UMass Amherst 2018-2019 Rising Researchers

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The UMass Amherst Rising Researcher award honors students who excel in research and who demonstrate leadership and impact in their chosen field of study. Research Next selects the awardees from among undergraduate students across the UMass Amherst campus in both the fall and spring of each academic year. In Fall 2018, eight students were honored, including five Commonwealth Honors Colleges students:

Bianca Edozie, a double major in chemistry and biochemistry & molecular biology, has been working in Professor Jenny Ross' lab on projects that explore various behavioral aspects of microtubules. Edozie recently published a paper with Professor Ross that is under review at Soft Matter. Currently, Edozie is working on a project creating biologically relevant microtubule organizations called "tactoids," which act as model mitotic spindles in the lab. She plans on attending graduate school in the fall.
Nicholas Fragika, a biochemistry & molecular biology and psychology double major, worked as a research assistant in Professor Julian Tyson's lab as part of Tyson's collaboration with Chemists Without Borders. Fragola worked on finding a way to measure arsenic in rice, which causes problems impacting large populations around the globe. He co-authored a chapter in an ACS Symposium series book titled "Mobilizing Chemistry Expertise to Solve Humanitarian Problems." He will ultimately help train scientists in Bangladesh to implement his field test kit.

Taylor Guertin, a biochemistry & molecular biology major, worked for two years in Professor Kimberly Tremblay's lab assisting a PhD student investigating the role of Bone Morphogenetic Protein signaling in liver development. She ultimately co-authored a high-impact paper in the premier publication in the field of liver disease, Hepatology. Guertin will apply to MS/PhD programs for admission in 2020.

Aazam Najeebi, a psychological and brain sciences major, has been working in Professor Rebecca Spencer's lab on a project that uses MRI to understand how sleep changes memory representation and how this changes with aging. He has presented his research at several research symposia and conferences and is a Summer Research Intensive Program
Olivia Ringham, a biology major, has worked on a variety of projects as a member of Assistant Professor Mark S. Miller’s Muscle Biology Lab. Recently, she has been working on a project investigating the effects of the influenza virus on skeletal muscle function in older mice, and is doing her Commonwealth Honors College Thesis Project on the implications of her research on elderly populations affected by flu experience. Last summer, Ringham attended a research program at Tufts University School of Medicine and received first prize in the summer research symposium poster competition.

Read more about the awardees and their research here.