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Winthrop University

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# Senior Biology Major Earns Undergraduate Microbiology Award

## Quick Facts

- The biology major has worked in faculty member Matt Heard's lab for a year where she is studying whether there is a link between the introduction of exotic mammals and the emergence of infectious diseases in humans.
- Hardwick also is an undergraduate teaching assistant working with Vicki Frost in her microbiology classes in a job that is normally reserved for a graduate student.



Kara Hardwick

ROCK HILL, S.C. – **Winthrop University senior Kara Hardwick** of Charleston, S.C., recently was awarded the **Raymond W. Sarber Award** by the **American Society of Microbiology**.

The only undergraduate recipient of the award in the country, she will be honored in May at the **2014 American Society of Microbiology** annual meeting in Boston.

The biology major has worked in **faculty member Matt Heard's** lab for a year where she is studying whether there is a link between the introduction of exotic mammals and the emergence of infectious diseases in humans. She also is an undergraduate teaching assistant working with **faculty member Vicki Frost** in her microbiology classes in a job that is normally reserved for a graduate student.

Hardwick also is the biology representative to the **Dean's Council**.

Hardwick said she has always been a naturally curious person. She came to Winthrop wanting to become a doctor but discovered that there are many other exciting disciplines in biology that were better suited for her, particularly the **combination of microbiology and ecology**.

During her freshman year Hardwick was given the opportunity to work in **faculty member Kim Wilson's** lab where she examined the potential establishment of a red fox population in the Piedmont region of South Carolina.

"Using various genetic and molecular techniques, we attempted to determine the presence of the red fox and create a pedigree to track related groups based on fecal DNA content," **Hardwick wrote in her application for the Sarber award**. "My work with Dr. Wilson was my first exposure to research outside of human medicine and opened my mind to how I could answer ecology and conservation oriented questions using molecular techniques."

With faculty member Heard, she has found a project that explored the **interface of human, animal and environmental health**. "We formulated a new method to try and discover if the presence of introduced species is correlated with infectious disease outbreaks in both human and animal populations," she said.

By using newly available wildlife and human disease databases and occurrence records of introduced animals, they are writing a publication which will **map out geographic distributions** of disease outbreaks that may have resulted from animal species introductions.

The goal of this project, Hardwick said, is to aid the scientific community with a **comprehensive list of locations** that are at risk for various disease outbreaks in both human and animal populations.

Hardwick expects to continue work in the Winthrop labs for the rest of the academic year and anticipates earning an **advanced degree in microbiology** after graduation.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu).

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