

Megan McGarel

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Science

Major(s): Biological Sciences

Minors(s): NA

Scholar Group Membership: Biology Honors Program

Did you received other funding for this project?: College of Science

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? Yes

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: AACR Annual Meeting-Poster Presentation

Project Location: New Orleans, LA

ND Faculty Mentor: Dr. Laurie Littlepage

Project Type: Conference - Attendance

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD)

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: A Little

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Not Applicable

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: A Little

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: A Little

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Yes

Tell us about your experience.

From April 18th-20th I attended and presented at the AACR Annual Meeting. I arrived Monday afternoon in New Orleans and attended a session that talked about clinical trials and how their results should be used to better patient therapy. I spent the majority of Tuesday either at various sessions or walking the exhibit hall looking at posters. I went to a breast cancer talk looking at current clinical and translational dilemmas in breast cancer. It was interesting to see how we are able to determine prognosis using previous patient response and genomic data, and the speaker, Dr. Nancy Davidson, said that some patients are actually being over-treated. I also went to a talk about the heterogeneity of tumors and the cancer microenvironment. I was fascinated as Dr. Joan Brugge discussed clonal cell populations in breast and ovarian cancer. Her lab was able to barcode tag the different populations and observe the proportions of clones that made up a tumor. It will be useful to determine why and how different populations are more dominant than others throughout cancer progression. On Wednesday morning I presented my poster titled: Unexpected roles for stromal MMP3 during breast cancer. I went through my poster and explained my research to many different people. I enjoyed talking about the research I have done over the past several years, and loved answering questions and getting ideas for future studies.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

Attending and presenting at such a large conference allowed me to listen to and learn from some of the most renowned researchers across the globe. At my poster presentation I not only gained experience and confidence presenting my work, but I was also able to interact with other researchers and receive their feedback and ideas. Finally, it was inspiring to see so many people that share my passion for curing cancer.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

Obtaining this grant helped fulfill the conference presentation requirement for the Biology Honors Program. It also affirmed my desire to become a physician and work towards finding cancer cures for patients.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

Do your research before you attend. Especially if you are going to be at a large conference, check out the program beforehand and determine what you would like to see/do, because otherwise you will likely become overwhelmed.