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Where Are They Now? Cinda Scott, PhD

CINDA SCOTT, PHD, ATTENDED HER first Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference in 1996, when she was an undergraduate at Middlebury College. Nearly 15 years later, as project manager for a grant to increase student participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics at the New York City College of Technology (City Tech), Scott brought two students to the 2011 BSCP New England Science Symposium (NESS).

The Lexington, Massachusetts, native says the 1996 conference was a positive experience for her, “in that I met the director of the Mount Desert Island Bio Labs [MDIBL].” She spent the following summer at MDIBL, under the auspices of the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program, studying with a principal investigator, Dr. John Forest, who was looking at dogfish shark rectal glands to understand cystic fibrosis. It was the first time, Scott says, that she saw “how you could use marine organisms as models for human disease.”

After she graduated, Scott spent a year in the premed/postdoctoral program at Columbia University. A subsequent year working in the Holter monitor facility at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital assessing cardiac arrhythmias helped her realize that she did not want to become a physician.

Scott moved back to Boston in 2001 to prepare to apply to graduate school. At the same time, she juggled a job at Organogenesis Inc., a regenerative medicine company in Canton, and an internship at the New England Aquarium.

In 2002, Scott attended the University of Miami’s Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, receiving her

PhD from the Department of Marine Biology and Fisheries with a concentration in marine molecular evolutionary genomics.

“I graduated at the worst possible time,” Scott says. She moved back to New York in 2009 with her freshly minted PhD and no job. She remained unemployed for five months, finally taking a job teaching English in a neighborhood with a high percentage of disadvantaged minority youth. “I couldn’t figure out how to incorporate my marine background with minority youth education,” she says.

In November 2010, Scott found her current position. It is one of several National Science Foundation awards granted to broaden and strengthen minority student participation at the community college level. She also helps change the laboratory curriculum, incorporating real-world experience to entice students to stay in the sciences.

While she still is not working directly in the field she studied, Scott says, “my PhD experience taught me how things work in academia, and I now see how to apply the problem-solving skills I learned as a marine biologist here at City Tech.”

Scott says the two students she brought to the NESS “absolutely” got something out of it. One was shy about relating to anybody at the symposium, so Scott introduced her to a speaker she wanted to meet. The two spoke for more than an hour.



CINDA SCOTT, PHD

Student Profile

Sergio Ortuño

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE typical New England Science Symposium (NESS) participant. All the students and fellows who attend and/or present each year have their own stories, interests, strengths and goals. But Sergio Ortuño, 27, who attended the 2011 NESS in April, traveled farther than many. The recent graduate of San Jacinto College in Houston, who now attends Texas A&M University, came from Texas last spring and ended up spending the summer working in Harvard University's Disease Biophysics Group conducting tissue engineering.

"I would love to end up here doing bio-engineering," he says. "I love life science and bioengineering combined. One seems more logical, and there's a finesse working with cells."

Ortuño has worked hard his whole life. As a young boy in Texas, he was often the English translator for his Mexican-born parents. While in elementary school, he

worked alongside his father laying carpet, while his father quizzed him on fractions, conversions and area. At home, he used his love of mechanics and chemistry to take apart and reassemble his mother's appliances and create concoctions from her cleaning solutions. Not surprisingly, by high school, he was in advanced science and math classes — as well as Spanish and history. His father always impressed upon him the importance of education.

Instead of graduating and going straight to college, Ortuño joined the Navy, spending five years as a submariner. He says he was inspired in part by a desire to serve his country after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the thought that it was a way to help with college expenses.

In 2007, when his five-year commitment ended, Ortuño returned home and got a job as an electronics technician. That summer, he also got a job as a process operator for a chemical company. Shortly after he joined, the company filed for bankruptcy.

In the fall of 2009, the company offered severance packages to employees who wanted to leave, and the government made college tuition available to veterans through the Post-9/11 GI Bill. So Ortuño decided to become a full-time student.

