Purdue’s Discovery Park offers research internships

Nearly 50 undergraduate students at Purdue are helping with cutting-edge research in Discovery Park, the University’s new interdisciplinary research hub. The students are part of the Discovery Park Undergraduate Research Internship (DURI) program, which provides a $500 scholarship per semester and the opportunity to earn academic credit for research. Research projects are available in all 10 of Discovery Park’s research centers.

“The goals of the DURI program are twofold,” says Amy Childress, intern coordinator for Discovery Park’s Discovery Learning Center. “One goal is to get students involved in meaningful interdisciplinary research. The other is to interest the students in going to graduate school and eventually pursuing research careers.”

Kelley Krizek, a senior majoring in cell and developmental biology, is doing research on epilepsy as part of her internship. Her research team’s goal is to create a device that produces an inhibitory molecule in patients’ brains, to stop seizures right when they start.

“This has been an amazing opportunity for me,” Krizek says. “I have been able to work with a wide variety of people, in fields ranging from engineering to chemistry. Working this way helps a research team come up with new and unique ideas that would never have been thought of if only a single field were focusing on a problem.”

Majoring in physics opens doors to many careers

If you want to get a sense of how versatile a Purdue physics major is, just talk to Andy Hirsch, head of the physics department at the University. Hirsch recommends that even students interested in engineering or life sciences should consider earning a bachelor’s degree in physics.

“Many students who graduate in physics go into some type of engineering,” Hirsch says. “In addition, there are opportunities for people with physics degrees to make contributions in the life sciences. The overlap between physics and biology is a real growth area.”

Data from the American Institute of Physics shows that 24 percent of physics grads work in the software industry, 20 percent work in management or finance, 19 percent are in engineering, 12 percent work in education, 10 percent are in service and other non-technical fields, and 9 percent work as science or lab technicians.

Recent physics graduates from Purdue are achieving success in a variety of settings. Some are working in national labs, such as MIT’s Lincoln Laboratory, while others are going to graduate school in various fields at a number of prestigious universities, including Princeton and the University of California–Berkeley. Recent Purdue grads have also gone on to medical school.

If you have students who you think might enjoy majoring in physics, encourage them to prepare by taking advanced math classes — including a year of calculus — and by completing a year of high school physics. Students, parents, and counselors can learn more by visiting www.physics.purdue.edu.