



NEWS

Contact: David Bobbitt
(410) 385-6315
Bobbitt@umbi.umd.edu

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Minority Scholars Pursue High Impact Science Summer Research Internships

Baltimore, MD—While many college students spent their summers flipping burgers or lounging at the beach, Kimberly Jennings spent the summer researching how small microbes called dinoflagellates cause disease in the blue crab. “I started doing hands-on research from day one,” commented Jennings. “I am now more sure than ever that I want to pursue a career in science. And my research is quite useful for Maryland, because disease impacts on the quality of product the seafood industry produces as well as on the environmental conditions in the Chesapeake Bay.”

The goal of the program at the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute’s Center of Marine Biotechnology (UMBI’s COMB) is to prepare minority students for careers in research, public policy, and management of fisheries and to foster research collaborations.

“American students are generally not pursuing degrees in science, and the rate is even worse among minority students. We want to excite achievement oriented minority students by placing them in real, high impact lab research,” said program coordinator Dr. Rosemary Jagus, a faculty member at COMB.

This summer is the fifth year that COMB has hosted the Living Marine Resources Cooperative Science Center (LMRCSC) Summer Internship Program, sponsored by the Educational Partnership Program of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). UMBI is one of six institutes within the LMRCSC and provides hands-on research opportunities for minority students from the other partners as well as from local minority serving institutions during an 8-10-week long internship. UMBI’s sister institution University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) is the lead partner in the LMRCSC program. UMES is a historically African-American serving institution.

“This partnership offers an intensive research opportunity in molecular biology and biotechnology that students usually cannot find at their home institution,” commented Dr. Joe Pitula of UMES, a mentor of many LMRCSC students throughout the history of the program.

This summer, seven students from UMES, including Jennings participated: Sylvia Dasi, David Hall, Scha-Chia Murphy, Daniel Shelton, Ashlei Walker and Kimberly Williams. Other student researchers included Ebony Andrews and Heidi Thomas from Coppin State University, as well Sheree Brooks of Savannah State University, and Shanna Chambliss from Delaware State University.

The program culminated in a day long presentation of their research by each student to their parents, mentors, and other UMBI researchers. At the 2006 presentation, COMB Director Dr. Yonathan Zohar told the students, “We are all excited about you gaining a better understanding of the marine sciences as well as an appreciation for the strength of biotechnology in approaching problems in fisheries and aquaculture. We hope this experience will influence your career choices and that you pursue further learning opportunities in marine biology and biotechnology.”

Student research projects focused on disease, reproduction, and development using oysters, finfish and Maryland blue crabs as subjects.

One of five centers forming UMBI and located in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, COMB researchers apply the tools of modern biology and biotechnology to study, protect and enhance marine and estuarine resources.

With research centers in Baltimore, Rockville, and College Park, the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute is the newest of 13 institutions forming the University System of Maryland. UMBI has 85 ladder-ranked faculty and a 2006 budget of \$60 million. Celebrating the institution’s 20th year of service to Maryland and the world, UMBI is led by microbiologist and former biotechnology executive Dr. Jennie C. Hunter-Cevera. For more information visit www.umbi.umd.edu.

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Students Kimberly Jennings and Scha-Chia Murphy share their research projects with Dr. Eric Schott of UMBI COMB and Dr. Joe Pitula of UMES.