

Minority Graduate Student Recruitment and Retention *in Life Sciences*



at the
University of Missouri-Columbia



“ I attended a summer program at MU and became familiar with the faculty and research opportunities. It has a lot to offer in terms of the variety in research projects. When I decided to apply to graduate programs, MU was my FIRST CHOICE.”

Dorian Jones
Predoctoral Fellow in Nutritional Sciences

THE MOLECULAR BIOLOGY PROGRAM

The interdisciplinary Molecular Biology Program (MBP) at the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) administers a NIGMS training grant involving four academic units: Biochemistry, Biological Sciences, Genetics, and Molecular Microbiology and Immunology.

Recruitment Strategies

Information Resources

- Brochures and personal letters distributed to:
 - **minority undergraduates majoring in life sciences;**
 - recruitment offices at **institutions with strong life sciences programs;**
 - **multicultural centers** at universities with large minority enrollments.
- MBP maintains a *Minorities in Science* web site (www.biotech.missouri.edu/mbp/minority) which features photos, research information and quotes from a sampling of current MU minority graduate students and faculty, as well as links to other relevant sites.

Internships

- **MBP faculty serve as preceptors/mentors** in the Minority Enrichment High School and College Programs sponsored by the MU School of Medicine, the McNair minority summer research internship program for undergrads, and the Life Sciences Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (LS UROP) summer research internships.

Advertising

- The Molecular Biology Program has placed **display ads in diversity advertising supplements of *Science***, most recently, a full page, full color ad in November 2000, in conjunction with several other life science-related programs at MU.

Partner Schools

- The Molecular Biology Program participates in long-term relationships with **partner schools** that involve **summer research internships for undergraduates** and coordination of recruiting activities.

Personal Contacts

- **MBP training grant faculty visit colleges and universities with significant minority enrollment** to establish contacts with faculty advisers, talk with students and solicit applications.

Student Involvement

- Currently enrolled **MBP minority graduate students are involved in recruiting activities** in several ways:
 - **Assist in responding to inquiries** about graduate study at MU, the Molecular Biology Program and cultural awareness in Columbia.
 - **Host prospective students** who are visiting the MU campus.
 - Future plans include having minority graduate students **visit select Missouri high schools with high minority enrollment** to discuss careers in the life sciences, and to stress the importance of high achievement in high school coursework.

Coordination of Recruitment Efforts

- The Molecular Biology Program **collaborates on recruitment efforts with the MU Graduate School and a variety of MU academic departments and programs**, such as the Minority Biomedical Researcher Training Initiative coordinated by the MU College of Veterinary Medicine.

Retention Strategies

Selected Training Faculty

- The **MBP training grant faculty are carefully selected**, not only for the quality of their research and stature in the field, but also for their willingness to provide excellent mentoring for graduate students, which we believe to be a significant factor in student persistence and success.

Doctoral student Jeamelia Davis says it best: “I chose MU because the faculty-student interactions seem so relaxed. **The faculty members that I talked to seemed really interested in keeping me in the degree program, not just accepting me.** It is important to attend a university that has its students’ best interests at heart.”

Student Mentoring

- We are also **expanding our student mentoring program**, pairing graduate students (volunteer minority students in their third year or beyond) with new students in their first year of training.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Molecular Biology Program/NIGMS Training Program

University of Missouri-Columbia
311 Tucker Hall
Columbia, MO 65211-7400

Toll-free: 800-GENE PhD (436-3743)

Fax: 573-884-9676

Web: www.biotech.missouri.edu/mbp/



“ It is important to attend a university that has its students’ BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.”

Jeamelia Davis
Predoctoral Fellow in Biological Sciences

THE MU GRADUATE SCHOOL

- **Attends graduate fairs** at historically black colleges and universities, and those serving Hispanics and Native Americans.
- Creates **Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)** and **partnership agreements** with various minority-serving institutions.
- Hosts the **Access to Doctoral Education (ADE) Summer Research Program** through the NSF-sponsored Missouri Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (MAGEP).
- Offers students **financial and mentoring support** through the Heartland Alliance for Minority Participation (HAMP), Ronald E. McNair Program and the Gus Ridgel and MAGEP Fellowships.

MU’S COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS

The University of Missouri-Columbia is committed to providing **an educational environment that supports and encourages persistence, personal and academic success.** In addition to traditional campus student services, MU has a Black Culture Center with a full-time director and staff, plus many organizations and programs that provide support and assistance to all under-represented minorities.