

SUMMER RESEARCH ACADEMY 2009

PEER MENTORS

Lead Mentors



Daniel Leventhal

Majors: Molecular Biology & Microbiology and Biotechnology

Research Project Title: Cytokeratin 8/ Green Fluorescent Protein Fusion Construct: Developing a Model System for the Study of a Potential Carcinoma Target Protein.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Mark T. Muller

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Honors in the Major (HIM), Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Student Mentor Academic Research Teams (SMART), Summer Research Academy (SRA) participant and mentor, Showcase for Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE), Molecular Biology and Microbiology Program for Undergraduate Research Experience (PURE), Student Undergraduate Research Council (SURC) and Student Editor of the Undergraduate Research Journal (URJ).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Participating in intellectual discussions with numerous faculty and graduate students on topics which I find extremely interesting (cancer biology, biotechnology, etc.).

Interesting Fact: My father owned a limousine service when I was 12 and I used to miss the bus on purpose so he would have to drive me in a limo to school.



Claudia Nunez

Major: Speech-Language Pathology, M.A.

Research Project Title: Stuttering and Fluency Disorders in Bi-lingual Speakers

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Martine Vanryckeghem

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: McNair Scholars, Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Summer Research Academy (SRA) mentor, Student Undergraduate Research Council member (SURC), Showcase of Undergraduate Research (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Being able to travel, present, and receive recognition for my research.

Interesting Fact: I love building computers, playing video games, and I just started working with clients this semester.

Peer Mentors



Paul Biscardi

Major: Environmental Engineering

Research Project Title: Nitrogen Transport and Transformation Beneath Stormwater Ponds.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Marty Wanielista

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Student Mentor Academic Research Teams (SMART), Student Undergraduate Research Council Member (SURC), Showcase of Undergraduate Research of Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Standing under one of the largest rainfall simulators during its unveiling.

Interesting fact: I spent most of my sophomore year working on research in the Biology Department and currently work as an intern at the United States Geological Survey (USGS).



Natalia da Silva

Major: Art History

Research Project Title: Contemporary Altars and Votive Offerings in Florida

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kristin Congdon

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Honors in the Major (HIM), Independent Research Credit, McNair Scholars, Undergraduate Research Student Grant, Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Student Mentor Academic Research Teams (SMART), Student Undergraduate Research Council (SURC), Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE), Undergraduate Research Initiative.

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Traveling to Brazil to collect data.

Interesting Fact: When I am not researching or studying, I am dancing or practicing Capoeira.



Catherine Forrester

Major: Hospitality Management with a minor in Anthropology

Research Project Title: A Cross Cultural Study of International Employees' Work Values within the hospitality industry.

Faculty Mentors: Dr. Po-Ju Chen, Dr. Denver Severt, and Dr. Kevin Murphy

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Honors in the Major (HIM), Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Talking with various professors to gain their perspectives and hearing all their sometimes crazy and always interesting stories.

Interesting Fact: I started researching my subject after working with people from Macedonia, England, and Turkey while I was a manager at Universal Studios!



Dominique Ghannam

Majors: Molecular Biology and Microbiology and Biotechnology

Research Project Title: In Vitro Drug Testing Using Human Embryonic Stem Cells.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Peter Molnar

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Independent Research Credit, Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Summer Research Academy (SRA) participant and mentor, and Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: It is so exciting to be working on something that very few people in the world are working on.

Interesting Fact: Drug trial process can take 7-10 years for clinical trials, and 3-5 years for preclinical drug discovery, which can cost millions of dollars.



Aaron Godwin

Major: Interdisciplinary Studies (Life Sciences/Arts/Political Science)

Research Project Title: Understanding the potential impact of an invasive marine mussel: a field study examining the growth and survival of *Mytella charruana*.

Faculty Mentors: Dr. Kimberly Schneider, Dr. Eric Hoffman, Dr. Linda Walters

Research Activities and Programs: Independent Research Credit, Summer Research Academy (SRA) participant, Student Undergraduate Research Council (SURC), Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: The best part about undergraduate research is the opportunity to get to work with the professors in such a close proximity, as well as the learning experiences you gain and the opportunity you get to increase your knowledge in such a unique way.

Interesting Fact: In addition to going to school, doing research for the Biology department and working as a barista, I also work as a photographer and am the co-founder of a non-profit organization dedicated to fighting injustice and poverty in developing regions (Spoon in the Hand, Inc.).



Elizabeth Haynes

Major: Molecular and Microbiology

Research Project Title: Unilamellar Vesicles as a Tool to Understand the Mechanism of Action of Anti-Cancer Immunotoxin/Lipopolyamine Treatment.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ken Teter

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Honors In The Major (HIM) in the fall, The Department Of Molecular Biology And Microbiology Program For Undergraduate Research (PURE), Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Showcase Of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: I really enjoy the relationship I've developed with my PI, my lab, and the other student researchers I have met through Research and Mentoring Program and the Department of Molecular Biology And Microbiology Program for Undergraduate Research.

