

Eight UCSD Undergraduates Join Other Scholars From Across Nation At Annual NCUR Research Conference

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Undergraduate Marcella Evans (left), one of eight research scholars who will represent UCSD at the noted NCUR conference, discusses her scientific investigation of cholesterol-lowering drugs with Faculty Mentor Dr. Beatrice Golomb, Department of Medicine.

Eight undergraduates from the University of California, San Diego will join other students from campuses across the country in April at the 20 th Anniversary celebration of the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) to present findings on individual research studies they have conducted under faculty mentors.

The conference - which reflects the growing emphasis that universities and colleges nationwide are placing on undergraduate research in all disciplines of study - will be held April 6-8 at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, and is expected to draw more than 3,000 undergraduate scholars who will present their research orally or via poster display before peers and faculty.

NCUR, established in 1987, partners with college and university faculty, students, administrators and others in promoting undergraduate research excellence in higher education. Its annual research conference for undergraduates is one of the nation's largest and most respected, and has expanded from being heavily rooted in the sciences to today embracing other academic majors, including the humanities, arts and social sciences.

Representing UCSD at this year's conference are eight undergraduates from Student Affairs' Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP) unit. AEP programs motivate and prepare UCSD undergraduates for entry into master's, doctoral or professional school degree programs. Much of AEP's mission involves providing students (many of whom are the first in their family to attend college) with hands-on research experiences with faculty mentors, the opportunity to present research findings at local, statewide and national undergraduate research conferences, and other opportunities.

The eight AEP students attending NCUR are:

Marcella Evans - Major: Animal Physiology and Neuroscience. Oral presentation: *Cognitive Adverse Effects of Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs: Results of a Patient-Targeted Survey*. Evans is affiliated with AEP's McNair Program, the California Alliance for Minority Participation in Science, Engineering and Mathematics Program (CAMP), and the Health and Medical Professions Preparation Program (HMP3). Faculty Mentor: Dr. Beatrice Golomb, Medicine.

Luis Guerrero -- Major: Mathematics. Poster presentation: *Exploration of Khovanov Homology and Link Cobordisms*. AEP affiliations: CAMP, and University of California Leadership Excellence through Advanced Degrees (UC LEADS), and Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics Scholarship (CSEMS). Faculty Mentor: Dr. Justin Roberts, Mathematics.

Andrew Jan- Major s: Political Science and History. Oral presentation: *Reexamining Chinese Military Reform from a Western Perspective 1911-1929*. AEP affiliation: McNair Program. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Jeeyang Baum, Political Science.

Joshua Kellison - Major: Psychology. Oral Presentation: *The Role of Attachment Behaviors in Toddler's ERPs While Viewing Pictures of Their Mothers and Strangers*. AEP affiliation: McNair Program. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Leslie Carver, Psychology.

Thien Nguyen -- Majors: Mathematics and Economics. Oral presentation: *The Extension of Case-Based Theory*. AEP affiliation: McNair Program. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Mark Machina, Economics.

Oscar Rebolledo-Mayoral - Major: Chemical Physics. Poster presentation: *Expression and NMR Structure Determination of Recombinant Human Tropomyosin Isoform 5 and Its Mutants*. AEP affiliation: CAMP and McNair Programs. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Stanley Opella, Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Phong Wu -- Major: Philosophy. Oral presentation: *Revisiting Normativity*. AEP affiliation: McNair Program. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Richard Arneson, Philosophy.

Dmitri Young- Major: Psychology. Oral presentation: *Size Matters: An Investigation into the Varying Extreme Amounts in the Ultimatum Paradigm*. AEP affiliation: McNair Program. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Edmund Fantino, Psychology.

David Artis, Ph.D., director of AEP, says that there has been a gradual build-up to the office's support of student participation in scholarly meetings like NCUR. "We've always considered individual requests from students for assistance with the costs of attending conferences," he says. "In the last few years, we decided to invest as much as possible in enabling our students to participate in academic conferences, since we consider this a critical part of their scholarly development. We've become much more proactive in notifying them of opportunities to present their work in front of faculty members and their peers and in encouraging them to submit proposals and abstracts."

Students Learn Important Skills by Presenting at Research Conferences

"Many undergraduates think research projects end with completing an experiment or turning in a paper," Artis says. "Faculty mentors teach them not only techniques, but also the necessity of sharing their results with others and joining the larger scholarly conversation about their fields of interests. We work with students and their mentors to provide that experience for as many of them as we can."

He adds: "For a while, we were limited to supporting their travel mostly to regional or state conferences. We've had to be creative, but we are now finding ways to send students all over the place. After several years of supporting AEP students presenting at SCCUR (the Southern California Conference on Undergraduate Research), it seemed natural for us to offer them a chance to present at NCUR."

Artis says the students AEP is sending to NCUR have already presented their findings in public, most of them more than once. "They are beginning to appreciate, however, how much presentations involve a give-and-take with a learned audience and are a regular part of a scholar's life. I think they realize now that speaking at more conferences, in more settings, in front of more people, builds their confidence, sharpens their thinking, helps them reevaluate their results, and, not incidentally, strengthens their graduate school applications."

Thomas Brown, Ph.D., coordinator of AEP's McNair Program, says such exposure also heightens career success and motivation for students, giving them a broader perspective on research. "It not only allows them to be heard, but, just as importantly, it gives them an opportunity to learn about the work that their peers in a wide range of academic disciplines are doing, and enhances their understanding of their own role in the greater academic quest for insight and knowledge."

Says Jacqueline Azize-Brewer, Ph.D., coordinator of UCSD's CAMP initiative: "It's very important that CAMP students, and other undergraduates from scientific disciplines, get a chance to meet and interact with students from non-scientific backgrounds and vice versa - just to realize that there are numerous pathways to becoming a scholar."

In addition, says Artis, exposure to conferences such as NCUR can have a positive impact on further encouraging underrepresented, low-income and first-generation college students toward their chosen fields.

AEP will pay for its students' essential expenses to the NCUR gathering out of its programs and general funds -- including air fare, hotel accommodations, conference registration, and meals not included with the cost of the conference.

For more information on the 2006 NCUR conference, visit: www.unca.edu. For additional details on AEP, go to: <http://aep.ucsd.edu/default2.htm>

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