

STUDENT DIRECTORY

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HARVARD-AMGEN | SCHOLARS | PROGRAM



KATIE ANEY

Gustavus Adolphus College | Biochemistry, Mathematics

Hometown: Rochester, MN

Research Interest/Area: Cancer and cellular biology

“I was born and raised in Rochester, MN, where the medically centered community sparked my interest in biomedical research. I now attend a small liberal arts college where I play collegiate tennis and study biochemistry and math. I am fascinated by the field of cancer biology, and I have had the opportunity to research genome instability as well as neuroblastoma. I also enjoy reading, ice skating and spending time with my wonderful family, including Teddy my yellow lab. I am excited to be a part of the Amgen community and spend the summer researching in Boston.”



DANIELA BARRAZA

New Mexico State University | Biochemistry and Chemistry

Hometown: Santa Teresa, New Mexico

Research Interest/Area: Molecular Pharmacology and Stem Cell Biology

“I am a first-generation Mexican-American. Although I was born in the United States, I lived in Cd. Juarez, Mexico until the age of eight when my family decided to move back to Santa Teresa, NM. I am currently a Chemistry and Biochemistry student and a MARC scholar at New Mexico State University. During my time at NMSU, I have had the opportunity of conducting Biochemistry/Microbiology research in Dr. Paola Mera’s laboratory. My research with Dr. Mera has given me the opportunity to learn about most basic and some advanced research techniques. I really enjoy the work that I do in the lab and I can definitely see myself doing this for the rest of my life. Outside of school and lab, I enjoy playing soccer, watching MLB games, and spending time with my family and friends. “



ANA KARLA CEPEDA DIAZ

Harvard | Molecular and Cell Biology

Hometown: Boca Raton, FL

Research Interest/Area: Viral Vectors/Gene Therapy

“Originally from Cuba, I spent most of my childhood in rural Mexico but recently moved to Florida. I am interested in microbial sciences and work investigating the assembly mechanisms of viral vectors used in gene therapy for sensory disorders. I have a passion for science education and social activism, which fuels my pursuit of a minor in History of Science. I serve as Co-President of the Harvard Undergraduate Research Association, promoting research, scientific and non-scientific, among undergraduates on campus. I am also a lover of the outdoors and enjoy spending time in nature.”



TANIA FABO

Harvard College | Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology

Hometown: Saugus, Massachusetts

Research Interest/Area: Cancer and Developmental Biology

“I was born in Hamburg, Germany, but have lived in Massachusetts for the past 13 years. While I unfortunately no longer speak German, I do speak French (my whole family is Cameroonian) and the tiny bit of Spanish left over from high school. I have spent a number of years doing cancer research. I currently work in a lab studying metastatic melanoma in zebrafish models and will continue to work there this summer. Outside of lab, I am very interested in health disparities and am currently planning a conference centered around Black health. In my free time, I am an Olympic-level Netflix binger (real event), having definitely watched enough TV for us to find an ice breaker somewhere!”



AMANDA HORNICK

University of Rochester | Biomedical Engineering/Cell and Tissue Engineering

Hometown: Andover, MA

Research Interest/Area: Synthetic Biology and Genetic Engineering

“Ever since I read the book "Regenesiis," by George Church and Ed Regis, I have been fascinated by synthetic biology and genetic engineering. Seeing how these fields have the potential to provide efficient, effective, and environmentally-friendly technologies to prevent, treat, and cure disease drove me to pursue biomedical engineering as a major. Currently, I work in a gene therapy lab where last summer I tested whether the gene therapy delivery method the lab uses could create antibiotic-resistant bacteria in vivo. Outside the lab, I enjoy dancing, singing, writing poetry, cooking, and working out.”



MADISON LEET

Smith College | Neuroscience, Psychology

Hometown: Brentwood, New Hampshire

Research Interest/Area: Neuroscience, Molecular Biology

“I grew up in a small town in New Hampshire, and found my passion for science and research at Smith College. My current work includes research on potential anesthetics and binding domains on the GABA-A receptor subunit. I tutor statistics and logic, and enjoy hiking and skiing. Last summer I taught forensics in Tokyo to engage young students in science; in return Japan gave me a taste for sushi, okonomiyaki, and a newfound love for travel.”



AMANDA MILLER

Texas Tech University | Biochemistry

Hometown: Frisco, TX

Research Interest/Area: Nano medicine / Nanotherapeutics

“I have always been passionate about science. I was a curious child who enjoyed reading nonfiction books about pathogenic microbes and astronomical discoveries. I fondly remember spending hours watching television programs with my father about black holes and magnetars. As I grew older, I began to believe that a career in medicine would best allow me to use my scientific understanding to help people. Naturally, Dr. John Hunter became my hero: the father of modern surgery, a grave-hunter who defied societal norms to dive into the unknown of nature and the seeming perfection of physiology. But as a result of my research experience as an undergraduate, I now greatly desire to become a researcher and faculty member at a university, to pursue a career as a full-time scientist in the field of nanotechnology.”



