

# Marissa Brake

## PhD in Biological and Biomedical Sciences

### **Why did you apply for graduate school?**

I originally wanted to be a veterinarian, but I was always interested in genetic research. I sought out an opportunity for research in my undergraduate. Doing that shifted my career goals to now wanting to become a researcher. I applied to graduate school because having a higher degree gives me more career opportunities in research and allows me to hold higher positions where I could potentially run a lab myself.

### **Why did you decide to go to OU?**

I decided to go to OU because of the research I would be able to do. In my undergraduate, I started working with Dr. Westrick. I enjoyed the research I was doing in his lab and the translational aspect of it. Dr. Westrick is an encouraging person and I knew I would be able to be involved in many projects and get an experience I would not get anywhere else.

### **What is your favorite part of being an OU Graduate student?**

My favorite part of being an OU graduate student is that the Biology graduate school is small, so I get to know the other graduate students and faculty very well. Getting to know everyone like that allows for us graduate students to go to each other if we need help with an experiment or class, and to have other faculty members as mentors that could also help with experiments but also with developing connections to help with future endeavors.

### **Do you have any advice for those applying to your program?**

My advice would be make sure to figure out which faculty's lab you would like to

work in and talk to them about it. Sometimes the lab does not have space to take a student. If you reach out to them and even talk to their other students, you can learn more about the work but also the work environment.

## **Do you have any advice for those who have been awarded a teaching assistantship?**

The teaching assistantship is unique because it requires the graduate student to teach an undergraduate lab course. For many of us, we have never had experience teaching before. My advice would be to shadow a graduate student who has experience teaching, so you can familiarize yourself with the lab and how to teach it. But most of all, do not get discouraged, because if you let the student know this is your first time teaching they are very understanding.