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23 IE students named fall 2015 Kuhn scholars



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By Eunice Ali

The Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) Pre-Graduate Internship Program awarded Kuhn awards to 23 undergraduates for the fall 2015 semester. Students received \$1,000 stipends from the Michael and Alice Kuhn Foundation, while their graduate mentors received matching \$1,000 funds from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE).

The IE program was created in 2003 to mentor undergraduate students and help them explore the option of graduate school, according to Rick Cherwitz, founder and director of the IE program. Cherwitz said students use the awards to pay for conference travel expenses, prepare for graduate school entrance exams and participate in research, among other opportunities.

“One of the things the IE Pre-Graduate mentorship program is trying to do is to give more underrepresented minorities, first-generation college and economically disadvantaged students mentoring opportunities so they can figure out if graduate school or other career possibilities are in their future,” Cherwitz said. “This award given by the Kuhn’s provides us a significant way to enrich that experience and help students discover their passion and construct a pathway forward.”

Nursing junior Nicole Gloris said this award helped her confirm her interest in graduate school.

“I feel honored to be a Kuhn scholar,” Gloris said in an e-mail. “It’s not every day that someone helps fund your desire to explore the opportunities of graduate school.”

Gloris said she met her mentor doctoral nursing student Ashley Henneghan when working in the same research department at the School of Nursing. With Henneghan’s encouragement, Gloris submitted her research to the Texas Student Research Showdown.

“This competition helped me rekindle my passion for research,” Gloris said. “[Henneghan] constantly inspires me to be a leader as she always gets recognized as a leader in her field.”

Social work junior Taylor Lambert, who aspires to work with children in a clinical setting through play therapy, said her mentor has helped her address her fears and anxieties about continuing education.

“[My mentor] and this program have helped me realize that what I’m thinking and feeling is completely normal,” Lambert said. “I definitely feel more secure in my decision to go to graduate school because of her.”

Social work graduate student Nadia Velasquez said she has enjoyed being a “role model” for her mentee Jeanette Pacheco, a women’s and gender studies and social work senior.

“[Pacheco] is a first-generation college student, and so am I,” Velasquez said in an e-mail.

“When you go to college at a four-year university, it can be overwhelming. It may even be more overwhelming for students who don’t have social and emotional support [because their parents and siblings have never gone to college].”

Velasquez said she meets with Pacheco two to three times a month to discuss Pacheco’s goals and ways she can help Pacheco accomplish them.

“If I — someone who comes from the similar background — can do it, she can do it,” Velasquez said.

Psychology graduate student Nicole Wen said she has mentored eight students since spring 2014.

“Do it! It’s such a worthwhile experience to meet motivated young people who are interested in what you do,” Wen said. “I remember being an undergrad and had I had the opportunity to do something like the IE program, I would’ve been so grateful!”