

# Honors



Newsletter of the University of Georgia Honors Program

Summer 2009



## 2009 Barry M. Goldwater Scholar

**Muktha Natrajan**, an Honors student from Martinez, GA, is a 2009 recipient of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. Muktha is currently pursuing a BS in genetics and a master's in public health with a focus on environmental health science.

Muktha came to UGA as a CURO Apprentice and immersed herself immediately in a research project involving stem cell differentiation, resulting in a new way to study and treat male infertility. This study was documented in a paper she co-authored for the journal *Human Reproduction*. She presented her research at the 2008 and 2009 CURO Symposia, as well as the 2008 Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), the nation's largest conference for underrepresented groups in biomedical sciences. Given her additional interests in environmental and ecological issues, Muktha traveled to China last summer on a grant through the National Science Foundation to study environmental effects of invasive plant species on China's coastline, at Nanjing University. Dr. Daniel Promislow, Muktha's program advisor, said: "When I met Muktha upon her arrival at UGA, I

was immediately struck by her deep passion for science, coupled with a sincere compassion for the world around her. She does all she does not to impress anyone, but because she truly believes that these are the right things to do."

In addition to her academic record, Muktha is also very active on campus, holding leadership roles in groups such as the Go Green Alliance and Advocating Safe Alternatives for Peers, a student group promoting healthy lifestyle choices. She is also involved in the UGA chapter of the Association for Women in Science and the Student Society for Stem Cell Research.

"Muktha is a model Honors student," said Dr. David S. Williams, director of the Honors Program and UGA's Goldwater faculty representative. "She is passionate about her scholarly work and how she can help better society. She makes the most of the opportunities presented to her. Muktha has certainly earned the awards and recognitions that are coming her way, and I couldn't be more proud of her."

## MAKING UGA HISTORY

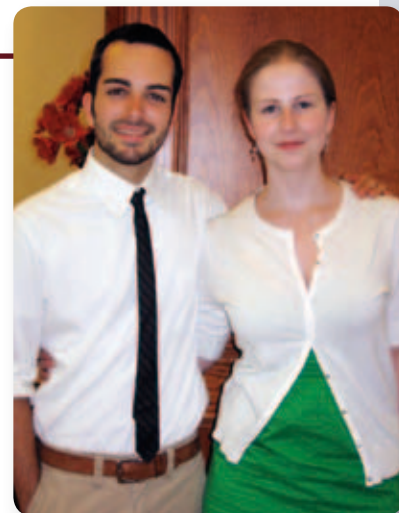
For the first time in UGA's history, two students were selected as recipients of the Morris K. Udall Scholarship. **Ashley Dronenburg** and **Mark Milby** are among 80 students nationwide to receive the award, which recognizes student leaders pursuing careers related to the environment or Native American policy.

Ashley is a third-year Honors student, from Lawrenceville, GA, double majoring in journalism and environmental economics and management. Through reporting and campus activities, Ashley has demonstrated her commitment to raise awareness about current environmental issues. She has published service articles on bio-diesel use in Athens and ways to "be green" on a student budget in *UGAZine*, a student magazine published by UGA's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Another article profiling UGA's student-run Herpetological Society is slated for publication in the fall. Ashley has been involved with Students for Environmental Awareness since her first year at UGA and has served as president of the group for the last two years. She also works with the Go Green Alliance, a coalition of UGA environmental groups. Most recently, Ashley created a student volunteer partnership with the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. "Receiving the scholarship and becoming part of the Udall community will give me an incredible opportunity to monitor the pulse of environmental news and developments in our country and across the globe," said Ashley. After graduating next spring, Ashley would like to pursue master's degrees in journalism/mass communication and environmental economics to prepare

for a career in environmental journalism.

Mark Milby is a third-year ecology major from Marietta, GA, who plans to enter graduate school and earn a Ph.D. in ecology or sustainable development after graduating from UGA. Mark has been conducting research since his first year at UGA and is currently investigating the effects of climate change on forest ecosystem dynamics. He serves as co-president of the Ecology Club, as well as a council member for the Go Green Alliance. He is also the founder of Gameday Recycling, a campus-wide recycling program that takes place during UGA's home football games.

"Like the Udall Foundation itself, both Mark and Ashley are committed to educating Americans about the environmental issues impacting our national heritage," said Dr. David S. Williams. "They are wonderful students and people, and are very deserving recipients of this honor. I am very proud of them."



