

July 06, 2015 | By Erika Johnson

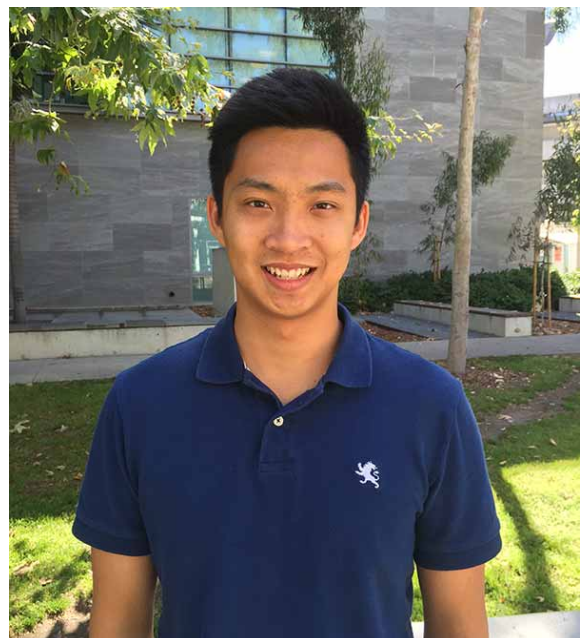
UC San Diego Academic Enrichment Programs Promote Student Success

Faculty mentors and research opportunities help UC San Diego students earn national scholarships for research and service

Robert She and Angela Zou, undergraduates at the University of California, San Diego, have been recognized with national scholarship awards for research and service. Both are part of UC San Diego Academic Enrichment Programs, which pairs students with faculty mentors and research opportunities in preparation for graduate school.

Academic Enrichment Programs offers numerous ways for undergraduates of all majors to get involved in high level research projects under the guidance of UC San Diego faculty members. By taking part, students can discover what it is like to work in a research lab and determine if graduate school is the right path for them. All students involved in the program take part in an annual research conference and receive training throughout the year on how to propose, write and present a formal research project.

UC San Diego students in the program are nominated for scholarships by David Artis, dean of Undergraduate Research Initiatives and director of Academic Enrichment Programs. “We want our students to feel UC San Diego and our office encourage them to engage with the wider society. The competitions are ways to introduce them to a larger community of scholars and leaders,” said Artis. “My team and I work one-on-one with students to help guide them in the application process for national research scholarships, and have experienced great success in securing support for many.”



Robert She

One recent student honoree is Robert She, who received a Donald A. Strauss Public Service Scholarship for his program called StRIVE, short for Student-Run Intercommunicative and Vocational Education. He has been involved in neuroscience research at The Scripps Research Institute for over two years. It was during this time that he decided he would like to make an immediate impact in people's lives. The result was StRIVE, a community outreach program launched to help young adults with mental disabilities achieve independence.

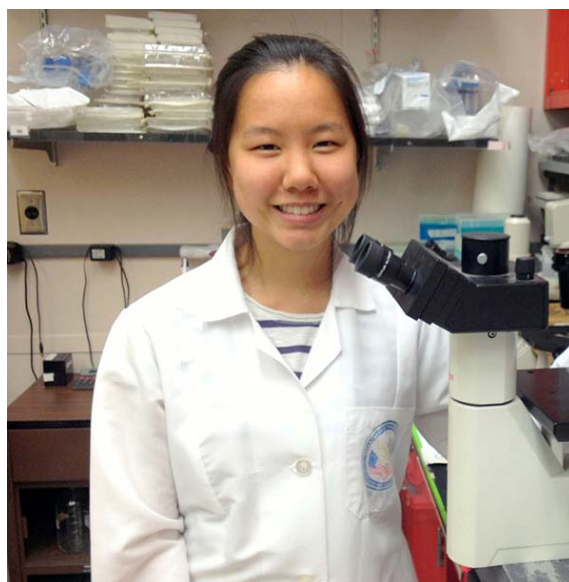
"I set out to create a new medically-related project that would not only bring smiles to the people we helped, but would also have a multiplier effect on the lives we touched," he explained.

A UC San Diego senior and aspiring physician studying biochemistry and cell biology, Robert is part of the American Medical Student Association at UC San Diego, a student organization for aspiring medical professionals. He engages other members in bringing StRIVE to local classrooms, where they help educate disabled students ages 18 to 22 in transitional and vocational skills. His program is run in partnership with the Transitional Resources and Adult Community Education program in the San Diego Unified School District.

With the Strauss Foundation grant, Robert plans to expand StRIVE into a county-wide program, with the hope of reaching more than 700 local disabled students. "I'm humbled that the Strauss Foundation chose to fund this project over many other equally impressive programs," said Robert. "The grant is a source of validation for all of the work we've put into StRIVE and will enable us to expand the reach of the program to twice as many classrooms."

In addition, Angela Zou, a junior at UC San Diego majoring in bioengineering and bioinformatics, recently received a Goldwater Scholarship, a national award given to students who have outstanding potential and intend to pursue research careers in mathematics, the natural sciences or engineering. Universities are allowed only four undergraduate nominations per year.

"Being named a Goldwater Scholar is a really big honor," said Angela. "I love research, and to have that recognized and encouraged by the Goldwater Foundation means a lot to me."



Angela Zou

Angela is conducting research in the lab of Weg M.

Ongkeko, M.D., Ph.D., who is a physician-scientist in the department of surgery at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. She is investigating the role of non-protein-coding RNA in the progression of head and neck cancer.

Angela entered UC San Diego in the Medical Scholars Program, which grants up to 12 California high school students admission to the UC San Diego School of Medicine, and plans to obtain a joint M.D/Ph.D. degree. Her goal is to be able to understand, by sequencing data, how disease develops, mutates and spreads to be able to effectively generate clinical therapies.

“I am grateful that UC San Diego offers of opportunities for undergraduates to contribute intellectually through research and take part in the process of discovering new information in their field,” said Angela.

For more information about undergraduate research opportunities at UC San Diego, visit the Academic Enrichment Programs [webpage](#).

MEDIA CONTACT

Erika Johnson, 858-534-9372, erjohnson@ucsd.edu

UC San Diego's [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via studio@ucsd.edu. To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.