

Chemistry Major Begins Fellowship to Nicaragua

Hernandez, an Honors student, is the first Dominican undergraduate to receive this fellowship and one of only a few non-UC Berkeley students to be accepted into the program. The award, she said, will help her decide whether she will pursue a research-based career or medical-based career in the future. It also continues to validate her decision to attend Dominican where she is also pursuing a minor in mathematics.

“Coming to Dominican has been a great choice,” says Hernandez, who was driving to the Berkeley campus once a week during the spring semester to participate in a two-hour class to prepare her to participate in the Household Influenza A transmission project this summer in Managua, Nicaragua.

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Hernandez majored in biological sciences when she arrived at Dominican from Analy High School in Sebastopol. However, in her first semester, she was impressed by Dominican’s chemistry department and its faculty.

Inspired by Dr. Roland Cooper in his Research Methodology program in [Dominican's Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics](#), Hernandez’s confidence and interest in research soared. Cooper suggested last year that Hernandez apply for the MHIRT fellowship. Dominican’s partnership with UCB Global Public Health program stems from President Mary Marcy’s 2012 Strategic Initiative Grant and is bolstered by an HNS grant to help with internationalization. Last year, Stephanie Huevo, an MS student at Dominican, was awarded a MHIRT fellowship prior to her second research trip to Uganda.

“Our focus was a summer-long, intensive research experience for one or two students each year. I had been mentoring Berkeley students in Uganda through the MHIRT program since 2010, so had quite a bit of experience at this,” said Dr. Cooper, who has utilized the President’s SIG grant to help integrate Dominican students into an ongoing malaria research collaboration.

“I think this is great example of success of the Strategic Initiative Grant program, as well as the competitiveness of our students who have completed the Research Methodology course.”

Hernandez is a first generation college student and one of two family members attending Dominican. Her sister, Stephanie, is a nursing major. Fluent in Spanish, Hernandez, who is president of Dominican’s Latinos Unidos club and volunteers her free time to mentor at-risk high school aged students through the Canal Alliance, is in the process of learning what her responsibilities will be in Nicaragua.

“It’s research, but at the same time you are doing field work and you’re interacting with patients,” Hernandez says.

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