In the summer of 2010, as a Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation scholar, Ortuño accepted an organic chemistry internship at Arkansas State University, where he worked on fuel cell technology. It was there that he met Earl Benjamin III, PhD, and Ellis Benjamin, PhD, who told him about the NESS and invited him to join them the following spring.



SERGIO ORTUÑO

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NESS Expanding Its Reach

THIS YEAR, THE NEW ENGLAND Science Symposium (NESS), which has always attracted students from a broad geographical range, expanded its reach even further, welcoming 24 college and graduate students from the Mississippi Delta, Appalachia, East Los Angeles and Arkansas. The students live among populations with health disparities and in areas that suffer from shortages of health professionals.

In addition to the symposium on April 1, the students were hosted for a full day of activities on Saturday, April 2, during which they met and engaged with Harvard faculty, administrators and students, and toured Harvard Medical School and its science laboratories and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (see related story, above).

The students who attended were very appreciative. In a private conversation, one was in tears when he described how much this experience has impacted him and the hope he now has for his future. Another, from East Los Angeles College, who presented a poster, was approached by a dean from the University of Massachusetts who wants to recruit him into the medical sciences program. And there were many equally inspirational stories.

After the event, Phil Crace, MD, wrote: *I just wanted to thank you for the invite to this year's symposium. I was really impressed by the openness/welcomeness of the Harvard medical community. I really hope that this will be the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship for our Appalachian students.*

I am already looking forward to bringing students next year to present.

And Dr. Armando Rivera, associate professor of chemistry at East Los Angeles College, said:

The students... were so thrilled to exchange experiences with graduate students and faculty in addition to the opportunity to tour the campus and medical school. Both have expressed that they now have an even greater sense of what they need to do to envision them in executing their academic pursuits.

Since it was started in 2002, the NESS has hosted 3,200 participants from 460 different institutions.

2011 Hope Scholars

AT THE APRIL 28, 2011, EVENING OF Hope, which celebrated BSCP's 20th anniversary, four students received Hope Scholarship awards of \$7,500. The four recipients were Yendelela Levana Cuffee, a third-year PhD student at the University of Massachusetts Medical School; Angel S. Byrd, an MD/PhD candidate at the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University; Alexander Tejada, an undergraduate at Dartmouth College; and Jonas Mark Enriquez Sacro, an undergraduate at the University of Connecticut.

Yendelela Cuffee, from Alexandria, Virginia, received a BS in biology from Hampton University and an MS in epidemiology from New York Medical College. Her dissertation research focuses on elucidating the root causes of cardiovascular health disparities and the psychosocial and behavioral predictors of medication nonadherence. Yendelela attended the New England Science Symposium (NESS) in 2009 and the Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference in 2010. She delivered poster and oral presentations at the 2010 and 2011 NESS respectively, and she is a member of the NESS planning committee. After graduating, Yendelela plans to continue research aimed at identifying and reducing health disparities among African Americans and designing interventions that promote medication adherence among underserved populations. Biogen Idec Foundation sponsored her award.

Angel Byrd, from Mississippi, graduated *magna cum laude* from Tougaloo College, where she was a Gates Millennium Scholar and a Jackson Heart Study Scholar. She has conducted research at Peking University Health Science Center in Beijing through the Minority International Research Training Program and at other locations through the Leadership Alliance Summer Research Early Identification Program. She attended the 2006, 2008 and 2010 Biomedical Science Careers Student Conferences and the 2008 and 2009 NESS. She has presented her work at

national and international conferences on behalf of the American Society for Investigative Pathology and was recognized as a Lilly Scholar and a United Negro College Fund/Merck Fellow. She plans to pursue a career as a pediatric endocrinologist/diabetologist focusing primarily on childhood obesity. Genzyme Corporation sponsored her award.

