

## **Samantha “Sam” Elling – Music**

### **Why did you choose your degree program? How has it helped you grow personally and professionally?**

I chose my major because I love making music. I’ve been singing since I could talk. I started playing piano when I was around 7 or 8 years old, and I began playing in band when I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Although my degree program is primarily based in voice, I feel that my degree program has helped me grow personally because I was finally able to “find my own sound” and make some of my greatest friends while doing that. It has helped me grow professionally because I was able to fully understand that in a lot of my ensembles, I have to channel different areas of my brain as a musician to make amazing music with even more amazing people.

### **What activities are you involved in at McKendree?**

I am a member of the chamber choir, concert choir, wind ensemble, and concert band, and I am a chaplain intern.

### **What are you most proud of accomplishing during your time here?**

I’d have to say that my greatest accomplishment was my senior recital. As a music major, the senior recital is the culmination of our career as a musician at the college level. From doing research on 13 songs in 4 different languages to matching my wardrobe for the recital to the vibe of the location and the songs I sang, it was a very proud moment seeing all of the work I’ve put in since my first year as a Bearcat come to fruition.

### **If you could go back in time, what advice would you give your first-year self?**

If I were able to go back in time, I would tell my first-year self to not let the negativity around her influence what she thought of herself, and to think for herself. It’s because of figuring these two things out around halfway through my college career (thanks to some help from my parents, professors, and advisors) that I am where I am today.

### **Who helped you the most on your journey?**

My support system, for sure! My parents are some of the most supportive people I know. My grandparents, aunts, and uncles haven’t missed a single music concert since I started doing the “little kid” Christmas concerts in kindergarten. And even though I’ve only been with my boyfriend for a year, he’s given me a lot more support than I ever could have imagined. I love and appreciate my support system more than they will ever be able to understand. I don’t know where I’d be without them.

### **What’s next after graduation?**

After I graduate with my bachelor's degree in music (vocal performance), I am returning to McKendree University this fall to begin the courses for my Master of Arts in Teaching Elementary Education with an endorsement in special education!