

SURF's Up This Summer at the Miller School

Twelve talented college students with interests in biomedical research have been recruited to the 2019 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. The 2019 SURF fellows will spend the summer conducting biomedical research in laboratories across eight major departments and programs at the Miller School.



“This year’s fellows were selected from a pool of more than 100 applicants by a panel of six UMMSOM faculty members,” said SURF Director Priyamvada Rai, Ph.D., a member of the Tumor Biology Program at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and an associate professor in the Department of Medicine/Medical

Oncology. “They come from local South Florida universities as well as institutions across the country, including the University of Pittsburgh, Emory University, Franklin and Marshall College, Morehouse College, the University of Puerto Rico, Albertus Magnus College, and Eastern Michigan University.”

SURF was initiated in 2013 to immerse students from diverse backgrounds in hands-on biomedical research and to introduce them to the innovative biomedical programs at the Miller School. “This year represents the largest class of SURF fellows to date,” said Santos I. Cayetano, assistant director of the Medical Scientist Training Program, who has been coordinating the SURF program since its inception.

SURF is co-sponsored by Sylvester’s Office of Education and Training and the Office of Graduate Studies at the Miller School.

Kerry Burnstein, Ph.D., Sylvester’s associate director for education and training and professor and chair of Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology, said, “Sylvester’s commitment was critical to expanding SURF and reflects our priority of promoting diversity in the next generation of cancer researchers.”

David Lee, Ph.D., chair of the Office of Graduate Studies and professor of public health sciences, added, “Emerging research indicates that more diversity in our nation’s laboratories leads to better science. These students have a unique opportunity to learn from each other and to bring fresh perspectives and energy

into the research endeavor here at the U.”

A welcome luncheon for the new SURF fellows was held during the first week of the program, and each student was presented a monogrammed white lab coat by Carl Schulman, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D., executive dean for research and professor of surgery at the Miller School. In addition to hands-on exposure to biomedical research, the SURF fellows will benefit from a full schedule of career development sessions including learning how to write effectively, critical reading of scientific literature, scientific ethics and appropriate conduct, as well as opportunities to shadow physicians at UHealth Tower, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and The Lennar Foundation Medical Center.

In addition to Cayetano, the SURF program support team consists of Sarah Sandiford, manager of Sylvester’s Office of Education and Training, Charles Lowman, M.Ed., M.B.A., executive director of graduate studies, and Theresa Votolato, senior program coordinator in Microbiology and Immunology.