


[DFCI News](#)
[In the Media](#)
[Photo, Video & Webcasts](#)
[People are Talking](#)
[Publications](#)
[Social Networking](#)
[Announcements](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[List Servs](#)
[Holiday Schedule](#)
[Home](#) : [News](#)

September 13, 2012

Program offers first foothold for science careers



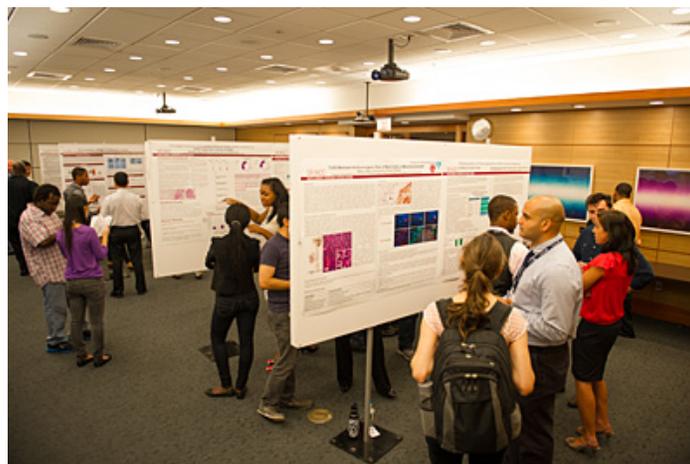
Mikenah Vega engages in an animated poster session discussion.

The poise and self-assurance of the presenters at a research symposium at Dana-Farber made it easy to forget they are students in high school and college.

The August 14-16 event represented a graduation of sorts for the 34 students who participated in this summer's [Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences \(CURE\)](#) program of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center (DF/HCC). Since its creation in 2002, the program has provided research opportunities for nearly 250 students from minority groups traditionally underrepresented in biomedical science. By making such experiences available, the program offers the first step on the ladder to a career in cancer and medical research.

More than 100 DF/HCC scientists have volunteered to participate in the program, welcoming CURE students onto their teams for the summer and assigning them to specific research projects. The program enables students to immerse themselves in the life and rhythms of a lab – conducting experiments, analyzing results, attending lab meetings, and making presentations under the guidance of a mentor and the lab director.

The experience has proven to be a powerful attraction to a career in biosciences. Fully 87 percent of the program's graduates are currently on a science career track, either as medical students, graduate students, or working professionals, including several employed at Dana-Farber, says **Karen Burns White** of Research Administration, the program's director.



CURE Program students participated in the August research symposium.

"When we started the program, the research experiences available to students were all in basic science," Burns White remarks. "Over the years, we've added population science, nursing research, clinical

Work better

[How to Get Things Done](#)
[New Patient Coordinator Staff](#)
[Help Desk Request](#)
[Work Order Request](#)
[Book conference room](#)
[Directions to DFCI](#)
[Shuttle Schedule](#)

Resources

[MPC](#)
[PeopleSoft \(Unity\)](#)
[Windows 7 Upgrade](#)
[HIPAA](#)
[Teaching Sheets](#)
[Financial Report](#)
[Policies/Manuals](#)
[Joint Commission](#)
[myTalent](#)
[Acronym Glossary](#)
[Medical Glossary](#)

Web sites

[DFCI web site](#)
[JF web site](#)
[Dana-Farber E-News](#)
[DF/HCC web site](#)

And more...

[Blogs](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Lunch Menu](#)
[Traffic](#)

Weather
 Holiday Schedule
 Online Stores

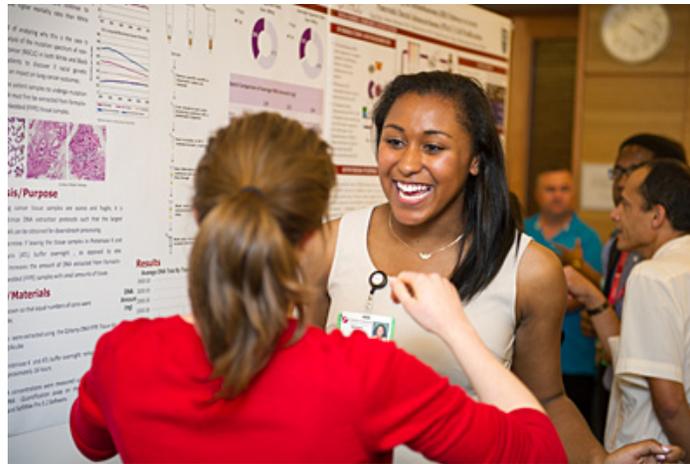
research, as well as bioinformatics and computational biology – largely because of scientists in these areas who expressed an interest in joining the program."

The range of opportunities is evident in the research projects presented by this year's "class." They include studies of immune cell activity in stem cell transplant patients treated for graft-versus-host disease; the role of a key enzyme in leukemia; the use of nanoparticles in delivering drugs to prostate tumor cells; the role of circadian rhythm disruption in breast cancer risk, and many others.

The presenters benefited from the presence of CURE students of previous years. "A number of our 'graduates' were on hand to meet and talk with this year's students," Burns Whites notes. "It's hard to overstate the impact that seeing someone who has been through the program and gone on to a science career can have."

For this year's students as for their predecessors, the summer-long immersion in science has whetted or confirmed an interest in a scientific career. "I've wanted to be a physician, but now I'd like to find ways to combine that with research," said Daniela Bennett, a senior at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, who worked in the lab of Dana-Farber's **Myles Brown, MD**.

As valuable as the skills the students have acquired and the analytical abilities they've honed are the role models they've found in the lab. "This is the first time I've worked in a science lab," said Shelby Jean-Michel, a UMass Lowell student assigned to **Sabina Signoretti, MD's** lab at Brigham and Women's Hospital. "I've gotten to know the people in the lab and see how they work. It's something I can see myself doing."



– [Robert Levy](#)

Photos by Sam Ogden

Comments (0)

[Add Comment](#)

Comment:

Name: You will be asked to log in before submitting your comment.