## Tulsi Patel Well on Her Way to Realizing Her American Dream

*“My American Dream is already coming true. I am doing everything I always wanted to do, yet never believed I could. But I still have a long way to go before becoming a professor.”*

*Tulsi Patel in her personal statement to the Merage Foundation.*



When Tulsi Patel came to the United States at age fourteen from Sambalpur, India, she was anything but excited about the move. She loved growing up in the small town south of Calcutta, and would have preferred to stay there. Little did she know that she would soon meet a science teacher at North Cobb High School who would start her on a path to success. After graduating from North Cobb, Tulsi applied to UGA and the Honors Program. She was awarded the CURO Apprenticeship and almost immediately started work in a biomedical laboratory. During the summer of her second year, she worked as a Summer Fellow in Dr. Scott Gold’s plant pathology lab. There she designed her own research focusing on a fungal pathogen that could be used as a biological agent to control Chinese privet, a harmful exotic weed in Georgia. During her last two years at UGA, Tulsi conducted stem cell research in the laboratory of Dr. Steve Stice where she studied how neural progenitor cells can be used as neurons in potential treatments for neurodegenerative diseases. She recently graduated with a degree in genetics and will enter a Ph.D. program at Columbia University this fall. Ultimately, Tulsi would like to become a genetics professor and research scientist. The Merage Foundation for the American Dream provides up to \$20,000 over a two-year period, and is awarded annually to twelve academically outstanding undergraduate immigrants. Tulsi is the fourth UGA Honors student to receive the scholarship in as many years.

## Outstanding high school seniors honored as promising scholars



For the fifth consecutive year, the Honors Program recognized 16 seniors from Georgia high schools for their stellar academic records. The 16 students were named 2009 Promising Scholars and attended the CURO Symposium during their two days on campus. They also gathered for informal and panel discussions on academics, research, and campus life with current CURO Apprentices, as well as UGA faculty. “The CURO Symposium serves as the major academic recruitment event for the CURO apprentice program,” said Dr. Pamela Kleiber, associate director of the Honors Program. “Georgia high school seniors may hear about opportunities to conduct research at UGA, but seeing is believing. We want these Promising Scholars to see and hear firsthand what UGA undergraduates are able to accomplish under the guidance of faculty mentors.” Thirteen of this year’s Promising Scholars will enter UGA this fall as CURO Apprentices.

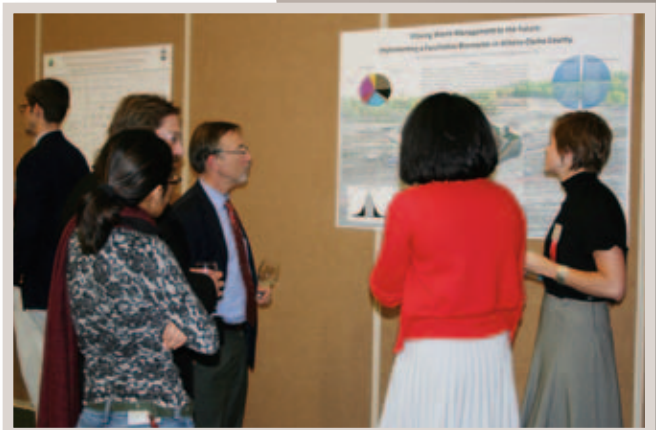
## 2009 CURO Symposium

**O**n April 6, 2009, more than 200 UGA undergraduate students came together to discuss and present their undergraduate research projects at the CURO Symposium. Students shared their research either by giving an oral or poster presentation, exhibiting their creative works in an art exhibit, or discussing it in roundtables with UGA faculty. “Conducting original research with faculty guidance, including sharing findings with a broader audience such as in the CURO symposium, is no longer reserved for graduate students,” said Dr. Pamela Kleiber, associate director of the Honors Program. “The CURO Symposium provides a supportive but demanding opportunity for undergraduates to share original research that has been guided by top faculty researchers at UGA. Presentation at the CURO Symposium is often the first, and seldom the last, scholarly opportunity for these students.” The following students, all recent graduates, participated in the 2009 CURO Symposium.

Combining research interests and career pursuits has been the path **Long Doan**, a fourth-year international business major from Savannah, GA has taken while conducting undergraduate research in sociology with Dr. Dawn Robinson, his faculty research mentor. Long studied the theoretical distinction between moods and emotions, and how people’s occupations may affect their emotions. “Being able to work with a faculty mentor who lets you venture out on your own is intellectually stimulating,” said Long, who would like to become a sociologist. “The experience has prepared me for graduate school and has opened so many doors, including presenting at the CURO undergraduate research symposium in Costa Rica in 2007, as well as many conferences and travel opportunities, while allowing me to network with people who have similar interests.”