TARA MURTY

Harvard College | Bioengineering Neuroscience

Hometown: Amherst, MA

Research Interest/Area: Tissue Engineering, Biomaterials

“I'm from Amherst, a college town in Western Massachusetts. I now study bioengineering at Harvard, and I'm excited about the intersection of engineering and medicine, with particular research focus in tissue engineering and biomaterials. Outside of the lab, I am involved in drug and alcohol peer advising, women empowerment in STEM fields, and fundraising for cancer care and research. I also love to dance and am excited to continue eating my way through Harvard Square this summer.”



ASHTON OMDAHL

Brigham Young University | Bioinformatics

Hometown: Fairport, New York

Research Interest/Area: Computational Transcription Factor prediction; Synthetic Biology

“I grew up all over the world as a result of my father's career in the United States Foreign Service, spending time across the US, South East Asia, and South Africa. I am studying Bioinformatics and mathematics, and am particularly interested in computational protein modelling and prediction for biological systems. Last summer, I visited eastern Germany to research the wild coyote tobacco, constructing a bioinformatics pipeline to predict its transcriptional regulation. Outside of my science interests, I enjoy training and competing in triathlons, as well as making music.”



RACHEL PETHEBRIDGE

Boston University | Biomedical Engineering/Nanotechnology

Hometown: Garner, NC

Research Interest/Area: Mammalian Synthetic Biology and Dynamic Biological Systems

“I’m from Garner, North Carolina, where my experiences as a visually impaired person sparked my early interest in genetics. I attend Boston University, and my current research involves exploring putatively enhanced minimal promoters utilizing synthetic transactivators and endogenous transcription factors in human cells. Outside of the classroom, I volunteer with the STEM Pathways, am Vice-President of BU’s U-WISE club, am an active committee chair in BU Model United Nations conferences, and enjoy exercising, visiting museums and adventures!”



BRITTANY PETROS

Harvard College | Chemistry and Physical Biology

Hometown: Dracut, MA

Research Interest/Area: Computational Chemical Biology

“I grew up in a small farm town along the New Hampshire border, spending most of my days outside with my siblings and cousins. Though I entered college intending to study biology, I did not expect to develop a passion for mathematics and probability. My work in cancer genomics has allowed me to merge the two fields. Outside of academics, I run (literally) Harvard on the Move, play the flute in the Pops Orchestra, and volunteer with an elderly service program.”



MERRICK PIERSON SMELA

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities | Chemistry and Biochemistry

Hometown: Minneapolis, MN

Research Interest/Area: Chemical Biology

“For all 20 years of my life, I have lived in the same neighborhood in Minneapolis. I started taking classes at the University of Minnesota part-time in 2010, and enrolled as a full-time student in 2015, mainly focusing on chemistry, biochemistry, and mathematics. Besides taking classes, I also conduct research in an organic chemistry lab and perform outreach with student groups. Currently, I am most interested in chemical biology and metabolic engineering. I am excited to do research in these areas at Harvard this summer.”



LAURA QUINTO

Tufts University | Biochemistry

Hometown: Arlington, MA

Research Interest/Area: Molecular genetics, biochemistry, and biological engineering

“As a biochemistry major at Tufts University, I have worked for over a year in the Van Deventer Lab (a biological engineering lab), designing selective inhibitors for matrix metalloproteinase 9 using yeast display. I hope to someday research mechanisms of disease, or engineer cyanobacteria to produce biofuels. When I'm not doing research, I love biking, hiking, reading, and spending time with friends. I also love traveling, and recently spent my junior spring studying abroad in Quito, Ecuador!”



DIEGO RAMOS ORTIZ

University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez | Chemistry

Hometown: Cabo Rojo, PR

Research Interest/Area: Neurophysiology, Genetics and Cancer

“I was raised in the beach town of Cabo Rojo, PR, where I developed an infinite curiosity. As a Chemistry student, I am interested in understanding cellular mechanism at the molecular level, with my main interests being neurophysiology, genetics and cancer research. I still have not chosen a specific research field, but I'm open to learning about everything I possibly can. As an Eagle Scout, I dream of making the world a better place, in my case, by developing ways to treat diseases and give everyone a better quality of life. I currently work as a Chemistry tutor at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, because I'm passionate about teaching. In my free time, I enjoy reading, jogging and playing basketball (I'm a die-hard Celtics fan!).”



