

Many of you that know me know that I started off as a political science major four years ago before switching to marine biology after one and a half terms. As a result of this, I was behind in all of the general science sequence prerequisites and didn't know anyone in marine biology or even the biology department. Only a few weeks after I changed my major, COVID started and those of us that were here four years ago left for spring break only to not come back until September. Many of us had our general science classes on Zoom where it was hard to form connections in general let alone find other students in marine biology.

My first in-person term after COVID was the 2021 summer term at OIMB. And it was a big shift to go from zoom classes in our apartments to an 8-5 schedule in wet labs or waking up at 4am, pulling on our boots, and trekking out to collect organisms before sunrise, but it was also amazing. Whether it was dissecting organisms in labs, bonfire Fridays at OIMB beach, or even listening to someone's alarm go off in the dorms at 6am for 10 minutes, for the first time, we had a community of students interested in marine biology and not just lost in the waves of the main campus science classes.

Since then, I've had two more wonderful terms at OIMB, taken amazing classes that I still can't believe are offered, and even traveled to Panama with the study abroad program with Richard and Maya. I've had the chance to do research, both independent and with the amazing marine biology faculty, and I've made friends based on a shared love of tide pooling, coffee, and melodramatic tv shows. My time at OIMB was truly special and no other major at UO is as lucky as we are to have such a close community because of that campus. I know everyone here has a different path next year: some are traveling, some are off to grad school, some are working, and some are still figuring it out. But wherever we end up and however far we go, I'm

so immensely grateful to all of you for the bonfires, the dining hall conversations, the last-minute field trips, the midnight wadings in the creek, and the late-night study sessions and movie nights in the library.

Because of you all, I've learned more outside the classroom than inside it which is pretty much the whole point of OIMB. To our professors and advisors, I want to say thank you on behalf of all of us for your encouragement, support, and dedication to OIMB and the marine biology program. Thank you to our families, friends, partners, and any roommates who dealt with weird lease situations while we were at OIMB. And to graduates, congratulations. I am so excited to see who you all become, and I am so grateful for all of the memories we've had together. Thank you.