

UC San Diego

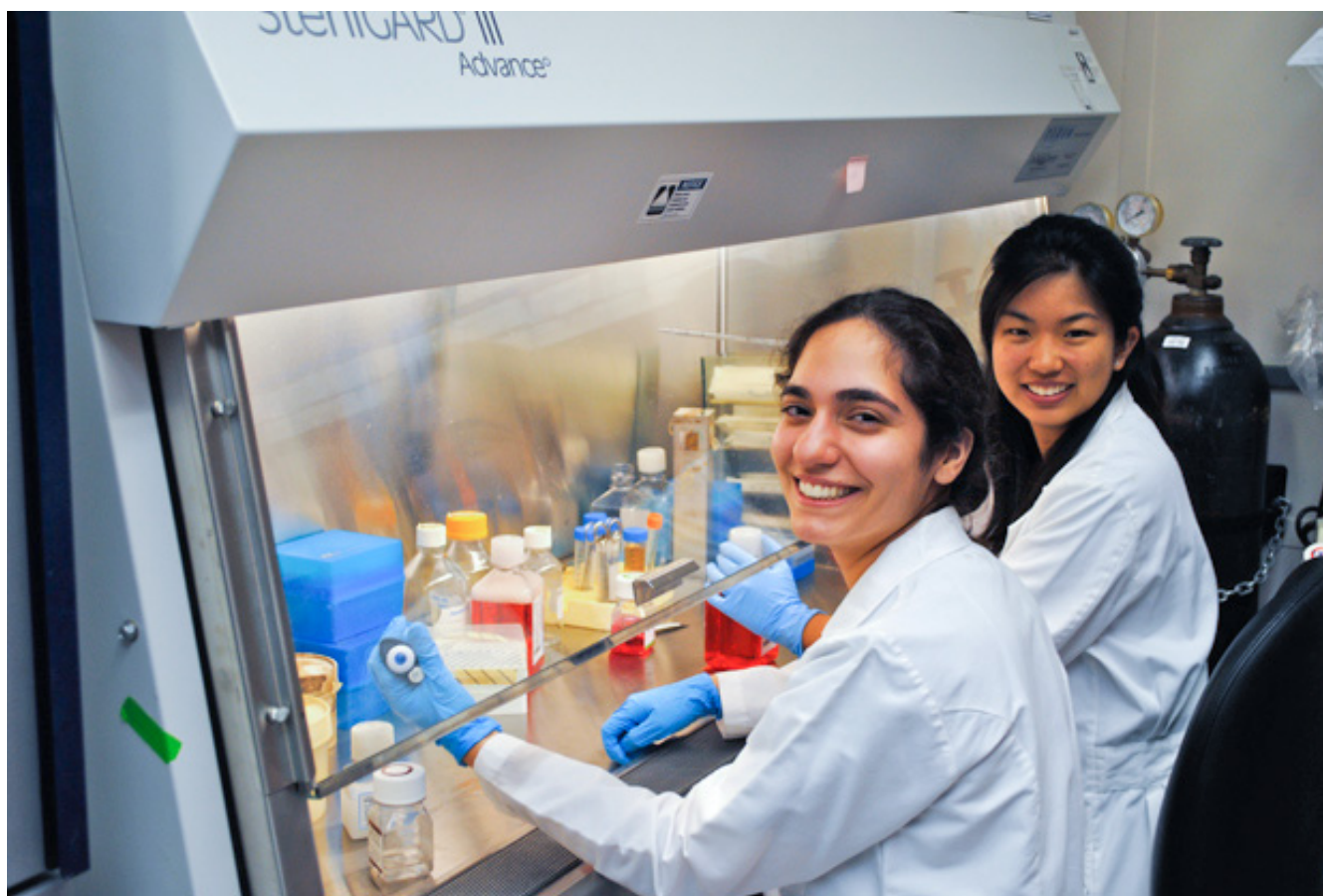
# UC San Diego News Center

---

June 04, 2012 | By Kristin Luciani

## Two UC San Diego Students Receive Prestigious Goldwater Scholarships

The university has had six Goldwater Scholars in the past three years



*Selena Kuo and Elham Rahimy, two undergraduates researching cancer stem cells, are among this year's recipients of the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship.*

Selena Kuo and Elham Rahimy, undergraduates at the University of California, San Diego, have both received the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the most prestigious award in the country conferred upon undergraduates studying the sciences. The scholarship awards \$7,500 per year to support outstanding students who plan to pursue careers in science, engineering and

math. A highly competitive national award, universities may nominate only four undergraduates per year for the Goldwater Scholarship. This year, a total of 282 students were selected on the basis of academic merit from a field of 1,123 applications.

“I couldn’t believe it when I saw my name on the list of Goldwater Scholars,” said Rahimy. “Not only that, but one of my good friends—Selena—was also on the list, and that just made the moment that much better. I am so appreciative and honored to receive this award.”

Kuo and Rahimy have plans to pursue careers in medicine and research, and are both investigating cancer stem cells under Weg M. Ongkeko, M.D., Ph.D., who is a physician-scientist in the department of surgery. According to Rahimy, cancer stem cells tend to be resistant to conventional chemotherapy and, like normal stem cells, possess the ability to self-renew and differentiate. “If we can understand the mechanisms of these cancer stem cells, eventually our findings could significantly contribute to the development of more effective treatment strategies for cancer patients,” she said.

Kuo and Rahimy credit their advisor, Ongkeko, with helping them to achieve the Goldwater Scholarship. “Dr. Ongkeko is a fantastic mentor,” Kuo said. “He goes out of his way to help each one of his students. None of this would have been possible without him.”

The UC San Diego students were nominated by David Artis, dean of Undergraduate Research Initiatives, who works with students interested in applying for national competitive awards, like the Goldwater Scholarship. “Selena and Elham are outstanding students and I am confident they will have successful careers as scientists,” said Artis. “And on top of everything, they are good friends and collaborative research partners.”

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

---

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](mailto: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>.