Amira Davis, (Biology ’11), is known on campus as the school’s first School of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) graduate. It’s a title she worked hard to earn. Davis discovered her love of science during her first year of college. There was only one problem: the school didn’t offer a degree in biology. Instead of transferring to another campus, she decided to stay and work towards creating a biology degree for herself and others. “I started to talk to some of my science professors and worked with them to push that along as a student,” she says. “I met with the administration and professors, I collected signatures at one point from students, and I just started really advocating for the need for a science degree sooner rather than later.”

She had a purpose for wanting the degree. At the end of her first year, she began working part-time at Children’s Hospital doing clinical pediatric cancer research. “That is why I wanted to get a biology degree, because I really wanted to go into that field,” she says.

For the next three years she tirelessly pressed the administration to approve the science degree. Meanwhile, the school would add more science classes as she and about six peers advanced in their studies. “We were this very small cohort, and we would always be taking the first existence of that class at UW Bothell,” she says. “My third year there was still no biology degree, but we were getting closer and closer. I just didn’t know if it would be there in time for me to graduate with it.”

At the beginning of her senior year, the biology degree was approved. I don’t know what I would have done if it hadn’t opened, but it did in time, and I was so honored to be the first graduate.”

At the same time that she was advocating for the science degree she was asked to join a design and planning committee for the school’s new STEM building. “I was given the opportunity to be a part of designing the future of science classes at UW Bothell,” she says. “Being able to be a part of getting the degree there, but also to be part of designing the building that was going to house all the sciences, that was an amazing experience.”

As a member of student government from her sophomore through her senior year when she was president, Davis says she constantly had the voice of the students in her ear. This role in leadership helped her make suggestions on behalf of students for the design of the STEM building. “I knew what the demands were, whether it had to do directly with the science building or not, I could integrate that into what we put into the building.”

It’s safe to say that all of Amira’s hard work paid off. Discovery Hall is scheduled for completion this spring. The biology degree she advocated for now has 150 students. And she has her dream job. As soon as she graduated, Children’s Hospital offered her a full-time position. She now coordinates all of the research in the pathology lab, collaborating with many different teams at the hospital on pediatric research.

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Amira Davis, Biology ’11