

Elena Sorci: CPO in Training

By R. J. Garrick, Ph.D.

Elena Sorci joined NURERC this summer as the 2006 Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) Scholar. Funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) of the Department of Education (Grant number H133E030030), NURERC's scholar program provides an opportunity for young academicians with a disability to participate in research and encourages them to pursue a career in rehabilitation research. Ms. Sorci completed NUPOC's orthotics program and currently is completing the prosthetics program. Ms. Sorci has an undergraduate degree in Movement Sciences from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Her interest in orthotics and prosthetics grew from her own orthotic treatment for Charcot-Marie-Tooth. Elena is working with **Stefania Fatone**, Ph.D., CPO, on a pilot evaluation of Ankle Foot Orthoses using roll-over shapes.

At UIC, Ms. Sorci majored in biology until an English assignment changed her career course. Assigned to interview someone in a career that interested her, she decided to speak with a person in P&O. After learning about the requisites for P&O certification, she transferred her credits to Movement Sciences. Movement Sciences is founded in normative studies and provides a comparative basis for knowledge of disability. In Movement Sciences, Ms. Sorci studied the physiology of the body during exercise, including diverse areas such as neuroscience and motor control in learning.

Typically, Movement Sciences graduates pursue Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy or Biomedical Engineering. Her academic advisor was unfamiliar with P&O as a career choice, so Ms. Sorci researched entrance requirements to NUPOC's P&O certificate programs. *"I did the groundwork, so I had*



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a clear idea about what I should study. By the time I graduated, I already knew about NUPOC, not just because it is here in Chicago, but because of its educational quality and excellent reputation."

Ms. Sorci explained that P&O integrates her academic and leisure interests, *"I like to design new things. That is why I like P&O so much. I can combine my interests in science, anatomy and physiology with the human element. I like to use my hands and be active, and I enjoy talking with patients. P&O offers me that combination and balance. P&O*

incorporates everything I'm interested in."

Enthusiastic and passionate about her study, Ms. Sorci described her experience at NUPOC, *"The teachers at NUPOC are excellent. They are poised in front of the class and that provides us with really good professional role models. They are exacting and strict, because they have to be. They know how much work we students do. They know that we spend a lot of time in class and that we study more at home. The teachers know how to keep us motivated. They are encouraging, supportive and understanding. They're really great. They keep us interested and show us that learning the material can be fun."* Ms. Sorci reflected on her work in the Orthotics and Prosthetics programs, *"My experience at NUPOC has been fabulous. I've enjoyed it so much. My only wish is that the program could be longer because I want to spend more time studying."*

Ms. Sorci and her classmates at NUPOC demonstrate hard work and dedication. We wish her and her NUPOC colleagues the best of luck and future success in the important field of prosthetics and orthotics and rehabilitation research.