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New program provides funding for UWF students to travel for research

Pensacola, Fla. – May 23, 2016 – A new program in the University of West Florida Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering is providing funding for four students to perform research at other academic institutions around the country. The Research Experience Away Program - launched in Summer 2016 - provides students with up to \$7,500 each to help offset travel expenses.

“It’s a different indicator on a resume if you’ve had that kind of an experience,” said Dr. Michael Huggins, dean of the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering. “We want our students to be competitive for the best jobs in the country. In order to do that, we need to provide them the best experiences in the country, and that means sometimes going away for research experiences.”

To qualify for the program, students must have a 3.0 or higher GPA in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics degree program; have at least one semester of research experience at UWF; have documented acceptance into a research program or laboratory at another research university, research center or other similar institution; and continue as a UWF student for at least one additional semester after their research-away experience.

Some of the first students participating in the UWF Research Away Experience Program will conduct research at institutions including Johns Hopkins University and Brigham Young University.

Biology student Rachel Richardson will spend her summer working on the coral reefs in Moorea, French Polynesia, with Dr. Robert Carpenter of California State University, Northridge at the Richard Gump South Pacific Research Station site established by the National Science Foundation in 2004 and operated by the University of California, Berkeley.

Chemistry student Savannah Bifulco will be working with Dr. Jeff Rothstein at Johns Hopkins University, whose research focuses on the role of nucleocytoplasmic transport in neurodegeneration. Bifulco will study the role that nucleocytoplasmic transport plays in frontotemporal dementia or Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

“The Research Experience Away that I am attending is special because it is tailored specifically for students who wish to obtain an M.D./Ph.D. degree like me,” Bifulco said. “Since this is a special program for aspiring M.D./Ph.D. students, it greatly increases my chances of being admitted into very competitive programs after my undergraduate degree.”

Graduates of M.D./Ph.D. programs, a dual doctoral degree for physician–scientists, often go on to become faculty members at medical schools, universities and research institutes. M.D./Ph.D. programs are some of the most competitive programs in all of the STEM fields. Having participated in experiences at world-renown research institutions, UWF students, such as Bifulco, will greatly increase their competitiveness for these highly sought-after degree programs.

In addition, nine students from the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering are participating in competitive programs funded by the host institutions or from grants awarded to UWF.

Students receiving support from these programs will conduct research at the University of Illinois, Air Force Research Laboratory at Eglin Air Force Base, the U.S. Department of Energy, Georgia Institute of Technology and several other institutions.

A portion of the funding for the Research Experience Away Program comes from the \$5 million gift long-time supporter Harold E. ‘Hal’ Marcus gave earlier this year to the College of Science and Engineering, which was named in his honor.

For more information on the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering, visit uwf.edu/cse.

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See attached headshot of Dr. Michael Huggins, dean of the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering



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.