Entomology Honors Program

Student Testimonials

" I genuinely and sincerely believe that pursuing undergraduate research opportunities can be worthwhile for any student, no matter the path they hope to embark on after graduation. During my time at the University of Maryland I was an engineering student eager to wrap up my degree so that I could start earning a paycheck — going to graduate school or working in a lab setting after graduation was never a part of my plan. That said, looking back I am so grateful for my undergraduate research experiences, as I have no doubt that the skills and habits I developed through my research are more applicable to my day job today than what t learned in the classroom. The Department of Entomology and the Honors Program offered me my very first opportunity to be entirely accountable and responsible for the drafting, planning, execution, and success of a project, very similar to what is expected in the real world. My efforts were not toward the pursuit of a grade nor was there a rubric or scale to determine a pass or fail. I very simply was putting my time toward meaningfully contributing to closing an actual gap in our scientific knowledge: I was investigating a unique and real problem and had the ability to impact the field with my findings. As a part of the Entomology Honors Program, I was privileged to have the consistent support and guidance from my mentor and labmates and after five years of being a part of the same lab group I can honestly say it did not feel like long enough. The sound advice and undying support received during this time equipped me with the ability to think independently and critically, taught me how to prioritize and manage my time, and strengthened my sense of confidence. The Department of Entomology became my second home, my undergraduate thesis became my tool to learn and grow from, and in the process I gained an incredible family and support system that has remained with me."

- Sadia Naseem, Class of 2016, Lamp Lab

"This is an excellent program to choose for students who wish to experience the process of conducting their own research. I started my honors program research in the spring semester of 2017 and finished in the spring semester of 2018. I had been working as an undergraduate lab tech in the vanEndelgsdorp Bee Lab since September 2015, so with over a year experience of working in the lab, I decided to start my own research project under Dr. vanEngelsdorp and become part of the Entomology Honors Program. During my time at the vanEngelsdorp lab, I gained quite an interest for certain aspects of honey bee biology and behavior, specifically their ability to produce beeswax and construct entire nests using the material. I focused my honors research project on which factors affect wax production in honey bees, which lead me to interesting findings as well as learning more in depth about the research process. The most impactful thing I gained from this experience was a familiarity with all the steps involved in creating, designing, and conducting an effective, efficient, and scientifically accurate experiment. This program offers students a way to experience for themselves, albeit with a scaled-down project appropriate for an undergraduate, what it's like to be a graduate student with their own research and experiments to perform. This program taught me a lot about the research process, my own abilities and work ethic, and of course honey bees. For any undergraduate students wanting to get involved in entomology research, and see a glimpse of what it would be like as a graduate student, I would highly recommend participating in this program."

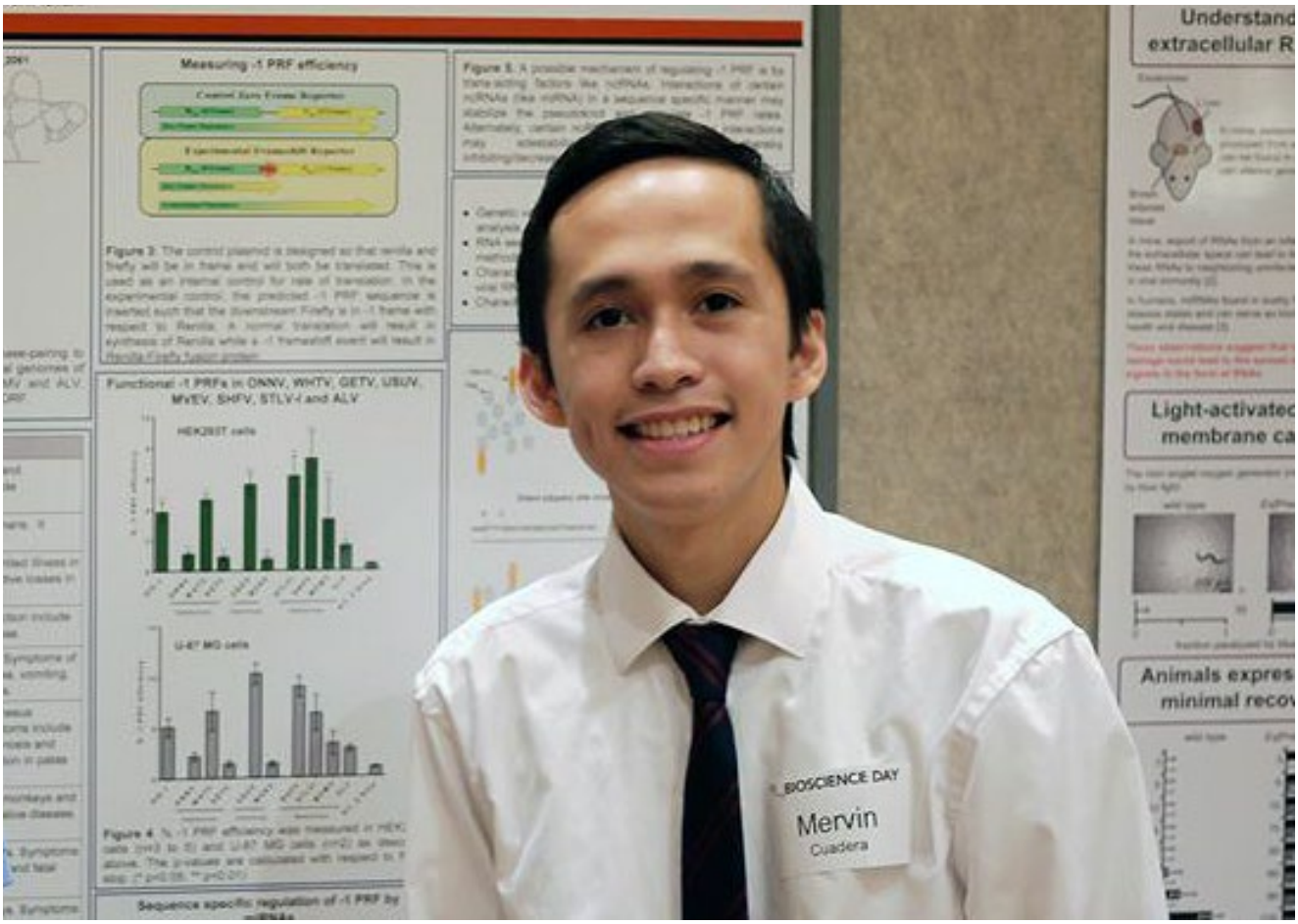
- Max O'Grady, Class of 2018, vanEnglesdorp Lab

