“MSU was not a school I grew up knowing I would go to, but today, I can’t imagine myself being in any other place. As soon as I stepped on campus, I was able to participate in ground-breaking scientific research which I couldn’t pass up. I love how beautiful this campus is and enjoy studying on the upper floors of the library where I can unload my books next to a window and gaze out at the Red Cedar between thermodynamics problems.”

SARA DENBO
Astrophysics ’17

TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR.

College of Natural Science
2014-15 Dean’s Research Scholar
A conversation with Sara...

**What is the societal impact of your research:** As the late Carl Sagan said, “We are all star stuff.” We know that most of the light elements were formed during the Big Bang and that the rest were synthesized in the lives and deaths of stars, but there are still some specifics we’re trying to work out.

**How has your undergraduate experience been impacted by this research opportunity:** The research I’ve done has been a major component of my undergraduate experience. Research is not only a possible career path, but a perfect way to engage with the material discussed class. It has also taught me the importance of not being afraid to ask questions - I never asked a lot of questions in high school, but actually speaking up when I don’t understand something now has immensely helped my understanding of the work I’m doing.

**What is something you never expected at MSU:** The fact that I would actually enjoy dancing! At first I thought it was going to be so awkward, but I stuck with it and today I’m the president of the club. I never thought an activity involving a certain amount of coordination and grace would be such an important part of my life!

**Favorite food:** Potatoes. You can make so much out of the humble potato. Mashed, fried, baked, you name it.

**Coolest gadget:** The microwave. I spent the summer of 2014 working at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory. The observatory is in the middle of the National Radio Quiet Zone and in order to reduce interference, there are no cell phones, radio stations or microwaves. Being there for a few months taught me how much I missed a microwave.

**Book you’d recommend:** *The Martian* by Anthony Weir.

**Person you’d most like to meet, living or dead:** Marie Curie. Of course, I’d like to bring a radiation suit with me to our meeting - after all, her research notebooks are dangerously radioactive to this day.

**Major research breakthrough of the next decade:** Cosmologists believe the universe is almost seventy percent dark energy, but we know very little about it. Hopefully, we can unravel some of its mysteries in the next decade. Also, aliens.

**What are some of your favorite MSU memories:** Christmas of my freshman year when some of the guys in our dorm bought a Christmas tree. A real one, not a small plastic one. All of us got together to decorate it and it was a last little bit of joy before facing finals.