

Traveling serves as her inspiration, but Amber Dale's college education took off close to home at Black Hawk College in Moline.

"My husband and I enjoy backpacking through the national parks, which has been a big inspiration for a lot of my personal work," she said.



Her love for the national parks resulted in her art exhibit, National Park Gift Shop. The University of Iowa's Visual Arts Building featured it for a week in October.

Dale will graduate from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design in December and is a student designer for Student Life's Marketing and Design Department at the university.

National Park Gift Shop featured a national parks journal, stickers for each park, T-shirts and a poster. Her tent and a fake campfire set the mood and complemented her designs.

Studying at Black Hawk College

Dale originally went to a different four-year university after graduating from United Township High School in 2010, but transferred home for personal reasons.

Switching to Black Hawk College was the right decision for her.



“It’s a great school. Smaller class sizes are great because you get more focused help,” Dale said. “You also make more connections by going to community college first and then transferring.”

She earned an Associate in Arts in 2012 and later returned to earn an Associate in Applied Science in Visual Communication and a Certificate in Art Technology in 2017 before transferring to the University of Iowa.

“I had a really good group of friends in the same major, every class was enjoyable, and the teachers really cared about us and what they were teaching,” Dale said.

Darkroom Photography was her favorite class, but Dale isn’t able to pick one favorite Black Hawk College teacher.

“All of the art teachers were my favorite,” she said. “They were awesome teachers and the classes were always fun.”

Dale served as co-president of Art Collective, the BHC art club. She organized a trip to St. Louis for students to explore museums and helped with artist talks and student events.

Transferring from BHC

When she transferred to the University of Iowa, the process went well. She didn't have to retake any classes and was ready to jump in and learn.

"I feel like Black Hawk prepared me really well for the University of Iowa with a well-rounded curriculum," Dale said.

She learned Adobe Suite in her BHC digital art classes so at Iowa she didn't have to spend time learning those while working on homework.



"I also knew what each program was used for and capable of and was able to use them together to create stronger designs," she said.

Regardless of age, Dale encourages others to give Black Hawk College a chance if they are looking to start college.

"Our little art group was made up of people of all different ages," she said. "Not everyone knows what they want to do when they get out of high school and for some, they don't have the money or stability at 18."

As graduation nears, Dale has her sights set on finding a graphic design position. With her education, experience and skills, she's ready for her dream job.

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