

Malaspina University-College
NEWS RELEASE

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Students Work in High-tech lab After Winning National Research Awards

Six students are wrapping up "innovative research projects" in a high-tech lab at Malaspina University-College.

The students worked all summer in the Applied Environmental Research Laboratory (AERL) after receiving Undergraduate Summer Research Awards valued at \$4,500 each from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and \$2,500 each from the Malaspina University-College Foundation.

"We are very proud that six Malaspina students received these prestigious national NSERC awards, and it's a credit to our faculty, our programs and the students themselves that they did so," said Dr. David Thomas, Vice-President of Instruction and Research.

The awards allowed the students to work on various projects in the state-of-the-art research laboratory for 16 weeks. They were mentored by Malaspina science and technology faculty, including Drs. Erik Krogh, Chris Gill and Duane Friesen in Chemistry, and Dr. Penelope Barnes, leading scientist in the Centre for Shellfish Research.

Chemistry student Michael Lynch, accepted into the third year honours program at the University of B.C. in September, describes his summer experience in Malaspina's AERL "as the best opportunity ever."

Lynch's research project involved measuring environmentally relevant molecules in water with highly specialized equipment called a "membrane introduction mass spectrometer (MIMS)."

"The opportunity to work in the lab with this kind of equipment was priceless," said Lynch, who graduated from Ladysmith Secondary. "Malaspina faculty like Dr. Krogh and Dr. Gill have more ideas and information than you could ever imagine. They treat student research assistants like equals and respect our ideas and thoughts."

Third year Biology student Skye Creba - a graduate of Nanaimo District Secondary School - also worked under the supervision of Dr. Gill. Her research focused on an air toxicology study concerning a specific molecule in wood smoke.

"It was a huge honour to receive the NSERC award and work alongside faculty and other students in the research lab," said Creba, who resumes classes at Malaspina in September. "This kind of hands-on training is difficult for undergraduate students to get anywhere else."

Robyn Ferguson, a fourth year Chemistry student and graduate of Wellington Secondary, spent the summer studying disinfection by-products in drinking water, a project monitored by Drs. Gill and Krogh.

Working independently in the AERL has been a very positive experience, said Ferguson. "The opportunity to problem solve and think of new ways of doing things has been invaluable."

Three other Malaspina students also obtained NSERC awards in 2004: Heidi Lydersen, Lindsay Rear and Thurston Helm. The NSERC awards foster scientific research at undergraduate based institutions and are awarded to students with high academic achievement. This is the second year that Malaspina students have been able to apply for the grants.

"We are very lucky to attract such a high caliber of students in the AERL," said Dr. Krogh. "The work they are involved with is innovative and significant on the national and international level. The results of these research projects will lead to new methods to measure chemical contaminants and monitor their transformations in the environment."

Dr. Chris Foote, Chair of Malaspina's department of Fisheries & Aquaculture, said without the financial support of NSERC and the Malaspina University-College Foundation "the students would not have been able to be employed while they enjoy and participate in the stimulating research that is going on at Malaspina University-College."