



News Release

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ECBC's Inaugural MUSIP Session Attracts Future Scientists, Engineers to Careers in Government Service

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. — The U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC), the premier national resource for chemical and biological defense, celebrated the success of its inaugural Minority Undergraduate Summer Internship Program (MUSIP) and the hard work of program participants with a graduation ceremony held Thursday, July 30.

While the college sophomores and juniors shared their accomplishments over the course of the 10-week program with ECBC leaders, distinguished guests and their family and friends, the event also highlighted each of the students' backgrounds and the research they conducted.

"There is a buzz in the air that I have not felt in a long time," ECBC Technical Director Rick Decker said in his opening remarks. "It is very exciting. Young people seem to be re-energizing government service."

In support of the Center's ongoing goal to strengthen its workforce and encourage students to pursue careers in science and engineering, MUSIP provided eight undergraduates with the opportunity to enhance their education by working on challenging integrated science, technology and engineering research projects with leading scientists and engineers.

"In addition to hands-on research, the students were exposed to the inner-workings of the government workplace in the hopes that they would familiarize themselves with the culture and later be attracted to a government career at ECBC or elsewhere," said Cindy Backhaus, ECBC workforce development officer.

Curious about how her classroom experiences would translate into a career, Lindsay Marron spent her internship working on the Personal Protective Equipment Standards Program where she tested animal skin, among other things. In the end, Marron, a biology major at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, learned a lot about the softer side of lab work when she was required to take safety and animal ethics training.

"I was anxious to find out what exists outside of my college's doors," Marron said. "This internship definitely took me outside of my comfort zone."

Many of the interns based their presentations on what they learned as a student, an American and a minority.

“This internship — from the lens of an American — has shown me that I definitely want to work for the government when I graduate,” said Joshua J. Armstead, a chemical engineering major at Trine University in Indiana “Things operate like a big family here.”

MUSIP was established by ECBC’s Diversity Advisory Committee and Workforce Management Office in collaboration with the Oak Ridge Institute of Science and Education in May 2008 and commenced on June 1. The program sought underrepresented minority college sophomores and juniors majoring in biology, chemistry, engineering, environmental science, occupational safety, physical science, physics or related disciplines at four-year colleges to apply for the MUSIP internship. The interns worked with ECBC mentors throughout the program to help guide them and develop their career interests.

“After some time, I began to view my mentor ... as a friend with whom I could discuss sports and politics,” Armstead said. “I really appreciated his willingness to communicate with me in simple terms and to keep me engaged in research instead of busy work.”

Aiming to build upon the success of this first MUSIP session, the Center is already preparing for a summer 2010 session. This summer’s interns have already been offered the opportunity to continue working at ECBC during their upcoming winter break with hopes that they will return after graduation.

For more information about MUSIP or ECBC’s other community and educational outreach initiatives, visit <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/>.

ECBC is the Army’s principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering and field operations. ECBC has achieved major technological advances for the warfighter and for our national defense, with a long and distinguished history of providing the Armed Forces with quality systems and outstanding customer service. ECBC is a US Army Research, Development and Engineering Command laboratory located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. For more information about the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, please visit our Web site at <http://www.ecbc.army.mil> or call (410) 436-3610.

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