



News Release

October 6, 2011

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Century Alum on Her Way to Academic Career in Archeology

Century College alum Erin McDonald of Vadnais Heights is one of those successful people who never fails to acknowledge that she is standing on the shoulders of all the individuals who helped her along the way.

After transferring from Century in 2008, McDonald, 30, attended St. Catherine University on a coveted Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship worth \$90,000. An excellent student, she studied at St. Catherine for two and a half years, graduating in December, 2010, with Salutatorian and *Summa cum Laude* honors.

McDonald worked as a teaching assistant at St. Catherine and earned valuable experience lecturing and working with students. Currently, she is applying to graduate schools and hoping to begin her advanced studies in archeology next fall. Her goal is to earn a PhD and eventually become a professor of archeology at a community college.

In 2009, McDonald was selected to participate in a post-baccalaureate McNair Scholars program that allowed her to spend the summer translating Book V of Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* from the Latin to English. Last summer, she participated in an archeological dig in Dorset, England, and spent three weeks discovering and caring for ancient items from Iron-Age Britain. "I got to wash the skull of a 2,000-year-old dog," said McDonald. "It was really exciting."

Century faculty and staff members Ida Baltikauskas, Beth Lanning, David Lyons and Wade Warner were in the audience to celebrate her success when McDonald presented her research findings at a "Seeing Ancient Women" symposium this fall.

McDonald credits the faculty and staff members at Century College for preparing her for the successes she is enjoying.

"Hopefully, I will be a community college professor some day and make all the difference for students, just as my professors did for me," said McDonald.

A single mom, McDonald has an 11-year-old son with autism. He was treated to a trip to Disneyland when McDonald finally graduated from St. Catherine.

McDonald has overcome significant barriers to achieve her academic successes. A self-described "Air Force brat," she attended eight schools between kindergarten and 12th grade, finally graduating from St. Paul Creative Arts High School in 1999. McDonald started at Century in spring 2006, taking mostly afternoon and evening classes her first semester, and going full time after that. She describes the six years between graduating from high school and starting at Century as "a rough patch" that included taking care of her son, plus working in a factory, a retail store and a pizza restaurant. A life in academia seemed an unreachable goal.

“My time at Century helped me decide what I want to do with my career and my life,” said McDonald. “I became determined to work for a career that I love. It has been a lot of work, but it is all worth it. I feel privileged and incredibly grateful.”



Photo: Erin McDonald