

A Taste of the Scholarly Life: 168 Undergrads from Across the Nation Gather at UCSD Conference to Present Research Findings

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Espoir Kyubwa, a UCSD Bioengineering major, presents findings from his research titled *In Vitro Calcification of Articular Cartilage Explants*.

Close to 170 undergraduates from the University of California, San Diego and other campuses from around the region and country gathered this month at the 2007 UCSD Summer Research Conference to present findings on a wide range of research studies conducted under faculty mentors.

The students -- representing a host of academic disciplines including engineering, biological and physical sciences and arts and humanities - conducted their individual research projects this summer under the guidance of faculty from UCSD, San Diego State University, Salk Institute and elsewhere.

Sponsored by UCSD's office of Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP), the annual Summer Research Conference allows undergraduates to share results of scholarly investigations from different academic areas with their peers, faculty members, university staff and other interested individuals.

"Gatherings like the Summer Research Conference represent a growing trend among higher education institutions to offer undergraduates opportunities to participate in significant research projects outside the classroom," says David Artis, Ph.D., director of AEP, a unit of Student Educational Advancement, in Student Affairs.

These hands-on experiences, he says, "help prepare students for graduate school, and enhance their critical thinking skills. At the end of the assistantship," Artis adds, "many students consider the experience of working closely with a faculty member on a particular project to be the highlight of their undergraduate educational experience." Additionally, the experience also serves to encourage more ethnically underrepresented and low-income student participants at UCSD and other institutions to actively pursue doctoral degrees and careers in research and college teaching, says Artis.

"Many of these students are already contemplating attending Ph.D. programs, medical school, or other professional schools following graduation," he says.

And participation in undergraduate research-related experiences is not only expected to increase, but is also expected to help groom leaders of tomorrow, says Veronica Henson-Phillips, coordinator of AEP's Faculty Mentor Program and the Summer Research Conference. "The size and diverse community of this year's group of scholars represents the strong and growing interest that we are seeing in undergraduate research at UCSD and across the nation. We are extremely proud of our students' research achievements this summer and of their time and commitment to scholarly work. We believe these students will help lead the next generation of scientists, scholars, professional and government leaders, and university leaders....and we sincerely thank the faculty who served as mentors, giving the students such a rewarding experience."

Contributing substantially to the annual conference's strength is the support its participating scholars receive from various local, state and national funding agencies. Funding sources for this year's conference included:

California Alliance for Minority Participation in the Sciences, Engineering and Math (CAMP); The Amgen Scholars (AMGEN); California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Cal(IT)²); Hughes Scholars Program (HSP); Center for Theoretical Biological Physics Research Experience for Undergraduates (Center for Theoretical Biological Physics REU); Medical Scientists Training Program (MSTP); Office of Graduate Studies and Research Summer Training Academy for Research in the Sciences (STARS); Physics Research Experience for Undergraduates (Physics REU); UC Fund/Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, UCSD (UC Fund); UC Leadership Excellence Through Advanced Degrees (UC LEADS); UCSD Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program; SDSU Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and the USD Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program.

"We are especially pleased to welcome AMGEN and HSP scholars as Summer Research Conference participants for the first time this year," says Henson-Phillips.

Besides UCSD, participating students this year hailed from such colleges and universities as: San Diego State University; San Diego University; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; University of Puerto Rico; University of California, Berkeley; University of Texas, Austin; Swarthmore College; University of Guam; California State University, Los Angeles; Dartmouth College; Duke University; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; University of Maine, and University of New Mexico.

With similar aims as the summer conference, AEP also sponsors an Undergraduate Research Conference each spring specifically for UCSD undergraduates.

For further information on these and other AEP programs designed to prepare undergraduates for graduate school and professional school, visit: <http://aep.ucsd.edu/default2.htm>.

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