Cornell Supplement: How have your interests and related experiences influenced the major you have selected in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences?

It all began with a tiny, white chicken named Flo Rida.

Living an urban lifestyle, I never thought I would be given a chicken to keep, especially one named after a vegan rapper. In the beginning, I admit, my husbandry skills were lacking—I took Flo Rida to grocery stores and fed her anything I could find, usually French fries or corn chips. Deciding that Flo Rida needed some "friends," I found myself with a menagerie of eleven chickens, three ducks, and two goats. As my "urban farm" developed and grew, so did I. I matured while tending to my animals, waking up early to care for them and spending my own money to improve their enclosures. My family had fresh omelets every morning as I built sites for the chickens to lay eggs. I even raised a baby goat, bottle feeding and potty training her. At family events, others brought side dishes or desserts, I brought Flo Rida and her entourage for everyone to enjoy. Beyond companionship, my menagerie sparked an irresistible curiosity about animal biology—a wellspring of inquiry stirred within me, ready to erupt every time I stepped into my backyard.

As high school began and progressed, I never directly studied agriculture, but the lessons on animal physiology and genetics tantalized my desire for future studies. Limited by the dearth of agricultural opportunities and information available to me, I focused my time on a developing interest in microbiology. Chicken coops became petri dishes, feed became nutrient agar, and eggs became extracted plasmids. By my sophomore year I was researching antibiotic resistant bacteria in my local hospital. As this desire developed, I researched the DNA of *Halomonas sp.* Strain GFAJ-1 at Stetson University and viral vectors at the University of Florida. My youthful love for Flo Rida developed into a deep love for microbiology.

As a Biological Sciences major in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, I would be able to deepen my understanding of microbiology while surveying the other aspects of biology. The various research opportunities on campus will allow me to refine my lab technique. Under the guidance of Elizabeth Buckles, my past and future could coalesce while investigating microbial pathology and its anatomical effects in countless animals like Flo Rida. Taking courses such as ANSC 1120 Sustainable Animal Husbandry will finally allow me to learn more about my backyard farm. In pursuit of expanding my biological knowledge—I hope to also explore marine biology, paleobiology, entomology, and more. With course offerings to fulfill my scientific curiosity, I will take advantage of the ability to delve right into the Biological Sciences major, CALS in fall 2016.

Now every time I eat an egg, I reminisce about my tiny, white chicken and how she helped "lay" the foundation of my future. I think about microbiology and the way it channeled my passions. Most importantly, I dream about a culmination of my scientific progression from an inexperienced child in my backyard farm to a published researcher at Cornell University.