

# Raelyn Begay

**Spring 2026 - CLAS Biology  
Graduate Honoree**



Rae is a Diné (Navajo), first-generation college student who represents the very best of our students at MSU Denver and is a clear example of what happens when perseverance meets opportunity. After a false-start at MSU in 2015, she returned in 2022 with renewed focus, maturity, and enthusiasm. From her first PCR in my research laboratory, Rae's passion for science was unmistakable. It quite literally cannot be ignored. Her footsteps echo through the halls of the Biology department as she runs to my office eager to share her latest data.

As my research assistant, Rae consistently demonstrated careful attention to detail, analytical thinking, and the ability to connect her data to broader ideas. She grew in confidence, knowledge, and scientific independence as a Choose Development! fellow through the Society for Developmental Biology. This prestigious opportunity allowed her to participate in cutting-edge research and provided her with mentorship by leaders in the field of stem cells and development. She has presented at national and international meetings and speaks confidently about her work with people of varied backgrounds from her student peers to well-known scientists (who, by the way, are equally as impressed by Rae as I have been).

Despite her many scientific accomplishments, Rae has remained truly humble and deeply committed to mentorship and community building. She gives freely of her time, guiding students through the challenging content in the classroom, mentoring students in the lab, and representing MSU Denver on a campus tour, as a panel speaker, or at the Science Open House. On a personal level, Rae has forever changed me as a professor. She has challenged me to think more deeply about teaching and mentoring, and the potential of our students.

~ Nominated by Dr. Vida Melvin

