SUMMER INTERNS CONDUCT CANCER RESEARCH IN HAWAI'I

University of Hawai'i Cancer Center faculty members mentor students; build Hawai'i’s future workforce

HONOLULU - Nineteen high school and college students have been chosen to conduct cancer research this summer at the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center.

The interns were chosen in a highly competitive process from public and private schools across Hawai'i and the nation. The students will do everything from analyze natural extracts for their potential as cancer drugs, to examine smoking habits among adolescents.

The program boosts Hawai'i's efforts to build the state's science and technology workforce, and provides valuable experience and encouragement to local youth. Combined with summer programs for high school students at the John A. Burns School of Medicine, the internship program exposes young people to possible careers in the life sciences and connects them with professional contacts that can assist them as they progress. Past students from the Kakaako Health Campus programs have gone on to earn advanced degrees from top universities before returning to work in Hawai'i as physicians or scientists.

"These programs are a triple win. They benefit the students, the University, and the state of Hawai'i, which has a looming physician shortage and which needs an
educated, competitive workforce in scientific and medical fields," said Dr. Jerris Hedges, dean of the John A. Burns School of Medicine and interim director of the UH Cancer Center. "Encouraging local youth to explore careers in the life sciences will help Hawaii address its growing shortage of physicians and help build a more diversified economy."

The Cancer Center's program places interns under the guidance of faculty mentors, who help them gain research experience and complete an independent project. Interns must also present their research findings to their peers and to Cancer Center faculty. Participants receive a stipend for their work, which takes place over a two-month span.

Kiana Frank, a Kamehameha graduate who interned at the Cancer Center 11 years ago, got her PhD in molecular biology from Harvard. Today she is an oceanographic researcher at UH Manoa.

"The experience I gained as an intern at the Cancer Center cemented my career aspiration to be a research scientist. The continued mentorship over the past 12 years has been invaluable to my coming back home and getting established here at the University of Hawaii," said Frank.

Andrea Jurado, a Waipahu High School graduate who interned at the Cancer Center in the summer of 2013, now attends Columbia University.

"All the exposure I had in the lab was so important. Most people don't know how to use advanced lab technology, or about proper etiquette and technique, but I learned that during my internship. All the lab experiences I had made me a very competitive candidate for college-level research," said Jurado.

The Cancer Center internship program is supported in part by the NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG), CURE Supplement 3P30 CA01789-14S1, and an endowment from the Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Company.

The Cancer Center college interns are:
Matthew Agsalud (Punahou), from Creighton University
In Ichinotsubo (Punahou), from the University of Washington
Dan Ju (Kaiser), from Johns Hopkins University
Nick Lee (Kamehameha), from Creighton University
Philip Lin (Punahou), from Johns Hopkins University
Mariah Moncada (Bellevue East), from UH Manoa
Jeremie Oliver (Sequim), from Brigham Young University
Nicholas Simon (Punahou), from Boston College
Sean Saito (Maryknoll), from UH Manoa
Beau Sylvester (Punahou), from University of Southern California
Brandon Taylor (American School of Correspondence), from UH Manoa
Kristen Valencia (Sacred Hearts Academy) from the University of Portland
Eric Wolfe (Kaiser), from Creighton University

The Cancer Center high school interns are:
Kristine Julian (Waipahu)
Blessie Vergara (Leilehua)
Hannah Mettias (Hanalani Schools)
Ashley Lee (Kamehameha)
Lyneh Manuel (Aiea)
Bryanna Lilo (University Laboratory School)


The UH Cancer Center is one of 68 research institutions designated by the National Cancer Institute. Affiliated with the University of Hawai`i at Manoa, the center is dedicated to eliminating cancer through research, education, and improved patient care. Learn more at www.uhcancercenter.org. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UHCancerCenter. Follow us on Twitter @UHCancerCenter.