

## UAFS Graduate Valli Earns Ph.D.

Earning a Ph.D. takes a lot of hard work and dedication, but everyone has to start somewhere. **Hanna Valli** started here at the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith, and she has only gone upward. Valli first came to UAFS as an international student in 2006 from her home in Tallinn, Estonia. She studied for four years and earned her bachelor's degree in biology. In 2009, she moved on to the University of Pittsburgh, where she earned a master's degree and eventually a doctorate in molecular genetics and developmental biology.

At UAFS, Valli was very involved in campus life and was a member of the UAFS volleyball team. Some might assume that

transitioning from UAFS to the University of Pittsburgh would be difficult to manage, but Valli said that was not the case for her.

"It was fairly easy," she said. "I think at UAFS I had more of a support network from faculty and staff, and because I was on the volleyball team, it was really easy to make friends. When I got to Pittsburgh, I had to figure everything out on my own." She said the smaller student population at UAFS allowed for UAFS faculty and staff to devote more personal attention to students.

Valli speaks warmly of her time at UAFS and credits the university with helping her down her path. She said it was thanks to the small class sizes at UAFS that "I got to know most of my professors. My biology professors were the ones who got me interested in doing research in the first place."

She advises other students who are looking to follow her, especially those interested in science and research, to "do a summer program at a research university so that they know what they're getting themselves into." Now that she has earned her doctorate, Valli hopes to land a postdoctoral position at the world's leading lab in oncofertility in Chicago. We at the UAFS Office of International Relations are very proud of Hanna Valli's achievements and heartily congratulate her on her accomplishments. For more information on other graduates, please visit UAFS International Office website at [www.uafs.edu/international](http://www.uafs.edu/international).

