



PRESS RELEASE: Grant Provides Ferris Melanoma Research Assistance
Sandy C Gholston to: Archive

10/07/2011 12:45 PM

Included below is a press release regarding the a grant secured by Ferris State University Professor of Biology James D. Hoerter that has brought Alexandria Casillas to campus to assist with melanoma research. The grant also is working to strengthen diversity in research. Any questions about this release can be directed to Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services. Attached is a photo of Alexandria Casillas taken by University Photographer William Bitzinger.



casillas_media.jpg

For Immediate Release
Oct. 7, 2011

Sandy Gholston
Ferris State University
Interim Assistant Director of News Services
sandygholston@ferris.edu, (231) 591-2021

National Institute of Health Grant Provides Ferris Melanoma Research Assistance

BIG RAPIDS – The National Institute of Health has awarded Ferris State University a research fellowship grant that has provided funding to recruit Alexandria Casillas to campus as an intern to further develop studies of melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer.

Casillas, originally from Antioch, Calif., will be working for a full year under Ferris Professor of Biology James D. Hoerter, who received the grant to fund this NIH research fellowship. The newly-hired intern will conduct scientific research on the role of skin stem cells in the development of melanoma.

“What we are doing is educational for both students in the lab and outside of the lab,” said Casillas, a graduate of Dominican University (Calif.). “I am thankful I was able to receive the grant to work here, and I am excited to begin my research.”

Hoerter believes that this experience will provide an “excellent opportunity” for Casillas to strengthen her research skills in preparation for a career in environmental health sciences.

Casillas plans to design her own experiments, while monitoring the zebrafish and keeping up with her skin cancer research. Part of her experience includes radiating the zebrafish with UVB rays, observing the skin pigmentations and observing their patterning, while watching for any changes or specific markers towards melanoma.

Hoerter expects Casillas to be a strong addition to the team on multiple levels through this minority post-baccalaureate grant. The purpose of the fellowship is to provide research experience and career mentoring to a member of a minority group to encourage a research career

in environmental health sciences.

“A very important benefit of having Alexandria in my lab is that she will promote an understanding of the value of diversity in research environments,” Hoerter said of Casillas. “She will play an important part in enhancing the research community in my lab as she serves as a post-baccalaureate peer mentor to other students.”

Hoerter, as research mentor, will help Casillas develop skills regarding the design and plan of her scientific experiments, ensuring each will answer a specific question.

Casillas will be collaborating with students in the lab, while preparing and presenting seminars and posters at undergraduate conferences on and off campus. Hoerter explained that her developing skills as a peer mentor will also be a valuable asset in preparing for graduate research training in environmental health sciences.

“Her skills will gradually develop as she continuously works with me in the lab on a day-to-day basis,” Hoerter said. “Also, the development of her skills as a peer mentor and collaborator with other students in my lab will be valuable asset in preparing her for her graduate research training in environmental health sciences.”

Learn more about the work related to melanoma and zebrafish, here:

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/archive/2010/october/melanoma.htm>

Learn more about Biological Sciences at Ferris State University, here:

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/colleges/artsands/Biological-Sciences/HOME-Biological-Sciences.htm>

- 30 -

Sandy Gholston
Interim Assistant Director of News Services/Social Media PR
Ferris State University
420 Oak Street
Prakken Building 108
Phone: (231) 591-2021
News Services Web site: www.ferris.edu/news
Ferris State University News Blog: ferrisstatebulldogs.blogspot.com/

This message may contain confidential and/or proprietary information and is intended for the person/entity to which it was originally addressed. Any use by others is strictly prohibited.