

Summer research migration *by Walter Brooks*

Two students from profoundly different worlds share a common experience at UNMC.

Lindsey Griepenstroh and Joseph Lamar live in profoundly different worlds, but thanks to UNMC, they both have access to promising futures.

Griepenstroh is from Nebraska City, Neb., and attends Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa. Lamar is from Lithonia, Ga., and attends Morehouse College in Atlanta, Ga., one of only five remaining all-male universities in the United States.

Both Griepenstroh and Lamar spent 10 and six weeks at UNMC, respectively, and now agree – UNMC is a university where one size fits all.

Every summer, hundreds of the nation's

undergraduates find their way to UNMC via one of its outstanding summer undergraduate internship programs. Summer interns receive “real world” opportunities to shadow health specialists, take advanced science courses, pursue laboratory research that will be published, and obtain mentoring on careers in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry and the allied health professions.

Griepenstroh heard about the M.D./Ph.D. Summer Undergraduate Research Program from a Cornell classmate.

“By participating in this program, I learned how clinical research is conducted and had a great experience doing it,” said Griepenstroh, who is



pursuing a double major in biochemistry/ molecular biology and chemistry. “Also, research poster presentations required at the end of the summer taught me how to analyze data and present the information professionally.

“I have learned that UNMC’s M.D./ Ph.D. program is the pinnacle of education. I’m now considering more summer internships here because of all the great opportunities available.”

Lamar was one of 78 undergraduates in the UNMC Student Medical Dental Education (SMDEP) program. This group of students – rising sophomores and juniors – came from 20 states and included 50 women, 28 men, 28 Caucasians, 26 African Americans, 15 Asians, seven Latinos and two Native Americans. Of the total, 23 were from Nebraska.

The SMDEP students were the most diverse group of undergraduates to ever come to UNMC.

The \$1.2 million, four-year grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation enabled UNMC to create a six-week enrichment program for students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, racial and ethnic groups or rural areas. UNMC was one of only 12 universities in the nation who received this prestigious grant.

“I found out about the SMDEP program from my academic advisor at Morehouse,” said Lamar, a biology major with a minor in public health. “I wanted advice and information that will help me successfully negotiate courses I have to take next semester at Morehouse. I gained a small taste of how medical school is structured. Just to be exposed to medical school professors and get a chance to hear the same lectures presented to medical students was pretty unique.

“I felt like I belonged at UNMC and if I go back to Morehouse and work hard enough, I can make it back here for the real thing.”



The Office of Student Equity and Multicultural Affairs (OSEMA) coordinates undergraduate programs that specifically focus on talented undergraduates from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

OSEMA programs include:

- National Institutes of Health Research Supplements to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research – basic science research for 12 weeks for two consecutive summers.
- Minority Health Education Research Office (MiHERO) Summer Research Opportunities – basic science research for eight weeks.
- Nebraska Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research – basic science research for eight weeks.

“Many of our interns have participated in national scientific meetings as a result of their experience – some have co-authored scholarly papers in scientific journals,” said John McClain, Ph.D., associate vice chancellor, student services administration.

Dr. McClain noted that a number of faculty from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) also have journeyed to Omaha for the summer – “usually as a direct result of their student’s glowing reports after their internships.”

In addition, Dillard University, UNMC’s first affiliated HBCU partner, now has five students in the colleges of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry, including four who did summer internships here.

Jeanne Ferbrache, director of Institutional Research and coordinator for the Office of Postdoctoral Education and Summer Undergraduate Research, has been involved with the campuswide departmental summer internship program since 2004. She has seen a remarkable evolution in UNMC’s internship recruiting efficiency and success.

“In 2004, we had about 120 interns each summer,” Ferbrache said. “But since students applied directly to a particular department, we didn’t have a solid handle on exactly how many interns we actually had. The numbers of positions available depended largely upon how many research dollars were available in each individual department.”

In December 2004, Ferbrache guided the development of an online application process. More than 500 students applied for the 120 slots available for the summers of 2005 and 2006. One-half the 2006 summer interns were from Nebraska. Interns under the departmental program spend 10 weeks on campus.