

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **\$120,000 awarded to UWF students in Summer Undergraduate Research Program**

**Pensacola, Fla. – May 16, 2016** – The University of West Florida Summer Undergraduate Research Program in the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering has returned for a second year.

The 10-12 week program in the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering is funded almost entirely by external gifts and grants and allows students to work on research projects under the supervision of faculty mentors. The program is designed to provide students with hands-on experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

Private donations and grants in the amount of \$120,000 will support the 48 research students.

“It’s probably true for all the disciplines, but for the STEM disciplines in particular, you’re not competitive if you don’t have hands-on experiences in your field of study,” said Dr. Michael Huggins, dean of the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering. “We’re really trying to build the programming to help make sure that students are getting more and more of those experiences.”

To be considered for the program, students submit formal applications, including a research project proposal and statement of personal and professional objectives. The 48 students are paid \$2,500 each to work 20 to 25 hours per week in a UWF research lab with a faculty mentor.

Research projects are clustered in the following areas: Biological and Biomedical, Coastal and Marine Studies, Curriculum Development and Evaluation, Data Science and Informatics, Energy, Intelligent Systems, and Material and Molecular Science.

Projects include research focusing on the detection and origin of DDT in wetland sediments in Escambia Bay. Another project examines offshore aeolian sediment transport on nourished and non-nourished beaches.

Biology student Amy Brower will be working on a project using environmental DNA to investigate the presence of Mooneye fish in the Mobile River Basin. The Mooneye is a critical

species that is endemic to North America and is declining in population throughout its range in Alabama, Brower said. Dr. Alexis Janosik, an assistant professor in the Department of Biology, will be Brower's faculty mentor on the project.

"The Summer Undergraduate Research Program was of particular interest to me because of its emphasis on research in ways that are unattainable for students to receive in a classroom setting. Specifically, I am gaining hands-on experience and training in the field of Molecular Biology, and will gain valuable mentorship from working with Dr. Janosik," Brower said. "Skills gained through this experience will help me to be successful in my chosen field for graduate school in molecular genetics of marine species."

The program will end with a summer research celebration during which students will present the results of their projects.

"It's part of their professional development to be able to present their science to a general audience," Huggins said. "We're looking forward to another successful program."

For more information on the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering, visit [uwf.edu/cse](http://uwf.edu/cse).

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*See attached photo of Dr. Karen Molek, assistant professor of chemistry, and UWF student Aaron Mena in the UWF chemistry lab during the 2015 Summer Undergraduate Research Program*



**About the [University of West Florida](#):** Founded in 1963, the University of West Florida is a vibrant, distinctive institution of higher learning with undergraduate, graduate and targeted research programs. With multiple locations in Northwest Florida, the University serves a student population of more than 12,000. Dedicated to helping students realize their full potential, UWF favors small class sizes with quality teacher-scholars innovative, hands-on learning and leadership opportunities.

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