



For the first 16 years of my life, I grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas, the only daughter of two Midwesterners. About the time I turned nine, my parents decided they needed new options for themselves and divorced, although they remained in the same city for several years. These life circumstances led me to be a very independent child – yet one that also sought out social activities and a myriad of friends. When not outside exploring creeks or woods, I more often than not “played” school. I always excelled in ‘real’ school and thought about an initial career in medicine. At 16, I moved from Little Rock to suburban Chicago (Naperville) and began a northern circuit that would take me through undergraduate, graduate school and my first research job. Great teachers shaped my love of learning. I found my passion for ecology (turned out to be so much more fascinating than medicine to me) and discovered my own desire to teach while forging ahead with the process of scientific discovery. Reality illustrates that I never really left ‘school’ and genuinely reflect the “ProfRomi” image.

I received both a Bachelor's of Science in Biology and a Bachelor's of Arts in English (both *magna cum laude*) from Loyola University of Chicago. I went onto to complete my Ph.D. in Aquatic Ecology at the University of Notre Dame. During my graduate studies, I conducted research in Denmark as a Fulbright scholar and made other international research connections. I currently have a funded National Science Foundation project that involves training undergraduates as global scientists by studying the ecology and life history traits of a group of large freshwater snails (genus *Pomacea*) in Uruguay. I now enjoy a tenured faculty position as a Full Professor at a small college (~1500 students), Southwestern University, just north of Austin, Texas. I serve as Co-Chair for both the Environmental Studies and Animal Behavior Programs. In addition to maintaining a lab with undergraduate research students, I teach a number of courses related to ecology (i.e. Biodiversity, Methods in Ecology and Evolution, Ecology, Invertebrate Ecology, Wetlands Ecology and Policy) as well as a first year seminar on chocolate and another course on mainstream science writing.

I take every opportunity to blend my interests in research and teaching by mentoring undergraduates and developing creative pedagogy. As one example, I spent the summer of 2012 learning molecular biology skills in a conservation biology lab at the University of Hawaii while also seeking out local Hawaiian contacts in the chocolate industry to enrich her interdisciplinary first year seminar. In June 2013, I worked on a collaborative pedagogy project at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and also attended a Fine Chocolate Industry Association meeting. Eventually, I hope to compile her knowledge about chocolate into a book that highlights teaching in a liberal arts context. On and off campus, you will often see me accompanied by my two favorite four-legged children, Bichons Twinkie and Cupcake. I further enjoy reading, writing, travelling and foodie-related activities.