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Undergraduates receive UT Southwestern's McKnight Prizes for science research

DALLAS – Feb. 5, 2010 – Nine students from universities across the country have earned a Sara and Frank McKnight Prize in Undergraduate Sciences at UT Southwestern Medical Center. The national competition honors top research projects submitted by college seniors.

Dr. Steven McKnight, chairman of biochemistry at UT Southwestern, created the prize to honor his parents.

Fifteen finalists traveled to New Braunfels in mid-November to give poster presentations on their work at the annual retreat of UT Southwestern's Department of Biochemistry. Winners were chosen in three categories, both for the significance of their work and for the quality of their presentation. First-place winners received \$2,000; second-place winners \$1,000; and third-place winners \$500.

The winners were:

Biophysics/Computational Biology

- First Place: Susanna Lynch, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., "Single molecule force-pulling on guanine quadruplex DNA"
- Second Place: Noam Prywes, Columbia University, "The role of global conformational dynamics in the regulation of ribosome recycling"
- Third Place: Alexander Zevin, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, "The histone chaperone Nap1 promotes nucleosome assembly by eliminating non-nucleosomal histone DNA interactions"

Biochemistry

- First Place: Celine Santiago, Rice University, "Maternal CHUK/IKK1 is required for the differentiation of the zebrafish's first epithelial cell layer"
- Second Place: Christopher Novotny, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "The design, synthesis and evaluation of s-PAC-1 as a potential personalized anti-cancer drug"
- Third Place: David Hershey, Iowa State University, "Functional genomics of gibberellin biosynthesis in symbiotic bacteria"

(MORE)

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Chemistry

- First Place: Anish Shah, Columbia University, “Synthesis and anti-neurodegenerative activity screening of a neolignan derivative and related analog”
- Second Place: Yongho Park, Duke University, “Total synthesis and biological studies of manassantin A”
- Third Place: James Masters, University of Notre Dame, “Research toward titanium-catalyzed cyclization reactions”

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