**Caitlin McLaughlin’s** research project emerged after taking a class with Dr. Daniel Kapust, her research mentor in political science. Caitlin, a student from Raleigh, NC, who double majored in political science and history, researched why the writers of the U.S. Constitution did not include term limits, especially since some seemed to be pessimistic about human nature and the potential for abusing authority. “My research revealed that the framers of the Constitution often had very different motivations and perspectives and that the documents they created were not necessarily the result of consensus, but often of compromise,” said Caitlin. “This finding is especially relevant to me personally because I plan to pursue a law career, and I will encounter issues of constitutional law often.”

**Kelly Nielsen**, a student from Booklet, GA, who majored in theater, investigated the role of physical space as used in “invisible” theater performances, a technique developed by innovative Brazilian theater practitioner Augusto Boal to draw attention to social injustices during a ban of activist theater performances. As part of her project under the guidance Dr. George Contini, Kelly developed a scene addressing verbal abuse in domestic relationships that was performed in public locations such as a large retail store, while the passing audience was unaware that it was a stage performance. “When I was younger, I wondered how anyone could find original ideas to research,” said Kelly, who would like to pursue a career in academia or a non-profit theater environment for community-building and education. “But when I came across invisible theatre and wanted to learn more, it was very difficult to find any research on the subject. It’s been a rewarding experience to learn and contribute my knowledge to invisible theatre. Research has provided a focus for my education.”





## Elizabeth Godbey:

*“The student least likely to offend and most likely to mend, the person who makes sure that everyone around is included and that everyone is heard and respected.”*

— Dr. David S. Williams

The Lisa Ann Coole Award was established in 1999 to honor the memory of an extraordinary young person, and to inspire Foundation Fellows not only to preserve that memory but to translate into their lives the compassion, joy, courage, and excellence that defined Lisa’s presence in the Fellowship, at UGA, and in her communities both in Georgia and Illinois. The criteria for the award reflect the way Lisa lived, with modesty and grace: academic distinction; campus-wide leadership, without a hint of self-promotion; community service with a genuine impact; and

love of the Fellowship and the opportunities it provides. Elizabeth Godbey has all those qualities and more. One of her classmates wrote this about Elizabeth: “Her sunny personality, leadership experiences, and scientific research will undoubtedly pave the way for her success in the field of medicine. One of the most kind-hearted and dedicated individuals you will ever encounter, Elizabeth will be the kind of doctor any of us would be lucky to have.”

*Congratulations Elizabeth!*

## *Special Recognition for Foundation Fellows on Campus and Beyond*

<b>Amanda Brouillette</b>	Wheatly Award in Physics
<b>Stephanie Chapman</b>	John G. Hollingsworth Award for Undergraduate Math
<b>Chris Chiego</b>	Rhodes Scholarship National Finalist
<b>Rebecca Corey</b>	Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship
<b>Christina Faust</b>	George J. Mitchell Scholarship
<b>Beau Gilmore</b>	Homecoming King 2008; Arch Foundation Fred C. Brown Leadership Award
<b>Geales Goodwin</b>	Advisor/Advocate of the Year, University Judiciary
<b>Claire Hatfield</b>	Rhodes Scholarship and Marshall Scholarship National Finalist
<b>Brittany Lee</b>	Pandora Yearbook’s Outstanding Senior Leader of 2009
<b>Caitlin McLaughlin</b>	Best Paper with Civic Focus, CURO 2009 Symposium
<b>Phillip Mote</b>	Cohen Scholarship from Alpha Epsilon Delta Pre-Med Honors Society
<b>Lucas Puente</b>	Truman Scholarship National Finalist
<b>Joseph Stunzi</b>	Speaker, National Association of Broadcasting Conference
<b>Robert Thrasher</b>	Dean’s Rotaract Student Service Award
<b>Jasmaine Williams</b>	UNCF/Merck Undergraduate Science Research Scholarship
<b>Sheena Zhang</b>	NSF Partnership for International Research and Education Scholarship

## From CURO Apprentices to Foundation Fellows

**Marcus Hines** and **Muktha Natrajan** came to the Honors Program to participate in the CURO Apprenticeship Program, but both have gone on to be awarded mid-term Foundation Fellowships this spring. The Fellowship will cover their tuition, student fees, and an assortment of academic and cultural enrichment activities for the last two years of study.

