Ellie Thiemann Passions Paper October, 2014

**What:** According to Merriam-Webster, passion is “a strong feeling (such as anger) that causes one to act in a dangerous way” or rather “an intense overmastering drive or feeling of conviction.” This may be true, but I think of passion in a different way. I believe passion is whatever characteristic of life causes one to wake up, go out and keep on living their life. For instance, my passion is nature. I think this began as a kid when my family would go on camping trips to places all around Ohio, Indian, Kentucky and Michigan, my favorite being Hocking Hills or Turkey Run. When I look back on these trips, I remember them as brief pauses from the normal family tensions where we took a break from our various activities and jobs, and just enjoyed each other’s company. We haven’t been able to go on a trip in years, but I am constantly looking forward toward my next chance to immerse myself in nature. For me, being surrounded by nature is very calming and refreshing, it helps me to recharge. When I stop to appreciate how simple, delicate, and beautiful the natural world actually is, life’s problems don’t seem as daunting.

**So What:** I was inspired by my passion to embark on a nine day journey to the beautiful country Costa Rica in which I got to tour some of their biological reserves and learned about the efforts the country is making to preserve its biodiversity. This trip definitely lit a spark that made me want to do more exploration of nature. It’s hard to hike through a rainforest, zip line through the canopy, and scale a waterfall and not fall more in love with the outdoors. The more I visit new places, the more my hunger to explore natural settings grows. My passion for nature makes me want to be a conscious global citizen working towards the sustainability and promotion of environmental protection. When I start to feel pent up inside, especially during the winter, I look back on this trip and reflect on its meaning to keep me going.

**Now What:** I’m excited to be taking part in UC’s Sustainability Summit on October 24-26, to learn more about leadership and campaign techniques as well as complete nature hikes and how to turn sustainability from an idea to an action. On this summit I will team up with Leaders for Environmental Awareness and Protection, or LEAP, to launch an initiative on campus to make the average member of the UC community more environmentally conscious. Our ultimate goal is to get UC at Zero Net Waste by 2020. This is a lofty goal, but I think any efforts are worth attempting because I love nature, see its value, and want it to be around for a long time.