

CUR 2006 Student Research Experience



Megan M. Bell

Class: Senior

Age: 21

Major: Biology

Hometown: St. James, LA

Program Information

Name: Center of Excellence Scholars Program

Length of Program Participation: 10 months

Location: Xavier University of Louisiana College of Pharmacy

The Center for Undergraduate Research: How did you find out about the program?

Megan Bell: I received an information packet in the mail after I was accepted into the College of Pharmacy (COP).

CUR: Did the program pay for travel expenses, room and board, meals, etc.?

MM: Yes.

CUR: What type of research did you do in the program?

MM: From October to March I worked with a microbiologist on campus. I plated bacteria, isolated proteins from bacteria, made nutrient agar and ran electrophoresis on bacteria DNA. In other words, I was training to do a larger research project. Later, between June and July I was a research student with a professor at LSU's dental school. Our focus was breast cancer metastasis. I grew breast cancer cultures and manipulated the cells using proteins/substrates and chemokines.

CUR: Did the program offer sufficient hands-on experience?

MM: Yes.

CUR: If any, what activities did you do outside of the program?

MM: I was a member of several pharmacy organizations and I was an active member of a local church.

CUR: Did this program exceed your initial expectations?

MM: Yes

CUR: How has this program helped you in regards to your major or future goals?

MM: I have decided to change my major from pharmacy to biology and I have a better idea of what I want in a career. Before I participated in this program I thought I wanted to become a researcher, now I am about 90% sure I don't want spend my career doing bench research.

CUR: What was the most difficult aspect of your participation?

MM: The most difficult aspect of my participation was the long hours I had spent in the lab. Sometimes I had to arrive to work at 6AM and stay until 8PM or 9PM because my experiments had to be conducted at a certain time interval.

CUR: Name the best thing about your experience.

MM: The best thing about my experience was my all expense paid trip to the Experimental Biology Expo held in San Diego, CA and the Society of Toxicology conference held here in New Orleans. There were lectures there, which were a little "over my head," but it was a great experience. Now I know how the scientific community operates. They meet at various conferences and share research findings.

CUR: Would you recommend this program to others? Why or why not?

MM: I would definitely recommend this program to others because it offered me an opportunity to see that there is more to a pharmaceutical occupation than retail stores.

CUR: How can others prepare for this program before applying?

MM: Well, you must be accepted into the COP and have at least a 2.75 GPA. Prior research experience is helpful but not necessary.