Marcus, from Albany, GA, is pursuing a double major in microbiology and cellular biology. He was named the CURO Hollowell Apprentice as well as a CURO Summer Research Fellow. His research focuses on analyzing the function of a particular glycan linked to type II diabetes and cancer. Marcus also sings in the UGA a cappella group, the Accidentals, and volunteers at Mercy Health Center, a clinic that provides social services for the uninsured in Athens. After graduation, Marcus would like to earn a Ph.D. in cellular biology, and an M.D. He hopes to become a physician-scientist at a university-run hospital, specializing in oncology.

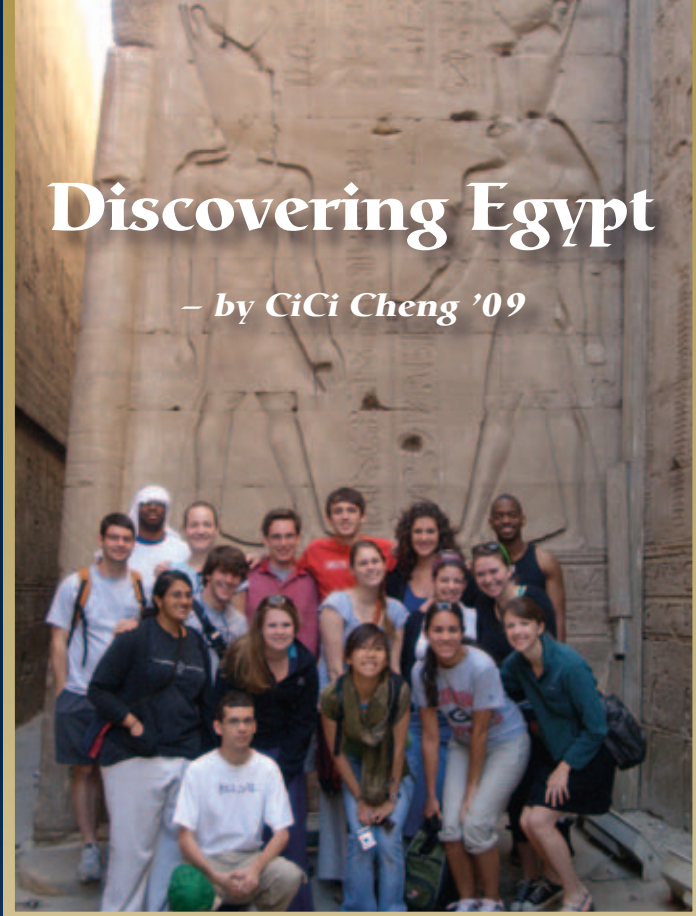
Muktha, who recently was awarded the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship (see page 1), would like to earn a doctorate in neuroscience after earning her UGA degrees. She would like to pursue a public service career, researching environmental pollutants, such as neurotoxins, and developing public policy to minimize their effects on society.

Both Muktha and Marcus are currently participating in the New York University Summer Undergraduate Research Program at the Sackler Institute of Medicine. Marcus and Muktha are joined at NYU by Honors Program students Ope Fawole and Kathy Riccione.



## Discovering Egypt

– by CiCi Cheng '09



I set out with 16 other Foundation Fellows to Egypt this March. Our Nile cruise began in Lower Egypt in the driest inhabited city in the world, Aswan. Although this might make Aswan seem like it held not much more than desert, we found the contrary. We set sail in a traditional wooden felucca (sailboat) on the Nile with a driver who tapped a handheld drum and convinced us to dance on the boat that barely held all of us. We also rode on camels across gold sand to a Nubian village, one of many inhabited by this minority population who were forced to relocate with the construction of Lake Nasser and the Aswan dams. There we were greeted in a small home and treated to hibiscus tea and even henna tattoos hand painted by an elderly woman! Our trip took us from here “down” (but really north on) the Nile, stopping occasionally to look at ancient temples, including Philae, Kom Ombo, and Edfu. Our final destination of Luxor held more historic treasures in the Valley of the Kings where we walked through the hidden tombs of pharaohs, and Karnak, where we ambled through vast pylons and hypostyles engraved with religious and decorative hieroglyphs—some of which still held their original color! The richness of the relics and culture we experienced was enough alone to make this trip a priceless memory, but to top off the trip, we were even so lucky (with the assistance of Dr. Williams and Honors staff member Danielle Romano) to turn a layover in Paris into a visit to the Eiffel Tower (and a requisite stop at a bakery café). Who could ask for more than cruising down the Nile and a Parisian foray, all in seven short days!

