Stefanie Steele

Reflection 3: Now What?

15 August 2017

 Now what, and where do I go from here? These question I have found asking myself as well as others asking of me, especially over the past year with my undergraduate career ending. They bring me both excitement, as well as a bit of anxiety as I look toward my future, the future of the projects I’ve in part created. These feelings would be expected of anyone going through similar situations, but knowing this does not make them easier. Let me explain with a little more context, first with the Bee Task Force.

 The Bee Task Force had it’s soft opening during the 2015-2016 school year, and the following year, the program was official with volunteer applicants, waitlists, and it’s own budget through the Student Sustainability Center. In other words, this project, my project, is only just now getting up on its own feet. I have full confidence that this coming year and years following will succeed, I am only just sad to leave because this is work I truly love and a project I care for. The effecting change work like this is where I find my purpose. My next goals will be to find similar work, but on a larger scale in the real world where I can make a career of it. Perhaps this would be conservation work in a non-profit or policy making in government agency. Developing an educational program such as the Bee Task Force has been a joy, and the experience has been invaluable. I have learned that it takes many people to create and implement a successful program, and clear and precise communication is crucial. I have always thought myself a creative person, but effectively communicating my visions is a challenge that I have acknowledged and strive to improve. Public speaking and sharing ideas with fear of rejection are also uncomfortable places for me, but these are the places where I find I can learn the most.

 My growth in the Bee Task Force over the past three years has lead me to the wonderful and somewhat new world to me of native bees. I had met Susan Masta, the official Invertebrate Museum curator, a few years back when I was trying to find a home for the now Bee Task Force. I knew when I met her that this would not be our last meeting, but our paths never quite crossed again until years later in my senior year at PSU. In my search for meaningful to me, upper division biology credits, with a flexible schedule, I reached out to Susan in hopes of doing some type of bee research with her. This leading me to my current position of native bee surveyor, identifier, curator, and education outreach liaison.

The combination of both the Bee Task Force and the Invertebrate Museum has been such an exciting and rewarding combination. To continue effecting change in the pollinator world I will need to start some serious networking with other like minded folk in the Portland area and/or explore my options elsewhere. The when/if/where factor of graduate school is another major factor in the “where do I go from here” question search. There has been quite a bit of a go-getter approach with my current projects, but I also believe that my path in life has led me naturally in these directions. My motivation is simple, passion for bees and nature and life happiness within that, but I do believe the hardest roads are yet to come. The struggles to find my path will be an enriching adventure, but I hope to push through the things that make me uncomfortable and come out a much stronger and rounded person in the end. I look forward in continuing my education in native bees and habitat management to create a richer world for all for years to come. The future is me, and I will create the change I wish to see.