

## CEE ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Nicole Nova, RSI '07

*Director of RSI 2016*

*Research Associate, Department of Biology, Duke University*

*Ph.D. Student, Department of Biology, Stanford University*

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*Nicole Nova*  
*Research Associate, Department of Biology,*  
*Duke University*

first time in the U.S. Being surrounded by smart and inspiring students and faculty at a world-class university had a huge impact on my life. **I loved the “anything is possible” attitude and the spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration I found in the American labs.** I knew that I would thrive in the U.S., especially since I was interested in working at the intersection of several fields. After I finished my medical training in Sweden, I started working on mathematical modeling of cancer at Harvard and later infectious disease modeling at Duke. I loved combining mathematics, computer science, and biology and medicine. Now I’m about to start my Ph.D. studies in a biomathematics lab at Stanford. I have also been involved with RSI as an alum and this summer, I will serve as the Director.

### What is your favorite memory about your attendance at the Center for Excellence in Education’s (CEE) Research Science Institute (RSI) ‘07?

I would have to go with the night spent on the Esplanade before the fireworks on the 4th of July. Talking, playing games, and laughing all night with the students and counselors was an amazing bonding experience. It happened at the end of the first week of RSI, so it was the first major event that brought us all together and set the tone for the rest of the summer. It was the start of many friendships that are now almost a decade old! **I remember watching the fireworks and feeling so happy about being among so many passionate young scientists in one of the greatest research cities in the world.**

### How did your experience help you both professionally and personally?

CEE helped my professional career tremendously. I was an international student from Sweden and my summer at RSI was my



*Nicole Nova with some RSI '07 Classmates at Final Presentations*

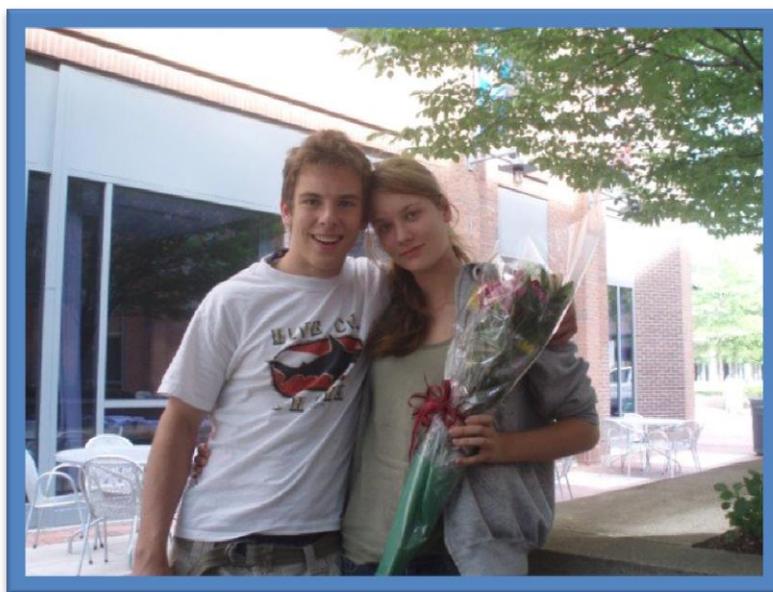
On a personal level, CEE changed my life completely. I never expected my RSI lab partner to become my future husband! Or that my RSI roommate became one of my best friends and ended up being the maid of honor at my wedding. Thanks to CEE, I already had a huge circle of friends in American academia, so it was easy to start a new life and research career here.

## Describe the importance of getting involved in STEM opportunities at a young age.

What you learn in the classroom, it only touches the surface of what is really out there. Programs like CEE's RSI allow you to experience life as a researcher and expose you to research fields outside of your normal comfort zone. I went into RSI thinking that I wanted to do "pure" biomedicine or neuroscience. After a summer of doing stats in a psychology research lab, I realized that I loved the quantitative aspect too - a realization which ultimately led me to biomathematics. Research is exciting and fulfilling, but it is also quite demanding. **It is critical that you find a field that you are truly passionate about. The sooner you start exploring options, the more likely it is you will find your match early in your research career.** Early research experience is also a huge plus for your college applications and especially for graduate programs later on!



*Nicole Nova (center) with RSI '07 classmates*



Nicole Nova in '07 with RSI lab partner, and now husband, Max Nova, RSI '07 (former Uhlenhuth)