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Beckman Scholars Program to Support Undergraduate Science Research at UCSB

In a first for the campus, UC Santa Barbara has been selected for the Beckman Scholars Program, which provides support for undergraduates conducting interdisciplinary research in the chemical and biological sciences.

The scholarship awards will support six undergraduate students over the course of three years as they conduct research under the direction of faculty mentors from the Departments of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Chemical Engineering, Materials, and Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology. The project's principal investigator is Galen Stucky, professor in the Departments of Chemistry and Biochemistry and of Materials.

"The Beckman Scholars Program is a powerful enabling resource for the development of creativity and independence in our younger generation," said Stucky. "The UCSB academic community deeply appreciates the Beckman Scholars Program award, and the very special opportunity that it presents for furthering the educational aspirations and dreams of its undergraduate student community."

In addition to Stucky, other faculty members involved in the research program include Patrick Daugherty, associate professor of chemical engineering; Kathleen Foltz, associate professor of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology; Songi

Han, professor of chemistry and biochemistry; Craig Hawker, professor of chemistry and of materials and director of the Materials Research Laboratory; Kenneth Kosik, professor of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology, and co-director and Harriman Professor in Neuroscience Research at the campus's Neuroscience Research Institute; Samir Mitragotri, professor of chemical engineering; Kevin Plaxco, professor of chemistry and biochemistry; Joel Rothman, professor and chair of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology; and Todd Squires, assistant professor of chemical engineering.

The biomedical research projects supported by the award are diverse, and they promise to yield exciting discoveries. Among them are Stucky's work using inorganic species and surfaces to define biomolecular assembly and biosystem processes, and the biogenetic synthesis of inorganic materials using sequenced polypeptide substrates; and Rothman's project addressing the molecular mechanism of cell proliferation and death, stem cell specification, and mechanisms that regulate cell identity and reprogramming using molecular genetics and functional genomics through RNAi-based screens for novel functions involved in these processes and phenotypic output analysis in the nematode C. elegans.

"The Beckman Scholars Program is designed to give outstanding undergraduates a fast start toward a career in research," said Michael Witherell, UCSB's vice chancellor of research. "I think the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation recognizes that we might well have another undergraduate on campus today who could turn out to be another Carol Greider, winning a Nobel Prize." Greider, who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2009, is a graduate of UCSB's College of Creative Studies.

Established in 1997 by the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, the Beckman Scholars Program is an invited program for accredited universities and four-year colleges in the United States. The foundation provides grants to nonprofit research institutions for innovative scientific research in chemistry and the life sciences, and, more specifically, to foster the invention of new methods, instruments and materials that will open new avenues of research in science.

The founder of Beckman Instruments, Inc. and a leader in establishing the modern instrumentation industry, Beckman is considered one of the top five inventors of scientific instruments. He created devices that revolutionized the study and understanding of human biology.

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