When Hannah Gilder looks back on her four years at Tulane University, she will fondly remember the professors who helped guide and support her as she planned the next phase of her life: medical school.

Hannah Gilder has always wanted to be a doctor. After graduation, she's headed to medical school at the Mayo Clinic. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

But the one thing that will stand out above all else is the time she spent with Tulane Emergency Medical Services (TEMS), the student-run ambulance service that is based on the uptown campus.

Gilder, an aspiring neurosurgeon who served as director of TEMS from February 2013 to March 2014, says it was a life-altering experience that reconfirmed her desire to pursue medicine.

Over the past four years, she and her fellow EMTs, all nationally certified, responded to such calls as alcohol poisoning, drug overdoses, car accidents and orthopedic injuries. Some of the toughest were those of a psychiatric nature, such as suicide threats.

"It's hard to see your peers in a situation like that," she says.

Gilder will be graduating with double majors in neuroscience and Spanish. She has been accepted to the medical schools of University of California, Los Angeles, Northwestern University, Emory University, Washington University in St. Louis and Mayo Medical School at Mayo Clinic, which she calls her "dream school," so she is heading to Rochester, Minn.

Growing up in Oregon, Gilder says she knew as far back as middle school that she wanted to be a doctor. When a grandparent suffered a stroke and another was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, she decided to focus on the brain.

"I wanted to know more about the brain and how it works," says Gilder, who conducted research on the aging process under Paul Colombo, associate professor of psychology.

Gilder says she couldn't have asked for a better academic experience. But it is her time with TEMS that she called the defining point of her Tulane career.
“It was tough,” she says. “But I loved every minute of it.”