

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

UMMC GRADUATE SCHOOL'S DISCOVERY U SUMMER-RESEARCH PROGRAMS LINK LOCAL UNDERGRADUATES WITH LAB SCIENCE

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JACKSON, Miss. – Although Jackson native Thomas Rousselle spent this summer with catfish, he didn't hook, farm or fry.

Rather, during a biomedical research program at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, he researched catfish immune systems in science lab.

The catfish research results can go on to change the way doctors treat allergies and infections – or improve the way Mississippi catfish farmers raise their fish.

Later this month Rousselle will return to the University of Southern Mississippi for his junior year as a microbiology and psychology double major.

He was among more than 60 undergraduates from around the state who enrolled in Discovery U programs this summer sponsored by the School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences at UMMC.

Through various programs, Discovery U exposes K-12 and undergraduate students to biomedical research. In its Summer Undergraduate Research Experience, or SURE program, Rousselle and 37 other students got 10 weeks of hands-on biomedical research and training on laboratory techniques and equipment.

They attend Friday-lunchtime discussions on science-career paths, hosted by Medical Center faculty and post-doctoral fellows. And, as participants in the SURE program, they each received a \$3,500 stipend.

"The SURE program not only gives undergraduate students hands-on research training, but opens up a world of career possibilities that they can pursue with a master's or Ph.D in basic sciences. In fact, SURE is the main way we recruit for the graduate school," said Dr. Joey Granger, UMMC distinguished professor of physiology and graduate school dean.

This year's SURE program closed Aug. 2 with a half-day symposium where each participant presented his or her research in front of the other students, laboratory technicians, mentors and faculty members.

Dr. Michael Ryan, associate professor of physiology, co-directs Discovery U along with Dr. Michael Garrett, associate professor of pharmacology.

"In my view, one of the major benefits is giving students these opportunities is they can see how research is important to human health and disease," Ryan said. "A lot of times students aren't familiar with biomedical research so by bringing them in and going out to their classrooms, we build pipelines for the next generation of scientists."

Mary Canterbury, Discovery U program administrator, said the caliber of students keeps improving. And number of young, scientific minds each year came away interested in the graduate school's master's and doctoral programs.

"This year we had undergraduates from colleges all over Mississippi and from Harvard, Carnegie Mellon and Notre Dame," she said.

Rousselle, a 2010 Central Hinds Academy graduate, worked in the laboratory of Dr. Melanie Wilson, UMMC professor of microbiology.

"This program was very helpful. It was the first hands-on biomedical research experience I've had," Rousselle said.

This summer, 62 undergraduates participated in Discovery U programs at the Medical Center. SURE accepted 38 students out of 175 applicants. The remaining 24 students were enrolled in various other Discovery U programs.

For more information on SURE, go to graduate-school.umc.edu/SummerResearch.html

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Please forward this message to colleagues who might be interested. If you wish to be removed from this list or know of a colleague to add, send an e-mail message to: jmazurak@umc.edu.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's health-care enterprise includes five hospitals and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's population. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at (601) 984-1100 or umc.edu/publicaffairs