Alexander Tejada, from Boston, is a biology major at Dartmouth College with a minor in Latin Caribbean studies. He participated in Harvard Medical School's Project Success in the summers of 2008, 2009 and 2010. Alex was awarded an NIH Minority Scholarship and conducted research at the Center for Sickle Cell Research at the Boston Medical Center. He also received an NIH Minority Internship for Research and Training to conduct research in Guatemala this past summer. He attended the 2006 and 2010 BSCP Skills Workshops for College and High School Students and the Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference in 2008 and 2010. He presented posters at the 2010 and 2011 NESS. After graduating, Alex plans to apply to medical school and pursue a career in medicine and research

aimed at improving health disparities and developing strategies to improve health equality. Vertex Pharmaceuticals sponsored his award.

Jonas Mark Enriquez Sacro was born in the Philippines and moved to Connecticut in 2006. He is majoring in chemistry at the University of Connecticut (UConn). During the summers of 2009 and 2010, he participated in the Northeast Alliance Summer Research Program for underrepresented minorities, conducting research in a pharmaceutical sciences research laboratory at UConn. Jonas presented his research at the 2010 and 2011 NESS. He also attended the 2010 Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference. Jonas is an active member of the Philipino-American Association of Greater Hartford and the American Association of Pharmaceutical Sciences. He is a Science and Technology Reaching Out to New Generations in Connecticut scholar. Jonas plans to pursue a doctorate of pharmacy. He hopes to work in the pharmaceutical industry and help communities in the Philippines that need adequate health care and modern medicine. The Fleming Family Foundation, Inc. sponsored his award.



LEFT TO RIGHT: ALEXANDER TEJEDA, YENDELELA CUFFEE, JONAS SACRO AND ANGEL BYRD

Save the Dates

Career Development Series: Federal Funding Opportunities

Thursday, October 20, 2011

Program: 3:00 to 6:15 p.m.

Networking Dinner: 6:15 to 7:00 p.m.

Harvard Medical School — Gordon
Hall Waterhouse Room

Audience: Physicians in postdoctoral training, junior faculty and fellows (research and clinical)

Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference

Friday, March 30 and Saturday,
March 31, 2012

The Westin Hotel Copley Place

Audience: Postdoctoral fellows; medical, dental and graduate students; college and community college students; post-baccalaureates; high school seniors and juniors

New England Science Symposium

Sunday, April 1, 2012

Joseph B. Martin Conference Center
at Harvard Medical School

Audience: Postdoctoral fellows; medical, dental and graduate students; college and community college students; and post-baccalaureates

ABSTRACTS DEADLINE: January 5, 2012

For information and to submit an abstract or register, go to www.NewEnglandScienceSymposium.org.

Evening of Hope

Wednesday, April 28, 2012

The Westin Hotel Copley Place

Reception: 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and Awards Ceremony: 7:00 p.m.

Reminder

Please remember to update your contact information and post your resume at www.bsccp.org. Click on "Update/Submit Your Information," then enter your information under "Current and Former BSCP Participants."

For more information, contact: Lise D. Kaye at (617) 432-0552 or lise_kaye@hms.harvard.edu

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CINDA SCOTT, PHD

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The other, who needed presentation experience, delivered a poster presentation.

In addition to her grant position, Scott is an adjunct biology professor and says she always tells her students about internship opportunities and events like the Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference and NESS. The experience and exposure are important. "For a lot of them, they don't even leave Brooklyn, let alone [go to] Boston," she says. She hopes to continue to bring students to BSCP events and is certain that the BSCP provided her with the key to unlock many doors.

SERGIO ORTUÑO

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At the NESS, Ortuño took a tour of Harvard and MIT led by Carol A. Martin and Leonor Perez, PhD. He met John McNally, assistant dean, Harvard Integrated Life Sciences, at a graduate school recruitment session in Harvard Yard. "I gave him an elevator speech about my goals," Ortuño recalls. McNally, in turn, told Ortuño he knew the person who ran an internship that would be perfect for him and offered to pass along his contact information, which led to Ortuño's summer in the Biophysics Group.

"It's really rewarding," Ortuño says of his work in the laboratory, "and the resources are amazing."

Ortuño is studying chemical engineering at Texas A&M, with an emphasis on bioengineering and biomedical sciences. After he graduates, in 2013, he hopes to work in bioengineering in an academic environment, preferably in the Boston area.