

Schnaper Summer Intern Program Training Tomorrow's Leaders

It's a really positive thing coming out of University of Maryland Medical Center." Vicki Yang, who was a Dr. Nathan Schnaper Summer Student Intern at the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Cancer Center in 2004, is still enthusiastic about the program and the work it allowed her to do. "It was such a fantastic research experience."

Each year, the Dr. Nathan Schnaper Summer Student Intern Program gathers a small group of outstanding undergraduates to do hands-on lab work and research on cancer. "If the cure for cancer ever happens, it will come from these kids, from the laboratory," says Dr. Nathan Schnaper, in whose honor the program was named in 2003. Over the course of eight weeks the students work with a mentor in the lab, research a specific topic, and attend weekly symposia in which they hear both from the other interns and from cancer researchers.

"Without reservation, I can say that the experience was pivotal in my decision to pursue a career in research," says Justin Killebrew, who was an intern in 2002. According to Adam Pierce, a University of Maryland School of Medicine graduate student in molecular medicine who interned with the program in 2005, undergraduate research work is almost a requirement for entry into graduate school, but the Dr. Nathan Schnaper Summer Student Intern Program is unique in its field. "The internship program provided a practical side of cancer research." Dr. Schnaper concurs: "I think it's great. Those who become doctors later are better doctors for having a fire about research while they were in college."

One of the most exceptional aspects of the program is the relationship which forms between the interns and their mentors. Stories abound, from the intern who had recently lost his father and formed a strong bond with his mentor, to a hearing impaired intern for whom the mentoring staff learned some sign language. "It helped us learn to communicate better," says Dr. Bret Hassel, current head of the program.

Another intern, Amanda Stevens Openshaw ('03) "stayed well beyond the eight weeks because she was so enthused about her project," Hassel recalls. "I liked the field Dr. Hassel was working in," Openshaw explains, and she continued working at the Greenebaum Cancer Center because she had more time available and felt that she had not yet learned and done all the things the summer was meant for. Pierce, too, chose to stay an extra month at the end of his internship to continue his research work with Hassel.



"Working with Bret was definitely the highlight of the summer," says Killebrew. "As a mentor, Bret was an extremely supportive and excellent teacher. The door to his office was always open, and I never hesitated to approach him with questions or with ideas I had for experiments. His enthusiasm was contagious and I remember feeling inspired after our conversations. As I was preparing my final presentation for the other interns and faculty, Bret took the time to offer feedback and help me clarify my thoughts. We have maintained our relationship over the years through email and phone conversations. As I continue my career as a scientist, now in graduate school, I still seek his advice."

Yang, currently a student at the Medical College of Georgia, also praises Hassel's involvement. "He fostered a real sense of community in this group which didn't know each other at the start of the summer." She is in touch with Hassel to this day, even though he was not her direct mentor.

"They form a great bond with these kids," Schnaper says, and Hassel "is a great director of the program. In fact, he's magnificent."

The internship program includes social activities beyond the research labs. "Coming in to the program I was a little intimidated having not had much laboratory experience. My mind was soon put at ease after meeting the other interns and mentors. Outside of the lab we would get together and go to Orioles games or BBQ," says Killebrew. Pierce fondly recalls a fishing expedition with three other interns. Hassel states that the social aspects of the program draw the interns together, and that interns from the Baltimore area "take on the role of host, show the others around town."

Program: Interns in Cancer Research

"I really loved my experience at Maryland," Yang concludes. Openshaw agrees. "It was a great place to be." Pierce summarizes what makes the Schnaper Summer Intern Program so special: "The environment that they provided really cultivates the individual."

Dr. Kevin Cullen, director of the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Cancer Center and himself a graduate of summer internship programs, says "it's a wonderful win/win situation. The students get to do real work in real labs with real researchers and the Greenebaum Cancer Center gets eager, motivated students who contribute significant work to the lab. The interns bring a fresh perspective and ask intelligent questions. It is not uncommon that a question from someone who is new to a specific research lab pushes the work in a new, fruitful direction."

The program has been running for over 20 years. It was started by Dr. Nicholas Bachur and Dr. Merrill Egorin,

who had once been Dr. Bachur's summer student.

Throughout the years Dr. Schnaper was involved in the summer intern program, including raising money. "I've always loved it." According to Hassel, internship stipends used to come from pharmaceutical corporations and philanthropic contributions, but money got tight in the late 1990s. At the same time, Schnaper's patients and friends, "people whom he helped," wanted to do something to honor him, so they raised money to create an endowment to provide seed money for the internship program.

"Grateful patients ask me what they can do, or they give me money for use at my discretion," says Schnaper, and this money goes to the Summer Intern Program. "It was kind of everyone to honor me this way." At present the endowment stands at about \$327,000. ■

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A Message from our CEO



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the spring edition of the *Arbor*. For most of us, spring signals a time of rebirth and new beginnings, and is also a time to reconnect with old acquaintances as well as extend a warm welcome to new friends.

Good things continue to happen at the University of Maryland Medical System, and the future shines brightly as we remain focused on our mission of healing, teaching, discovering and caring. It takes the effort and dedication of our entire community to achieve our goal of providing cutting-edge, compassionate care to those who depend on us every day. Working together and staying committed to the vision and goals of excellence in health care is the key to our success. Please take a moment to read this edition of our quarterly newsletter and become connected with the spirit of UMMS and the exciting

events and new initiatives that are happening on our campus.

I would especially like to thank Brian Roberts, the Acme Paper & Supply Company, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and Baltimore City Public Schools for their generous support and leadership commitments.

I remain extremely grateful for the financial support that the University of Maryland Medical System receives from loyal contributors and members of our community.

Sincerely,



Edmond Notebaert
President and Chief Executive Officer
University of Maryland Medical System