

Two SCSU students spend summer in prestigious internships

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ST. CLOUD, Minn. - Two St. Cloud State University students are spending their summer working alongside some of the country's leading scientists. **Megan Cleland, a biochemistry and biomedical science double major**, is taking part in a summer internship program in biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Bethesda, Md. **Nate Jahns, an ecology and field biology major**, is at Mississippi State University, Starkville, Miss., as part of a National Science Foundation program that gives undergraduates direct research experience.

Cleland, a Sioux Falls native, is performing research for the genetics and biochemistry branch of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, an NIH subsidiary. NIH is the world's largest biomedical research institution. Its summer internship program in biomedical research is highly competitive – just one in four applicants is selected.

Cleland was awarded her internship in part because of her research experience at SCSU. As a member of the interdisciplinary research group, she has studied calf DNA with chemistry professor Lakshmaiah Sreerama.

Working with some of the world's leading scientists and researchers, Cleland is examining newly discovered proteins in order to form a better understanding of how cells grow and develop. That understanding will be the foundation for further research that may lead to advancements in treating diseases that affect millions.

Cleland hopes that her summer experience will help further her career. "NIH is an incredible place, and the opportunities to network and meet people are endless," she said. Working at NIH gives her the opportunity to be part of a community of people from around the globe who love research. Cleland also believes that her experience has significantly improved her skills in the laboratory environment and in dealing with complex scientific problems.

Jahns, Merrimack, N.H., was made aware of the National Science Foundation internship by SCSU biology professor Matt Julius. The program gives undergraduate students the opportunity to work at institutions throughout the country. Jahns said that he chose the Mississippi State site because of the ecological research performed there.

As a member of a small research group, Jahns is performing bird population studies in bottomland hardwood forests and green tree reservoirs. The two habitats are essentially the same, but the latter are intentionally flooded during the winter months to create environments conducive to duck hunting. The researchers hope that their study will shed light on the impact of human-induced flooding and the use of duck blinds on bird populations in forest habitats.

After he earns his degree, Jahns plans to attend graduate school and hopes to eventually work at a zoo or an aquarium. He sees his summer experience as an opportunity to bolster his resume and solidify his future. He says that his research experience will give him an edge in applying to graduate schools. He also believes that it will provide reassurance that ecology is the right field for him.

SCSU undergraduate and graduate degrees balance strong liberal arts programs and foundations with specialized career preparation. The university offers its 15,500 students 175 majors, minors and pre-professional programs.