“They showed me the barns, and I fell in love,” Senior Gretchen Lucken exclaims about her first visit to the University of Minnesota, Crookston. She toured more than one school but wanted an equine program close to her home in Melrose, Minn. As a first generation college student and the oldest of eight children, Lucken’s decision brought both anxiety and excitement for her family.

“It was a really big deal for my family,” she says. But Lucken didn’t miss a beat in the transition from high school to college at the U of M, Crookston. She has participated in theatre productions, the Rodeo Club, and as a freshman, she was a member of the U of M, Crookston Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) as a rider on the Western team. Her participation on the riding team halted in Gretchen’s sophomore year as she wasn’t living in Crookston. Rather, she called Ireland her temporary home.

Studying abroad is an exciting experience the U of M, Crookston offers to help students learn about other cultures and gain international experience. For Lucken, it was even more than a great cultural adventure. “I had an epiphany while I was in Ireland,” she affirms.

Lucken traveled abroad to Ireland, where she took classes that applied directly to her major in equine science. During a riding class, she fell off her horse and was left on the sidelines her last few weeks abroad. Although glum about the loss of riding time, Lucken quickly realized the benefit. Watching from the ground gave her a brand new look at riding. Soon, she was able to pick up on the minute details that she may have otherwise missed. When Lucken noticed a rider needing to tighten her hands, the instructor would note the same errors. When Lucken was eyeing a rider that needed to put her heels down, the instructor would shout out the same message.

For Lucken, the study abroad experience helped her realize she wanted to become an instructor. “I enjoy teaching and passing on knowledge to other people,” she shares. Lucken is well on her way already. During summer 2009, she taught riding to an 11-year-old neighbor girl who had just gotten her first horse.

Of course, the trip to Ireland isn’t the only thing that inspired Lucken to be an instructor. U of M, Crookston instructor in equine science Nicky (Demarais) Overgaard, ’96, also has guided her, “She has had the biggest influence on me,” Lucken says, “particularly on my career path.” Overgaard was literally the first riding instructor Lucken ever had, and she coached Lucken as a part of IHSA for a year. Lucken

Senior Gretchen Lucken, an equine science major, will graduate in spring 2011.
appreciates how Overgaard has helped her, “I’ve learned a lot from her and have great respect for her.”

Lucken will graduate in spring 2011 with a major in equine science and a minor in communication. She wants to attend graduate school with hopes of following her new dream of becoming a collegiate equine instructor.

To learn more about the equine science major at the U of M, Crookston, visit www.umcrookston.edu/academics.

Major Choice

Growing up in inner-city Miami, Fla., college was not in the game plan for most students around Senior Shelton Derisma. It turns out that for Derisma college was a way to get a step ahead. Add this to his love for football and you have an unstoppable combination. Derisma was going to college.

One might wonder why a Floridian would come all the way up to northern Minnesota for college. Derisma made the Crookston campus his home after deciding to play football for the Golden Eagles. He joined the squad at the last minute after his high school classmate, Alumnus Enrique Julien,’09, recommended the school.

Although Derisma knew he wanted a degree, he wasn’t completely decided what he wanted to pursue. “I started as a sport and recreation management major, but after working in that program, I found that it just wasn’t for me,” he said.

He visited with Kim Cousins, a former program advisor for the federally funded Student Support Services program. Cousins was one of Derisma’s biggest influences on campus. She directed him to the Crookston campus’ Career and Counseling Center where director, Don Cavalier, provided him with a career assessment test. With results in hand, Cavalier broke down what the U of M, Crookston had to offer to fit his needs which ultimately brought Derisma to the decision of a major in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management (HRI).

The U of M, Crookston offers three distinct options for this degree program: resort and spa management, food service administration, and hotel and restaurant management. Derisma has chosen the latter. He hopes to find his way to culinary school after completing his internships and ultimately graduation.

“Shortly after culinary school, I want to get established within the HRI industry in a restaurant franchise. Hopefully I can work my way up through the company to become a purchasing agent.”

Now, in preparation for graduation Derisma is working as one of the managers at the new food venue on campus, the Evergreen Grill located in Evergreen Hall. “I plan to do inventory and help create weekly specials for the shop.”

Derisma has been involved in other parts of campus life as well. He has worked at the Students in Free Enterprise coffee shop, the Golden Eagle Grind, is involved in Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) and was one of the co-founders of the Black Student Association (BSA) in 2006.

Learn more about the opportunities in HRI by visiting, www.umcrookston.edu/academics.