Six Saddleback College Students to Participate in Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Project at CSU Fullerton

Mission Viejo, CA – Six students majoring in biology at Saddleback College were selected to participate in the first Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Weekend Research Experience at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) on the weekends of March 21st and 28th. The students who were selected are Ms. Cindy Sholtis, Mr. Bishen Bedi, Ms. Kaitlin Beck, Ms. Allie Lindsay, Mr. Anthony Avanzino, and Mr. Elisha Fabricky. Selection was based on cumulative grade point averages, previous research experience, and an interest in pursuing a career in biological science. The students will receive a $250 stipend to support their participation.

Dr. Tod A. Burnett, President of Saddleback College, stated, “Congratulations to our students for the amazing opportunity to participate in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Weekend Research Experience. I am so proud of these inspiring students, who have made the very impressive decision to pursue a career in the biological sciences. I know they will make us all proud as they take on their important research.”

Dr. James Wright, Dean of the Division of Math, Science, and Engineering, stated, “Quote for Jim.”

Under direction from their faculty mentors, the students will design and complete research projects on the thermoregulation and hatching success, larval survival and feeding rates, and muscle and skeletal development of the California grunion *Leuresthes tenuis*), a local coastal fish. Grunion eggs incubate in the sand on local beaches until they are stimulated to hatch by wave action associated with a high tide. If tides are not favorable, hatching can be delayed for up to four weeks. This project will investigate the changes in the larvae during and after this extended pre-hatch period.

The faculty involved in the student research project include Dr. Marcelo Pires (Biology, Saddleback College, Dr. Kathryn Dickson (Biology, CSUF), and Dr. Jo Wu (Biology, Fullerton College). Dr. Dickson is known for her work on the muscle metabolism of fish and its relationship to swimming performance and Dr. Pires has studied the life history of Poeciliid fishes (live bearing freshwater fishes such as guppies) with a specific interest in
the evolution of placental energy transfer. The students, under the direction of their faculty mentors, will design and complete research projects on the thermoregulation and hatching success, larval survival and feeding rates, and muscle and skeletal development of the local coastal fish, California grunion (*Leuresthes tenuis*). Grunion eggs incubate in the sand on local beaches until they are stimulated to hatch by wave action associated with a high tide. If tides are not favorable, hatching can be delayed for up to four weeks. This project will investigate the changes in the larvae during and after this extended pre-hatch period.

Funded in 2008 by a larger HHMI grant administered by Dr. Maria Linder at CSUF, the HHMI Weekend Research Experience was established in response to the national need to recruit students into research careers in the biomedical sciences. The program involves faculty in the CSUF departments of biological sciences, chemistry and biochemistry, mathematics and science education, in consultation with their faculty colleagues at Saddleback College, Fullerton College, Mt. San Antonio College, and Santa Ana College, as well as the Orange County Department of Education and science teachers from several Orange County high schools. More information regarding the CSUF-HHMI program can be found at: [http://hhmi.fullerton.edu/](http://hhmi.fullerton.edu/)

*Located in Mission Viejo, Saddleback College provides quality higher education and training to the greater south Orange County community. Having served more than 500,000 students since 1968, Saddleback College offers more than 300 degree and certificate programs to help students reach their personal, career, and educational goals. For more information, please visit [www.saddleback.edu](http://www.saddleback.edu).*

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