Galina is a name with Russian roots meaning "calm." While Galina Kinsella may reflect her name's origin and appear outwardly calm, conversation immediately reveals a young woman with high energy and steely determination who has immersed herself into a world of animals, science, community service, and vibrant experience through her time at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). She will complete her Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Science with the Medical and Veterinary Science Option in May, 2015.

“I’ve wanted to be a veterinarian my entire life,” Galina proclaimed, “but, growing up in Milford, CT we didn’t have cows. I wasn’t sure if I even liked cows.” That perspective quickly changed when she came for a UNH visit. She saw students handling cows and heard about CREAM, the student-run class managing part of the UNH dairy cow herd and building skills in bovine health care and human teamwork. When Galina visited, she confessed, “I encountered a really friendly attitude here. It was just a vibe that I couldn’t explain, a feeling that I would fit in. My parents heard about the high level of undergraduate involvement in research which didn’t seem important to me at the time, but they were really highlighting that to me.”

While Galina was not considering any research agenda when she started at UNH, she evolved into an exemplary leader and student researcher. She traveled to Queensland in northeastern Australia with a UNH Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) to study the effects of human disturbances on koala behavior. She has been involved in multiple studies through the UNH Shoals Marine Laboratory and gained deep laboratory experience at the New Hampshire (NH) Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Galina stated with excitement that, “going to UNH I expected to get large animal experience and milk cows. I would have never thought on top of that I would band gull chicks in Maine and track koalas on a remote island in Australia!”

Galina’s broad experience and outstanding academic record are fueling her journey to veterinary school. She has been involved with Sigma Alpha Professional Agricultural Sorority and the Pre-Vet Club, volunteered with the Therapeutic Riding Program, and serves as a UNH Admissions Representative. With only 30 accredited veterinary schools in the U.S., admission is highly competitive. Galina has done well so far, recently completing her fifth admissions interview and earning her third acceptance letter.

“Animal Planet was always on when I was growing up,” claimed Galina. “My childhood dream was to work with Steve Irwin in Australia. I do like cats and dogs, but I really like the conservation aspect of wildlife medicine. I’ve also realized I can have an impact on human health through my work with animals, so my dream would be traveling and working in conservation and focus on zoonotic diseases, which can be passed between humans and animals. Many people don’t realize really nasty diseases like anthrax come from animals.”

Galina credits many professional mentors in her young life who have supported, encouraged, and inspired her journey, “I would not be where I am today without Dr. Fleetwood and Dr. Conroy.” Prof. Michelle Fleetwood is a Senior Veterinary Pathologist with the NH Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and Clinical Assistant Professor. Prof. Andrew Conroy is a faculty member in Applied Animal Science Program and trainer/consultant throughout the world on livestock management and many agricultural specialties. Galina shared, “Dr. Fleetwood was always there to give me a pep talk, right there telling me that I could do it. She was more than an advisor, she was my cheerleader. Dr. Conroy has done amazing work in Africa and has really inspired me to not give up on my dreams.”

Prof. Fleetwood wrote, “Galina is highly motivated for a career in veterinary medicine. She is adventurous and loves to travel and ... demonstrates the most leadership of any of our pre-veterinary students.” Prof. Conroy added, “Galina stands out as an exceptional candidate for the UNH Story. The early morning shifts (for the CREAM class) of milking and feeding a herd of cows on campus at 4:00 am ... can be overwhelming. Galina showed incredible adaptability and resilience, which speaks a lot to her dedication.”

Galina was quick to include her family in encouraging her aspirations. “I am so close to my parents. They have really strived for me to be independent, but supported all I’ve done and have just been there for me. My dad worked so hard to get where he is today, and my mom was a first generation American. My grandparents came from Russia. I was named after my grandmother, who was our family’s biggest keeper of traditions, making classic Russian dishes for Pascha (Easter) every year and continuing our Russian Orthodox faith. She actually went to medical school before World War II started, and always told me that I should be a doctor.”

As Galina completes her honors thesis and degree requirements over the coming months, she faces major decisions about where she will attend veterinary school, but is well on her way to becoming a doctor – an animal doctor! She summarized her passions with, “I love communicating with people and teaching new things and having the potential to make a difference.”