SHIV SHAH

Arizona State University | Biological Sciences (Neurobiology, Physiology & Behavior)

Hometown: Chandler, AZ

Research Interest/Area: Developmental Neurobiology

“I was born in Chicago, Illinois, but I grew up in Chandler, Arizona, a suburb just outside of Phoenix. As a rising junior at Arizona State University, I have gained an interest in early brain formation and neural circuit assembly. I currently study the cellular effects of neurological disorders on brain development in the Newbern Lab at ASU, and I look forward to continuing to pursue these interests in the future. Outside of the laboratory, I enjoy playing tennis, coordinating science outreach programs at local schools, and foraging for tasty food.”



JENNIFER SOWIN

University of Wisconsin Madison | Chemistry

Hometown: Appleton, WI

Research Interest/Area: Organometallic Chemistry

“I grew up in Appleton, WI, where I attended a small, private high school with a strong sense of community. I opted to attend a much larger college (UW Madison) for its excellent research environment. I’ve found community at UW Madison in the chemistry department, where I’m investigating palladium-catalyzed aerobic oxidation in Shannon Stahl’s research lab. I am excited to research at Harvard this summer, and continue working towards getting a Ph.D. in organic chemistry and becoming a professor/ researcher.”



EDNA STEWART

University of California, Berkeley | Molecular and Cell Biology

Hometown: San Diego, California

Research Interest/Area: Molecular Biology and Genetics

“Throughout the span of my childhood, I moved around from California to Maryland to Texas. Due to this constant displacement, I was homeschooled for two years when I was 10 years old for a consistent education. Within that time, I finished high school curriculum and graduated at the age of 12. I started community college and received my Associate's Degree in Biotechnology. Now, I am a third year undergraduate student at UC Berkeley studying Molecular and Cell Biology at the age of 17. I am passionate about lab research and hope to receive my Ph.D. degree in Molecular Biology to teach at a research institution.”



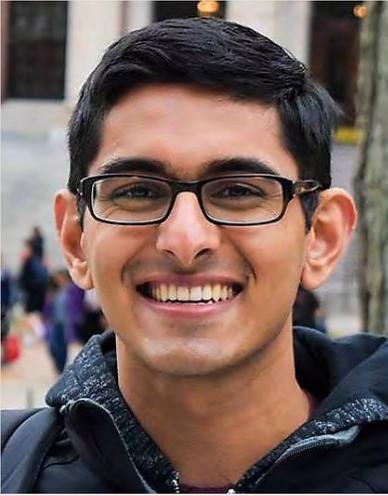
EMMA SYDIR

University of California, Berkeley | Molecular and Cell Biology: Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Hometown: San Jose, California

Research Interest/Area: Biochemistry and Biophysics

“I was born and raised in San Jose, California and am currently an undergraduate at UC Berkeley. My passion for research was sparked early and I began working at a microbiology lab studying cyanobacteria while in high school. At Berkeley, my interests have expanded and I have been able to explore biochemistry and biophysics through my work on signaling pathways which function in nutrient sensing centered at the lysosome. My future plans include going to grad school and continuing to work on understanding protein-protein and protein-lipid interactions in the context of cell signaling. When I’m not in lab, I like to ski (water and snow!), play soccer, sing, and read.”



GOPAL VASHISHTHA

Harvard College | Chemical and Physical Biology

Hometown: Irvine, CA

Research Interest/Area: Functional Genomics, Autoimmune Disease

“I grew up in the beautiful town of Irvine in Southern California. My passion for biological research was sparked by the careers of my parents, both biologists. At Harvard, I have worked as a teaching fellow for an introductory computer science course and am co-Discussion Chair for Harvard Dharma, Harvard's Hindu Student Association. I frequently travel to Chennai, Tamil Nadu to visit my grandparents and attend Carnatic music concerts. I enjoy running, biking, and playing the flute.”



CHARLOTTE WIRTH

Ohio Northern University | Molecular Biology and Biochemistry

Hometown: Crystal Lake, IL

Research Interest/Area: Molecular Biology and Epigenetics

“Coming from just outside Chicago, it was quite a transition moving to the middle of nowhere, Ohio Northern University. But, as a rising senior I can say it was a great decision. In my research at ONU, I am examining the protein CASK's function in border cell migration during *Drosophila* oogenesis. I'm interested in epigenetic gene regulation and the dynamic nature of the genome. After obtaining a Ph. D. in Molecular Biology I intend teach at a university while performing wet bench research. When not at the bench, I am particularly fond of awful horror movies and playing cards or board games with my friends. “