Online Learning Leads to Visit

It has been a more than a year since Senior Alisha Hillstrom, Maple Grove, Minn., began pursuing a bachelor’s degree at the University of Minnesota, Crookston. But, it wasn’t until last July that she actually took her first step on the campus. The business management major is earning her degree entirely online. In fact, she is on track to graduate in May 2012 with a business degree that includes a minor in marketing.

Her trip to campus happened thanks to a bit of serendipity on a gorgeous day in July. “My husband and I were spending the weekend of July 4 in Detroit Lakes, Minn., and it worked for us to make a trip to Crookston to see where I was going to school,” she recalls.

Hillstrom holds an associate of arts degree from North Hennepin Community College and wanted to pursue a bachelor’s degree but was unsure about where to go. “I am from Minnesota, so naturally, I checked out the University of Minnesota’s Web site,” she says. “I found the degree I wanted entirely online through the Crookston campus, and I was immediately interested.”

Another factor influencing her decision to choose the U of M was the way she benefitted from the University of Minnesota Promise Scholarship (U Promise), which supports admitted eligible Minnesota residents who enroll at one of the University’s five campuses.

A busy mother of a 4-year-old son with a job working for Target, Hillstrom manages her schedule to include being a full-time college student. “I do homework at the dinner table or in a favorite spot in

Hillstrom enjoyed seeing the campus in person. As an online student, Hillstrom plans to return in the spring for commencement.

Welcome
the living room where my laptop fits on the arm of the chair,” Hillstrom explains. “If I need serious peace and quiet, I head for the public library.”

She enjoys many facets of learning online, particularly posting on the message boards in Moodle, a software package for producing Internet-based courses and Web sites. “I found Moodle to be very helpful in the learning process, and I have the chance to interact with students from all over the world,” Hillstrom says. “I enjoy interacting with classmates who have such varied experiences and who share their thoughts and ideas in our online ‘classroom’ discussion.”

She finds most of her classmates are balancing work, life, and school just as she is.

In her online experience, she says she has found the professors both willing to help students and quick to respond. These two aspects are significant to students who are working independently and do not have the benefit of faculty onsite.

Commencement 2012 will mark Hillstrom’s second visit to campus, and she is looking forward to it already. “I recommend the U of M, Crookston’s online program when I can,” she reflects. “In fact, I had a friend who started the semester after I did because she knew how much I was enjoying my online learning experience.”

Hillstrom already has given graduate school consideration for the future. “I am thinking I might enjoy teaching as an online instructor some day,” she says. “However, I have to stay focused on earning my bachelor’s degree, and afterward, gaining more experience in the business world.” It is one step, and one degree, at a time for her.

No matter what she decides about the future, Hillstrom is finding the online classroom meets her needs today, and right now, that’s what matters.

Did you know?

Did you know? The University of Minnesota, Crookston’s online degree in business management was ranked among The Best Colleges list of “Top 10 Online Bachelor of Business Administration Degree Programs of 2011.” The U of M, Crookston’s bachelor of science degree in business management was ranked at number five. To find out more, visit www.umcrookston.edu/online.