Ryan Newton, a sophomore and forensic science major, would have made Mark Twain proud. He charted his own unique course after graduating from Perry Traditional Academy in 1997. Instead of enrolling in the traditional course of undergraduate studies, Ryan decided to become a boat captain.

During high school, he worked as a busboy for Pittsburgh’s Gateway Clipper Fleet and moved up to deckhand. He enjoyed the experience and decided to aim for the top slot. He received his license from the United States Coast Guard to pilot motor vessels of not more than 100 gross tons, and now pilots the Gateway Clipper on a part-time basis.

Knowing that he would eventually go to college, but undecided about a major, Ryan tested the waters by enrolling in some classes at the Community College of Allegheny College. He dreamed of a career in science, and when he discovered the Forensic Science & Law program offered by Duquesne University, he applied and was accepted.

Having taken a few years off from school, Ryan finds life on campus to be quite a contrast from the working world. “I appreciate it more,” he explained. “I don’t think I would have appreciated the experience as much had I gone straight to college.”

One of the things that Ryan likes about being back at school is the interaction with the faculty. “I like that fact that every one of my chemistry professors has encouraged us to get involved with the research program. They take the time to push the students when they themselves have so much on their plates. It shows they care about the students.”

Ryan is taking the chemistry professors’ advice and will begin work with Dr. Jeff Evanseck, associate professor of chemistry, on a drug design project to tackle the prevention of anthrax infection. He will continue this project through summer 2004.

By working in a research lab, Ryan hopes to explore the many different possibilities of a science career. “This experience will help me decide between a career in lab work or non-lab work,” he said.

He knows that many exciting opportunities await, and he is eager to discover them. In thinking about the future, Ryan intuitively knows his interests will evolve over time and through experience. “I am interested in exploring field work, especially reconstructing a crime scene,” he said. “I would also like to teach and see that as a definite possibility in the future.”

With a proven ability to explore, dream and discover, Ryan will surely keep the wind in his sails throughout the journey of a lifetime.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than the ones you did do,” wrote the great American author Mark Twain. “So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

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