"Before starting in the program, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in the future and didn't know if a career in research was right for me. I chose to join the Entomology Honors program to experience research firsthand and get an opportunity to go through the entire process of combing the literature, designing and completing a project, and writing a thesis. This experience was challenging but incredibly rewarding. It felt so good to finish a project and know that I had uncovered something new. I learned so much from this program but more importantly I learned what specifically within my field I was interested in. The program helped me discover that t was incredibly passionate about research and wanted to continue doing it in the future. Besides being a good professional experience, I had a lot of fun! I developed professional relationships as well as friendships while I worked toward my accomplishments. The amazing experience I had is why I applied to graduate school to continue learning and discovering. Through my research experience and opportunities to work with graduate students and an adviser, t got a glimpse into what graduate school would be like and decided it was right for me. Doing an honors thesis project gave me so much experience that I was able to go directly into a PhD program. As a current graduate student, I know I wouldn't have felt nearly as prepared for graduate school without having completed my own research in college. By learning what I was interested in, I was really ready to hit the ground running and pursue my own ideas when I started."

- Chloe Garfinkel, Class of 2018, Lamp Lab

"I selected the Entomology Honors Program because I wanted the opportunity to design and implement a field research project of my own. Specifically, I was inspired by taking BSC1467 (Freshwater Biology) to use aquatic macroinvertebrates as a way to study a local freshwater system. However, this proved more difficult than I expected, and due to time constraints I needed to find an established field site that I could use to investigate a research question relevant to my research goals. I was lucky enough to find a field site that had been studied for several years as part of a NPS/USGS project assessing the health of a tidal freshwater marsh in Kingman Lake in Washington, DC. This site became the basis for my honors thesis research. Before I could sample, however, E needed to develop a research question, obtain sampling permits, develop a sampling protocol that would effectively test the proposed question, organize a field crew, and then lead sampling efforts at Kingman Lake. Much of this was new to me I had no experience sampling for benthic macroinvertebrates or sampling in a tidal system, and I had never before led a field crew. On top of all of this, I massively underestimated the time that it would take to obtain a sampling permit from the federal government, so before I could even step foot in the marsh I had to keep in contact with the NPS to ensure that my application was processed before the field season ended. It was from this portion of the project that I learned the most. From little things, such as securing field equipment so that it does not float away as the tide rises, to bigger things, such as effective note taking in the field, correctly using a GPS Garmin to map out sample sites, and task delegation among the field crew, I was able to learn quickly from my mistakes and make the sampling process as efficient and consistent as possible. The next time I am tasked with developing a sampling protocol, obtaining a research permit, or developing my own research question, I will feel much more confident because of the experiences I had during my honors thesis research. Potential graduate school advisers were similarly confident in my abilities in independent research for the same reasons, and I was accepted to several of my top choice programs. t will forever be grateful for the opportunities that the Department of Entomology gave me as I move forward into graduate school and beyond."

- Lity Durkee, Class of 2018, Gruner Lab



"I chose to be part of the Entomology Honors because I wanted to challenge myself academically and learn more about the impact mosquitoes have in the world around us. Not only was I immersed in research looking at how mosquito host preference evolved, but I bonded with like-minded people either through the insect collection course or the Entomological Society of America conference. Being an entomology honors student also helped me prepare for the type of work I am expected to do in graduate school. Overall, I think that my experience at UMD was enriched by being part of the program, especially with the positive community that surrounded me."

- Mervin Caudera, Class of 2019, Fritz Lab

"I chose to participate in the Entomology Program because I had been working in Dr. Margaret Palmer's lab and I wanted to work towards a research goal for my senior year. The program was appealing to me because I was able to complete the requirements and an independent thesis along with the rest of my degree coursework. My thesis experience was one of the most valuable parts of my undergraduate career. I learned how to self motivate and ask critical questions through designing and implementing a field experiment, conducting lab analysis, and writing the thesis. I also gained experience communicating with graduate students and faculty members who helped to support and strengthen my project. I experienced a large learning curve which was sometimes frustrating when I was pressured by time constraints. However, am glad I pushed myself to complete the project because the skills that I gained will be very valuable if and when decide to continue a path towards academic research."

- Abigail Toretsky, Class of 2019, Palmer Lab