**Tara Palin**

*First generation college student dedicates herself to understanding the biomarkers of Alzheimer’s disease*

**Major:** Chemical/Biomedical Engineering

**Graduation:** Spring 2018

By: Ali Buis, University Communications Intern

Growing up in Daytona Beach, Fla., first generation college student, Tara Palin wanted to attend a school that not only embodied exuberant school spirit and academics, but was also a good distance away from home.

“I saw college as an opportunity for me to step outside my comfort zone and begin to discover who I am as a person,” Palin said. “Putting that distance between my home and myself really initiated my transformation into an independent young adult.”

Being the first one in her family to go to college, Palin felt motivated to make her parents proud every step of her college career.

“My advice for any other first-generation college students is to not be afraid to not know something,” Palin said. “Ask questions, be curious and change your major a million times. Do what you need until you feel you have found your calling.”

Palin has always been eager to work in the medical field, beginning her college career as a biochemical major on the pre-medical route. Throughout her time at FSU, Palin found herself excelling in her math classes, which furthered her decision of changing her major to chemical and biomedical engineering.

“This major allowed me to continue enhancing my math skills while still being able to make an impact in the field of medicine,” Palin said.

Palin and her research partner, Scott Boebinger, were awarded the Nany Casper and Mark Hillis Undergraduate Research Award, which provided them the opportunity to conduct research at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory this summer. With this research, they hope to find a relationship between the decrease of connectivity and the increased presence of plaques, potentially using this loss of connectivity as an early biomarker for Alzheimer’s Disease.

“Alzheimer’s is a disease that damages a person’s ability for not only self-recognition but the recognition of those who love them by loss of our neural connections,” Palin said. “My research has expanded my knowledge base of MRI scans and what they can tell us about a disease, but more importantly how to conduct research in a controlled and productive way.”

Palin was given this opportunity by an FSU professor Samuel C. Grant, whom she credits her accomplishments to.

“Tara has been very enthusiastic in the lab, and has no qualms about putting in the long hours needed to perform research,” Grant said. “Tara has demonstrated not only excitement for the work, but also skill in both the acquisitions and data processing involved.”

Palin continues to excel in her academics by receiving honors in the chemical/biomedical engineering major as well as being an inducted member of the national engineering honors society Tau Beta Pi, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Phi Eta Sigma and the Order of Omega honor society.

“My involvement in academic and honors programs has added to my college success because involvement helps us find what we are passionate about with people who will push us to be the best versions of ourselves,” Palin said.

Alongside her exceptional academia, Palin is involved in many recognized student organizations on campus. She was elected fundraising chair for the Biomedical Engineering Society where she holds responsibilities such as planning a 5K run and scavenger hunts to raise money to send the senior biomedical engineering students to their national conference.

Palin voluntarily teaches math and science at a local elementary and middle school In Tallahassee. She was also a member of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority, where she helped raise money for breast cancer education and awareness through philanthropic events.

“Becoming involved in community events outside of FSU puts things into perspective,” Palin said. “I am lucky to have been given the chance to enhance my education through these experiences and inspire others to do the same.”

The knowledge Palin has gained through her experiences at FSU has provided her with confidence to start the next chapter in her life.

“While looking back upon the person I was freshman year, I truly believe my ambition towards my future has grown immensely,” Palin said. “The end seemed so far away, but in actuality it is right around the corner. FSU was there for me every step of the way, helping me find the path I needed to go down to be a successful young adult.”

After graduation, Palin plans to further her education by pursuing a master’s degree in biomedical engineering, focusing on bioinstrumentation.

“I want to be able to impact at least one person’s quality of life for the better,” Palin said. “The disease affects more than just the patient, it impacts the family and those close to them as well. In reality, all we have at the end are the memories that we create, and I want to do my part in helping them keep those memories.”

**Related Links:**

[**FSU Chemical & Biomedical Engineering**](https://www.eng.famu.fsu.edu/cbe/)

[**FSU Biomedical Engineering Society**](https://www.eng.famu.fsu.edu/bmes/)

[**FSU Tau Beta Pi**](https://www.eng.famu.fsu.edu/tbp/)

[**FSU IDEA Grant**](http://cre.fsu.edu/students/idea-grants)

[**FSU Phi Eta Sigma**](http://www.fsuphietasigma.org/)

[**National Society of Collegiate Scholar**](http://www.nscs.org/)

[**FSU Order of Omega**](https://union.fsu.edu/ofsl/governing-councils/order-of-omega/)

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