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Biophysical Society Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA: March 4, 2012

### C-SURF Travel Award Reflection

From February 25 – 29, 2012, I went with my advisors and a graduate student in our lab to the Biophysical Society's 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in San Diego, California. Each of us was there to present a poster describing a particular project done in our lab. The courses I took as a BS Chemistry major, particularly biochemistry and analytical chemistry, were helpful in providing background knowledge of my project's focus. However, it was ultimately the Direct Independent Study (DIS) I took as a junior and the honors seminars that made it possible to work on my project and present it at this conference. The DIS introduced me to important concepts and advanced scientific techniques that were not covered in regular undergraduate courses but were needed to understand and work on my project. The honors seminars had taught me how to conduct formal presentations properly, which would be undeniably important for the conference.

Before my poster presentation at the conference, I attended various lectures by researchers in the same field of research, which was the study of peptide-membrane interactions. Because I knew that the topics to be discussed would be very specific to the field of biophysics, I came to these presentations assuming that I would, at best, vaguely understand the discussions. Although this came to pass in most of the lectures I attended, I was able to comprehend a few of them, which I credit to my biochemistry classes and the research I conducted for my honors project.

When the time came for my poster presentation, I was very nervous. I had assumptions beforehand that the people present would be very critical and stand-offish because of their experience in the field, and majority of them were post-docs and graduates. I was afraid that they would either look down upon me for being an undergraduate in this big conference, or viciously criticize my work. Fortunately for me, I was gladly mistaken. All of the people who came to my poster to ask me questions were quite friendly and were just curious about my work. One of them had actually used the same method I used in my research, so he offered me some insight on my procedure. Overall, by the end of the day, I was quite relieved to see how erroneous it was to assume that the people in the conference would be arrogant and pedantic because of their intelligence and experience.

I owe it to my time in the Honors Scholars Program and my DIS course for providing me with the critical thinking skills needed for this conference, as well as the opportunity to attend said conference. Because of this experience, I have learned that scientists, while very intelligent, are normal people too. I have considered a career in biochemical research before attending this conference. I am happy to say that, upon seeing how friendly and cooperative the atmosphere of the field is, I will continue to do so as I enter graduate school next year.