The University of Florida Science for Life program has just named 8 HHMI Graduate Student Awards for 2008. These awards recognize excellence in graduate students who are able to mentor their undergraduates to a point where the undergraduate achieves co-authorship in peer-reviewed publications. These graduate students represent 10 different academic departments university-wide and have published research with 20 different undergraduate students while mentoring far more.

**Julie Allen** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Zoology Department in the lab of David Reed. Her dissertation research focuses on the coevolutionary history of hosts and symbiotic partners. She earned the HHMI – GSA award for her work with Shelly Flanagan on a side project, which resulted in the publication "Using museum specimens to assess the health and diet of Florida panthers (Puma concolor)". For this research they examined the panther specimens at the Florida Museum of Natural History and analyzed carbon and nitrogen stable isotopes to determine likely dietary sources. This research may aid in conservation efforts by identifying the possible diet sources so that the land can be managed to ensure ample prey for the panthers.

**Dr. Roxana M. Coman** earned her Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences in August 2007 under the supervision of Distinguished Professor Dr. Ben Dunn. Her project was to biochemically and structurally characterize non-B subtype HIV-1 proteases. This work will help in understanding important differences between HIV-1 non-B subtype viruses and will aid in discovery of new anti-HIV drugs. Roxana received this HHMI-GSA for her work with Marty Fernandez on the publication “The Contribution of Naturally Occurring Polymorphisms in Altering the Biochemical and Structural Characteristics of HIV-1 Subtype C Protease”, published in *Biochemistry*, 2008. Roxana and Marty are working on another manuscript on biochemical characterization of six non-B subtype HIV proteases.

**Erika Eksioglu** collaborated with undergraduates in the area of immunology and bone marrow transplantation research while pursuing her Master's Degree in Biomedical Sciences. Dr. Vijay Reddy’s research focuses on how to improve treatments for leukemia. His laboratory has extensively trained undergraduate students for the past 9 years, Ms. Eksioglu being herself one of them. She receives the HHMI-GSA based on their publication "GM-CSF promotes differentiation of human dendritic cells and T lymphocytes toward a predominantly type 1 pro-inflammatory response" published in the Experimental Hematology in 2007 in collaboration with Sayed S. Mahmood while he was an undergraduate. He continues his studies in Medicine at the University of Miami. Erika herself has continues her career towards a doctorate in the biomedical sciences while mentoring undergraduates in her research.
Grace Ha is working towards her PhD in Dr. John Petitto’s lab in the Department of Psychiatry. Her research interests involve understanding the role of T cells in the brain following injury and delineating the potential mechanisms involved in T cell-mediated neuroprotection. Grace received the HHMI-GSA working with undergraduates Marlon Pastrana and Ravi Parikh, who were co-authors on the paper entitled, “Immunodeficiency impairs re-injury induced reversal of neuronal atrophy: Relation to T cell subsets and microglia,” published in Experimental Neurology in 2007. Marlon will enter medical school in May 2008, while Ravi is currently completing his undergraduate studies with hopes of becoming a doctor.

Sara J. Homeijer is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the laboratory of Dr. Laurie Gower in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, which focuses on biomimetic mineralization. Sara’s research focuses on understanding the growth mechanism of mineral nanofiber formation. Sara received the HHMI-GSA for her work with Richard Barrett in the publication “Growth of Nanofibrous Barium Carbonate on Calcium Carbonate Seeds”, in Journal of Crystal Growth, 2008. Richard, a biochemistry senior, has been working with Sara for two years and will be entering medical school next year.

Yu-Mei Hsu is pursuing her Ph.D under Dr. Chang-Yu Wu in the Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences. Her research is to evaluate the exposure potential of sulfuric acid mist at phosphate fertilizer facilities and to investigate the positive sulfate artifact in sulfuric acid measurement using NIOSH Method 7903. Yu-Mei received the HHMI-GSA for her work with Joshua Kollett and Katherine Wysocki on the publication “Positive Artifact Sulfate Formation from SO2 Adsorption in the Silica Gel Sampler Used in NIOSH Method 7903” published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology in 2007.

Adam P. Mecca is in his third year of the M.D.-Ph.D. program in the College of Medicine. He is co-author on four peer reviewed journal articles. Adam assisted in the mentorship of two undergraduate students, Juline Machado and Tonya Bolton, during a study that led to the publication of an article titled “Prevention of angiotensin II-induced cardiac remodeling by angiotensin-(1-7)” in the American Journal of Physiology – Heart and Circulatory Physiology. Adam is currently studying the role of angiotensin II type 2 receptors in cerebroprotection during stroke and is involved in the mentorship of a Howard Hughes Medical Institute – Science for Life undergraduate student. Adam is the current Director for the Equal Access Clinic, a student run free clinic in downtown Gainesville. The clinic serves the underinsured population of Gainesville and Alachua County.

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