Interesting Fact: In my spare time I like to ride and race bicycles, and I also DJ at WPRK 91.5fm.



Meghan Howley

Major: Biology

Research Project Title: Presenting Identification of Embryonic Stem Cell Markers Within Tumor Cells.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kiminobu Sugaya

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: The day I came in to interview for the lab, I ended up working with the lab manager cutting human neural stem cells, giving me the shock treatment on everything I would come to learn.

Interesting Fact: I will be graduating with my bachelor's degree in a total of three years.



Ronald Jackson

Major: History

Research Project Title: Linking Struggles: A Comparative Analysis of Black Nationalism in Malcolm X and Stephen Biko

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kurt Young

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: McNair Scholars, Student Undergraduate Research Council (SURC), Showcase of Undergraduate Research (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: My best experience with undergraduate research was having the opportunity to present at the National Council for Black Studies.

Interesting Fact: In my spare time I write poetry.



Javed Khan

Majors: Political Science, History

Research Project Title: (Current) A tale of two countries: Ghana and Malaysia's divergent development paths.

Faculty Mentors: Dr. Bernadette ME Jungblut, Dr. Terri S. Fine

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Honors in the Major (HIM), Independent Research Credit, McNair Scholars, Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Summer Research Academy (SRA) participant, Student Undergraduate Research Council (SURC), Undergraduate Research Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE), Student-Mentor Academic Research Team (SMART), Undergraduate Research Journal (URJ) author.

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Sitting with a bunch of Ph.D.'s at a conference engaging in "shoptalk" and feeling like part of the crowd; and not some undergraduate who is worried about the grade he'll get in a class, but a researcher who is worried about asking and answering interesting questions.

Interesting Fact: I have exhausted most of the research programs at UCF.



Rachel Odom

Major: Biology M.S.

Research Project Title: The next killer alga? Assessing the potential invasiveness of aquarium strains of the filamentous algal genus *Chaetomorpha*.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Linda Walters

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Student-Mentor Academic Research Teams (SMART), Independent Research Credit, Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: My favorite undergraduate research experience was walking a transect line on a fallen tree trunk, 6 feet above the ground, to collect Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data.

Interesting Fact: I used to teach beginning ballroom dance lessons.



Jennifer Scott

Major: Psychology

Project Research Title: Extraversion and Workload Transition.

Faculty Mentors: Dr. James Szalma and Dr. Alisha Janowsky

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Honors in the Major (HIM), Independent Research Credit, Student Mentor Academic Research Team (SMART), Showcase Of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: My best experience has definitely been the opportunity to work closely in the lab with my professors on research topics we both enjoy.

Interesting Fact: My dog, named Bella, was used in a psychology research experiment on campus.



Binh Tran

Majors: Chemistry

Research Project Title: Metal Nanoparticles in Carbon Nanotubes for Fuel Cell Applications

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lei Zhai

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs: Independent Research Credit, Undergraduate Research Student Grant, Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE).

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: I enjoy traveling and attending seminars/conferences, as well having independent interdisciplinary projects.

Interesting Fact: I aspire to improve the current technology in bio-imaging, and possibly start a company.



Theresa Trombly

Major: Psychology

Research Project Title: Psychophysiology of Selective Mutism

Faculty Mentors: Dr. Deborah C. Beidel, Dr. Jeffery Cassisi

Undergraduate Research Activities and Programs:

Primary investigator for Psychophysiology of Selective Mutism project. Co-Therapist for Comprehensive Social Skills Training for Adolescents (CSST-A) with Asperger's Disorder (Deborah C. Beidel, PhD, Kira Levy, PhD). Co-Therapist for group cognitive behavioral therapy for children (Teri Marino-Carper, M.A.). Research Associate for Children's Emotional Study (Nina Wong, B.A.), Child Media Study (Sharron Hayes, M.A.), and Peer Helper Study (Deborah C. Beidel, PhD). Co-Chair for Local Arrangements for Association of Behavioral Cognitive Therapists Conference 2008. Summer Research Academy (SRA) participant, Student-Mentor Academic Research Teams (SMART), Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP) participant, Honors in the Major (HIM) scholar, Showcase of Undergraduate Research Excellence (SURE) presenter (Honorable Mention), Presenter at 2009 National Conference of Undergraduate Research.

Best Experience with Undergraduate Research: Listening to the parents talk about the positive effects we have made on their child's life, has by far been the best experience.

Interesting Fact: I've worked at Universal Orlando for 6 years.