Another year, another successful ABRCMS!
by Wendy I. Pacheco-Rodriguez

Now in its sixteenth year, the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) is one of the largest, professional conferences for underrepresented minority students interested in pursuing advanced training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Held in different cities across the U.S., ABRCMS attracts approximately 4,050 individuals, including 2,100 undergraduate and postbaccalaureate students, 450 graduate students and postdoctoral scientists and 1,500 faculty, program directors and administrators. This year students from over 350 colleges and universities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico met in Tampa, Florida from November 9 to 12. More than 650 representatives from graduate programs in US colleges and universities as well as scientists from government agencies, foundations, and professional scientific societies had booths at the exhibits to share information about graduate school and summer internship opportunities. These representatives offered research opportunities, funding sources, and professional networks.

ABRCMS plays an important role in engaging and preparing underrepresented students for a career in STEM research, as highlighted in this year’s theme, “Diverse Voices, Diverse Science: A Future of Excellence in STEM Research”. They have made it their mission to inspire students understanding that a diverse biomedical research workforce representative of our society is necessary to make progress in issues such as health disparities and personalized medicine that greatly impact our communities.

During the four-day conference, attendees benefitted from a packed program including prominent keynote speakers, interesting plenaries, networking gatherings, and various professional development and scientific sessions on a variety of topics. Additionally, over 1,800 students participated in poster and oral presentations in twelve disciplines in the biomedical and behavioral sciences, including mathematics. All undergraduate student presentations were judged and those receiving the highest scores in each scientific discipline and educational level were given an award.

This year the University of Puerto Rico Ponce was called to the big stage twice thanks to the exceptional poster presentations of our PRISE seniors Lysmarie Figueroa Ríos and Mayra González Torres. Lysmarie won in the Engineering, Physics and Mathematics category for her summer research “C147 - In-vitro Characterization of the Rat Achilles Tendon Biomechanical Properties During Walking and Running Simulations”, which was conducted at University of Wisconsin. Mayra won in the immunology category for her summer research “B158 - The Role of Tumor Necrosis Factor Receptor 2 (TNFR2) in a Mouse Model of Valvular Inflammation and Fibrosis” which was done at the University of Minnesota.
## ABRCMS 2016 PRESENTATIONS

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Support from Disciplinary Societies

ABRCMS serves as a key stepping stone enhancing the scientific and professional development of young scientists. After participating in ABRCMS, all students are strongly encouraged to attend professional society meetings of their respective disciplines to continue their scientific and professional development. Below is a list of professional associations and societies within the biomedical and behavioral sciences that offer excellent resources (like fellowships and travel awards, too) for students to pursue advanced training and professional development:

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
American Association of Immunologists (AAI)
American Chemical Society (ACS)
American Physiological Society (APS)
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB)
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET)
American Society for Plant Biologists
American Society for Microbiology (ASM)
American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB)
Biophysical Society
FASEB MARC Program
Keystone Symposia
Society for Developmental Biology (SDB)
Society of Toxicology (SOT)
Society for Neuroscience (SFN)
St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital

Our next meeting!

PRISE at EB 2016 in San Diego, CA

Saturday Academies: Learning on the Weekend

As part of our Saturday Academies, PRISE students and adjunct members attended a Yale Ciencia Academy workshop held at the UPR Medical Sciences campus on Saturday September 24. The Yale Ciencia Academy (YCA) is a program for graduate students in the life sciences that provides training and opportunities for mentoring, professional development, and science outreach for success during graduate school and beyond. The YCA is a program of Yale University and the non-profit organization Ciencia Puerto Rico, supported with funds from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). On this occasion, the workshop Personal Statements: How to stand out in your application was focused on undergraduate students. The first part of the session covered the why, when, and how of graduate school while the second part explained how to write a personal statement. The workshop concluded with small working groups for a hands-on review and critique of personal statements.
PRISE Outreach

BRAIN AWARENESS

In an effort to increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research, our PRISE members Faviola Bernard and Yoheilly Velazquez, along with the members of Dr. James Porter’s neuroscience lab at Ponce Health Sciences University, participated in a brain awareness activity on October 3, 2016. On this occasion the Neuro Team visited the Lila Mayoral High School in Ponce where students were presented with demonstrations about the brain; lectures on brain-related topics and pursuing science careers; and brain-oriented games.

PHYSIOLOGY UNDERSTANDING (PhUn)

Our PRISE members Kevin Cintron, Mayra Gonzalez, Abdon Lopez and Wendy Pacheco joined a team of graduate students and staff from Ponce Health Sciences University to take “PhUn” to the 5th and 6th graders of Academia Santa Maria Reina Elementary School in Ponce on November 4, 2016. The activity was part of PhUn Week, the annual K-12 outreach program initiated by the American Physiological Society (APS), and featured exciting and interactive lectures and demonstrations. The program gives students a chance to meet scientists, learn about physiology in their daily lives, and explore physiology as a career. This year’s theme centered on brain-gut-microbe communication in health and disease.

HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE FAIR

A team of PRISE students and staff participated in the annual science fair organized by Luis Llorens High School in Juana Diaz on December 5 and 6, 2016. In addition to displaying lab equipment and promoting UPR and PRISE programs, we explained the importance of the role of the biomedical scientist. Kevin Muñoz, our Research Coordinator, lead the team in a series of hands-on experiments with the high school students. Yoheilly Velazquez, Pedro Cruz and Gerardo Arroyo demonstrated how certain chemical reactions are reversible using a colored pH indicator and how this dynamic equilibrium can be disturbed and its outcome predicted. They also showed a gel electrophoresis agarose separation, a technique often used in research to separate a mixed population of macromolecules such as DNA or proteins. On day 2 of the science fair, Ralpdy Vergne and Lysmarie Figueroa served as judges for the high school fair projects.
Save the Date

January 19, 2016 - Orientation: Summer Research Opportunities by Dr. Edu Suarez - UPR Ponce

January 26, 2016 - Presentation: How to prepare a personal statement/admissions essay, UPR Ponce

January 28, 2017 – Puerto Rico Society for Microbiology Semiannual meeting: Microbiology of Sex, UNE-Caroline

February 10, 2017 - Puerto Rico Physiological Society Annual Meeting, UCC Bayamon

March 10 & 11, 2017 - 4th Puerto Rico Cell Signaling Meeting- HIV/AIDS and Aging
Ponce Plaza Hotel and Casino

March 16, 2017 – Scripps Institute conference - UPR Ponce

March 18, 2017 – Welcoming Future Scientists
UPR Ponce, One-Day Scientific Meeting for High School Students and Teachers

March 29, 2017 – Junior Technical meeting & Puerto Rico Interdisciplinary Meeting, UPR Humacao

Research reported in this publication was supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R25GM096955. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

Please send questions, suggestions or contributions for The PRISE Post to Wendy Pacheco at rise.ponce@upr.edu or call 787-844-8181 ext 3086, 2652. For more information about the PRISE program, please visit our website at http://prise.uprp.edu.

Calling all High School Science Teachers and Students!

WELCOMING FUTURE SCIENTISTS
...is back!

WHAT: a one-day scientific meeting featuring hands-on demonstrations and experiments in different science fields, lectures on science careers and information about science programs offered at UPR-P and student university life.

WHO: High school science teachers and students in 11th and 12th grade interested in pursuing science in college.

WHEN: Saturday March 18, 2017

WHERE: University of Puerto Rico in Ponce

INFO: rise.ponce@upr.edu
787-844-8181 ext 3085, 2652

Reserve a spot for your school today!