***A Great Year for Our Students in National and International Competitions***

**Erasmus Mundus Scholarship**

Jonathan Chestnut and Jean Chi

**Fulbright Scholarship**

Christine Beitzl, Samantha Haggard, Chandler Holbrook, Alex Kazer, Jason Kim, Kelly Nielsen, David Porcaro, Selena Robinson, Julie Rushmore, Desiree Seponski

**Goldwater Scholarship**

Muktha Natrajan

**Merage American Dream Fellowship**

Tulsi Patel

**Mitchell Scholarship**

Christina Faust

**NSEP/Boren Scholarship**

Puja Chebrolu, Laura Eaton, Dan Healy, Daniel Jackson

**NSF Graduate Research Fellowships**

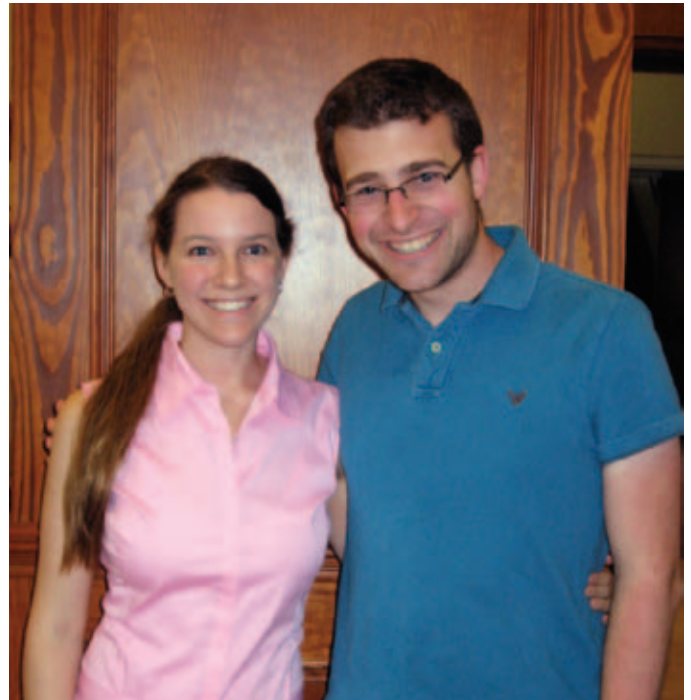
Tyler Kelly, Jessica Van Parys, Seychelle Vos

**Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship**

Rebecca Corey

**Udall Scholarship**

Ashley Dronenburg, Mark Milby



***Three UGA students awarded 2009 NSF Graduate Research Fellowships***

Honors students **Tyler Kelly** ('09), **Jessica van Parys** ('09), and **Seychelle Vos** ('08) were each awarded prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships. This award for math, science, and engineering students grants recipients \$30,000 per year for three years, \$1,000 for international travel, and \$10,500 to their graduate institutions.

Tyler, a native of Alpharetta, GA, spent last summer in Milan studying math, and during the summer of 2007 he attended the 12-week National Security Agency's Director's Summer Program to work on problem-solving, cryptology, and communications technology. This fall he will head to the University of Pennsylvania to pursue a Ph.D. in mathematics.

Jessica graduated this past spring with bachelor's degrees in economics and political science, as well as a master's degree in economics. One of the research projects she participated in demonstrated that the written portion of the redesigned SAT can be used to predict academic success in college better than any other portion of the test. This research was featured in a variety of publications, including the *New York Times*. She will be entering the Ph.D. program in economics at Columbia University this fall.

Seychelle graduated in the spring of 2008 with a bachelor's degree in genetics and is pursuing a doctorate in genetics at the University of California-Berkeley.





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## *I chose to attend UGA because...*

“...of the amazing opportunities. I was looking for an institution that would challenge and provide me with many chances to get involved. UGA’s Honors program had a good reputation and has since provided me with a great deal of resources and individualized attention that I did not think was possible at a large university.”

—Sara Brabender ’09



### **Sara Brabender**

*Sara Brabender is a fourth-year Honors student from Kennesaw, GA, who is set to graduate in August 2009 with a BBA in management information systems and BA in criminal justice. To read Sarah’s Amazing Student profile go to:*

[www.uga.edu/amazing/brabender.html](http://www.uga.edu/amazing/brabender.html)