Recognizing Rising Researchers

UMass Amherst recognizes student researchers for making their mark on a variety of academic communities. This year Commonwealth Honors College students Aaron Dunbrack ’17, Thomas McCarthy ’16, and Jennifer Olins ’17 were named Rising Researchers.

Aaron Dunbrack, a quadruple major in astronomy, math, physics, and philosophy hopes to graduate with five degrees in four years by adding a master's in mathematics to his impending bachelor's degrees. For the past two summers, he has participated in the prestigious National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates (NSF REU), investigating magnetic properties of spiral galaxies and the math behind how crystals melt. Under the direction of Professor Michael Ramsey-Musolf, he studies particle physics. Looking ahead, Dunbrack is on track to pursue a doctorate in physics.

Thomas McCarthy, a chemical engineering major, has been a member of Assistant Professor Shelly Peyton’s lab for three
years. He developed a process to synthesize, characterize, and purify peptides. His honors thesis is to engineer a synthetic tissue that can be used to study cancer progression, which he will likely submit for publication in 2016.

An honors biology student, Jennifer Olins has been a research assistant in Assistant Professor Samuel Hazen’s regulatory genomics lab since she started at the university in September 2013. She began her research career as a first year after being selected to participate in the First Year Research Experience and BioTAP Program. Now, she is executing her own experiments and has mastered a number of scientific techniques like polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

Students Zachary Goodman '16 and Elvira Sukamtoh '16 were also recognized for the Rising Research Award. As a food science major, Elvira Sukamtoh's research in Guodon Zhang’s lab has focused on the effects and mechanisms of dietary compounds on angiogenesis and lymphangiogenesis, two critical processes in cancer progression. Sukamtoh has been published in many high-impact journals like the Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry. An electrical engineering major, Zachary Goodman conducted networking systems research under the direction of engineering professors Tilman Wolf and Russell Tessier as part of NSF REU in 2013. Goodman's work on the project was published by IEEE Transactions on Computers, which is a highly regarded computer architecture peer-reviewed publication.

The Rising Researcher award is a student acknowledgement program designed to raise the profile of the most promising UMass Amherst undergraduate students and to publicly acknowledge their excellent work. Congratulations to all of the honors students above. Read the full profiles of these student researchers at Research Next.

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