

Two UCSD Graduate Students Awarded Prestigious NSF Fellowships

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Artie Suckow and Gloria Kuo, students in the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) School of Medicine's Biomedical Sciences graduate program, have been awarded highly prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) graduate fellowships for 2006-07.

"These NSF fellowships are very competitive. The ability of our students to compete nationally for two of these fellowships reflect in a very positive way on the quality of the students in our biomedical sciences program," said Jack E. Dixon, Ph.D., Dean for Scientific Affairs and Professor of Pharmacology and Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the UCSD School of Medicine.

Both Kuo and Suckow have just completed their first year in the UCSD biomedical sciences graduate program. Kuo will be studying neurodevelopment in the laboratory of Joseph Gleeson, M.D., Director of the Neurogenetics Laboratory at the UCSD School of Medicine and associate professor in the Department of Neurosciences. Suckow will pursue his Ph.D. degree in a combined project with Steven Chessler, M.D., Ph.D. assistant professor of medicine in the translational oncology program at the UCSD Moores Cancer Center, and Palmer Taylor, Ph.D. professor of pharmacology and Dean of UCSD's Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

"During this time, I will investigate the neuronal phenotype of the insulin secreting beta-cells-the same cells that are affected in diabetes," said Suckow. "Previous work by others, and preliminary research I've done suggests that these cells have retained the same mechanisms for insulin secretion that neurons use for neurotransmitter release."

Suckow hopes this work will change the way people think about the surface of these beta cells and - the hope of most graduate students - that it will also result in peer-reviewed publications in top-tier journals.

"I would have never imagined myself as a scientist, much less a graduate student, had it not been for the example set by my mentors," said Kuo. "Their encouragement and insight broadened my vision of what I could accomplish and made me brave enough to follow where my interests take me. Besides being a scientist, it is important for me to encourage science education and science awareness."

The 2006-07 NSF fellowships are for a three-year period and provide an annual stipend of \$30,000 and fees, plus nonresident tuition for first-year students.

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