creatures. My previous works have all reflected a connection to nature, and this trip will only help to improve both my past and future ideas for artwork. I hope that my artwork can be another doorway for people to open, and feel connected to the outdoors, and maybe in turn, care for it. In order to expand these career goals, I need a research project that will give me the opportunity to experience nature up close, and find out for myself what it is like to be in the field. The exposure that I will gain from being in the field will give me knowledge in both the science and art fields. It will improve my ability to quickly capture animal movement in sketches and the immediate interaction will help me heighten my expression through my work. I will also be working between the two subjects, and learn how to further connect science and the natural world with art. The skills I will learn will help further my career in both areas, and help me be a better student, a more knowledgeable scientist, and a more experienced artist.