

Undergraduate Research Assistantship Student Interview - Zimuzor Ugochukwu Mentored by Dennis LaJeunesse

1. **How did you find out about the research of the faculty member you worked with?** I was walking through the Science Building and came across a marine biology lab. I walked in, explained my interest, and the direct me to Dr. L whom he thought would better fit my biological interests.
2. **Did you receive academic credit and/or pay for doing your research?** I received academic credit for my entire Sophomore year. 5 credits in all. I am now funded through OUR's URA program.
3. **How long did your research project last?** My project is ongoing.
4. **How was your involvement in the research project helped you with respect to your college experience?** It has broadened my experience. I am able to look at another aspect of college life in academics.
5. **Has your research helped you with respect to understanding the content in the courses that you have taken? Can you give a specific example?** My research has helped me to understand the content in the courses. For instance, I am taking Genetics now and the research that I have done and am doing pertains to Genetics and Cell Biology.
6. **What was the most positive aspect of your research project? The most negative?** The most positive aspect of my research is the fact that I may make a difference in the lives of others in the future, as well as being paired up with a wonderful mentor who is willing to help me in any way possible. The most negative aspect would be the difficulty in understanding some of the material. However, I do have an extraordinary mentor to guide me.
7. **What is the title of your research? Briefly describe what your research is about.** In Fall 2007, my mentor professor and I cloned CG16972, a gene which encodes a protein of an unknown function. CG16972 is expressed in a group of autonomic neuron-like cells which we are interested in studying. This gene encodes a novel protein that is slightly homologous to a protein in the human body that in its absence is the cause of a facial bone disease known as Treacher Collin's Syndrome.
8. **What do you plan to do after graduation? Has this research experience influenced that decision at all? If so, how?** After graduation, I am looking at a number of different things. I may pursue a higher degree or I may pursue my political interests. However, I am not sure at this moment. This research has the ability, if we work hard enough this year; to influence my decision in the future.

Faculty Mentor Interview - Dennis LaJeunesse

1. **What was your role in the undergraduate research project?** I help Zim analyze the data and design other experiments. We talk about the results and have weekly discussions about important science issues that relate to the experiment. I also trained her to identify certain phenotypes and use different microscopes, dissect larvae and set up genetic crosses.
2. **What was the most positive aspect in working with an undergraduate researcher?** The most positive aspect in working with an undergraduate researcher is guiding that student through the process of science and at some point seeing the sign that they have finally learned how science works. People have misconceptions about science. There is a science that people think that happens that is exciting, and there is a reality of science that is much more tedious. It is so hard to get to those exciting results and having a student appreciate the fact that science is not always exciting yet still work hard in spite of the tedious processes and still be interested in science is very rewarding to me.
3. **About how much time did you spend with you undergraduate researcher and was it worth it?** My student works 10-15 hours a week and I am there almost all the time to help them with any problems they might have. Yes, it is worth all the time that I spend working with them.



Dennis LaJeunesse (left) working hard with his undergraduate researcher, Zimuzor Ugochukwu (right).

4. **Do you see yourself working with another undergraduate researcher sometime in the future?** Yes. Being at UNCG with a smaller graduate program, the most reliable research assistants I have are from undergraduates. They have provided me with an invaluable set of experiences as well as producing a great deal of data that I have used for my grants and publications.
5. **What would you advice for a faculty member who would mentor an undergraduate researcher?** It is a lot of hard work but it is well worth it. Having an undergraduate research assistant at a school like UNCG is a valuable resource that many other schools don't offer and this makes UNCG unique.