



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS | NEW ORLEANS, LA

Taking the Next Step in Systemic Mentoring

Ashok Puri, Ph.D., Campus Coordinator

In 2009, the University of New Orleans freshman minority STEM enrollment increased considerably in part due to UNOs Next Step Summer Program, which enables students, in five years, to receive both a physics and an engineering degree. The successful utilization of LS-LAMP resources and the implementation of systemic mentoring practices have caused the program to expand to a year-round comprehensive systemic mentoring program. Next Step implemented institutionalized university credit courses and specialized sections that equip students with basic research skills through active research and instruction. In addition, the UNO Physics Department, under the auspices of the 3+@ dual degree program, recruits students from Dillard and SUNO. The UNO LS-LAMP program has also progressively moved toward an INCENTIVE-based program that provides support in the form of book awards for academic improvement and awards for winning research presentation competitions.

UNO LS-LAMP has also offered a week-long problem solving activity (summer 2010) to community college students needing enrichment in algebra, trigonometry, and algebra-based physics. Of which, eight (8) community college students, five (5) from Nunez and three (3) from Delgado, participated in a short pre-college experience.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS | STUDENT PROFILES



NAME: *JOLENE ROBIN-McCASKILL, Ph.D.*

ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS:

B.S., Electrical Engineering, University of New Orleans

M.S., Applied Physics, University of New Orleans

M.S., Geophysics, Stanford University

Ph.D. candidate, Geophysics, Stanford University

Stanford Ph.D. candidate Jolene Robin-McCaskill admitted that initially she did not perform to her potential during her undergraduate studies, but the LS-LAMP program helped McCaskill to discover her talents, which also helped her to excel academically.

"LS-LAMP was the first time that I felt that my talents were recognized," said McCaskill. "My experience with LS-LAMP and LS-LAMP Campus Coordinator Ashok Puri are the sole reason that I am at Stanford University."

Puri encouraged McCaskill to take advantage of internship opportunities. McCaskill eventually began tutoring other LS-LAMP scholars. It was during her time as a tutor that McCaskill realized that she had a talent for taking difficult concepts and breaking it down where the concepts could be more easily understood. Currently, McCaskill is in her final year of Ph.D. studies at Stanford University in Geophysics.



NAME: *SYDEAKA WATSON, Ph.D.*

ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS:

B.S., Mathematics, University of New Orleans

*M.S., Mathematics, Michigan State University,
East Lansing, MI*

M.S., Statistical Science, Baylor University, Waco, TX

Ph.D., Statistics, Baylor University, Waco, TX

UNO LS-LAMP Coordinator Ashok Puri describes Sydeaka Watson as "a model student, a perfect mentor and a great researcher and scientist." Watson's peer reviewed articles and conference presentations are evidence of her "star student" status.

Watson was the second place winner of the 2010 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) Stat Bowl. She was also named Outstanding Graduate Student (2010) by Baylor University's Department of Statistical Sciences. She has also participated in a number of research experiences including Dillard University's Summer Transition Program, University Illinois Urbana-Champaign Summer Research Opportunities Program, Michigan State University Summer Research Opportunities Program and conducted research on Theoretical Biology and Biophysics as a graduate student at Los Alamos National Laboratory.