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EXPLORING NEUROSCIENCE


Austin Ly
SJND '27

This summer, I completed my internship at the UCSF Dubal Lab, a research lab focused on aging and neuroscience. Their goal is to discover how to slow and/or block aging and prevent diseases of the aging brain, like Alzheimer's. The lab's principal investigator is Dr. Dena Dubal, and my primary mentor was Dr. Jillybeth Burgado, a postdoctoral scholar.

My research project focused on the role of the X chromosome in neuronal health. Female mammals have two X chromosomes, one from their maternal and one from their paternal side. The lab previously discovered that female mice with a skewed maternal X chromosome have impaired cognition and that maternal and paternal X chromosome neurons express different gene profiles. Since male mammals have only an active maternal X chromosome, we were curious if they might also be more vulnerable to impaired cognition.

This was my first time working in a wet lab. I learned how to isolate and culture cortical neurons from male and female mice and maintain neuron health. I also conducted gene expression analysis, image analysis, and cell toxicity assays.

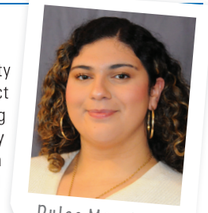
My mentor, Jilly, was incredibly kind and helpful in teaching me the basics of wet lab work. She shared stories about what led her to research and advised me to stay open-minded and explore as much as I can while in college. During this internship, I learned that there are countless fields of medicine and not just one route to get there. There are so many aspects of science that are understudied, and through research, we can bring them to light. Finally, I realized I can achieve anything through dedication, hard work, and focusing on my goals.

I also learned that you will always make mistakes. Our first plated cells died, which was discouraging, yet we persevered. I realized that I really enjoy the scientific process. Being able to create my own hypotheses and use experiments and tests to prove or disprove them is fascinating.

Last summer, I completed clinical research, which felt like mostly computer work. I was exhilarated that this summer I would be doing hands-on laboratory research in addition to reading, writing, and statistical analyses. I appreciate the mix of hands-on and computer work.

This internship was an incredible learning experience. Working in a wet lab allowed me to explore my curiosity, and I definitely want to continue scientific research during my undergraduate years. I am grateful to **achieve** and the Dubal Lab for this opportunity.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE


Dulce Martinez
MHSB '27

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern at UCSF's Sustainability Department, which works to reduce the university's environmental impact and create healthier communities. My main responsibility was managing social media content to educate students and staff about sustainability in a way that was both informative and engaging. I collaborated with several departments across campus to create content that encouraged participation and made sustainability more approachable.

One of my favorite projects was working with the Child Care Center, where I helped train teachers and staff on proper waste sorting, knowing whether items belong in recycling, compost, or trash. I enjoyed practicing my mentoring and leadership skills while answering questions about how they could improve waste sorting in their classrooms. I also led a hands-on activity with the children. It was rewarding to see how excited they were to learn while having fun. Watching both the children and teachers become genuinely interested in making a positive environmental impact showed me the importance of education in creating lasting change.

One of the people who had the greatest impact on me was Ben, the Zero Waste Technician for UCSF Housing. Before meeting him, I did not realize how much heart someone could bring to a job that often goes unnoticed. What inspired me most was how Ben responded to the challenge of improper waste sorting. Instead of blaming or criticizing residents, he chose patience, compassion, and education. He believed people wanted to do the right thing if they were given the knowledge and encouragement to do so. Meeting him reminded me that the most meaningful leaders are not always the loudest or most recognized. Sometimes they are the people working behind the scenes, quietly making their community better through empathy, humility, and a commitment to helping others.

Looking back on this summer, I realize how much I have grown. At first, I was nervous about working in a professional environment, but I became more confident sharing ideas, collaborating with others, and communicating with people from different departments. I also learned the importance of building relationships because every conversation became an opportunity to learn from someone else's experiences.

This internship helped me realize that I enjoy work that involves educating others, working with children, and making a positive impact in my community. I am thankful to my supervisor, Elizabeth Lin, for encouraging me and helping me grow. I am also incredibly grateful to **achieve** for believing in me and giving me this opportunity.

FALL 2026

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INSIDE THE COURTROOM


Sonam Anam
HNHS '27

Over the summer, I had the life-changing opportunity to work at the San Francisco Superior Court with Judge Breall, who presides over Juvenile Dependency. I have always been interested in becoming an attorney or judge, so I was very grateful to receive firsthand experience to help me determine whether a career in the legal field would be the right fit for me.

Throughout my five weeks at the Court, I learned a lot about the importance of family support, ways to prevent the cycle of neglect and abuse from continuing, and how following the law helps protect children. Because I have a lot of experience teaching and taking care of children, this work really resonated with me because it focuses on child safety and finding the best outcomes for children.

My daily responsibility was typing up notes for all the court cases I sat in on. I listened to around fifty cases and gave Judge Breall my perspectives on the final rulings. Those conversations were my favorite because Judge Breall explained her thought process in detail and shared additional information that was not included in the hearings. We discussed different legal terms and often debated the pros and cons of rulings and the impact each decision would have on the parents and child.

Some days I found myself horrified, while other times I was perplexed or disappointed, but through it all, I gained a deep appreciation for the law and for those who dedicate their lives to helping others in a fair and just way. I watched attorneys, social workers, witnesses, and experts advocate for and represent their clients with such conviction and care that I left feeling very inspired.

A breakthrough moment for me was teaching Judge Breall about Tibet: my country's history, religious beliefs, customs, and culture. She was very interested and asked many follow-up questions, and I was thrilled to share my culture with her. The concept of karma in a Buddhist context especially stuck with her, and she said she wanted to be more intentional with her daily actions.

Near the end of my internship, Judge Breall told me that the court reporter, security guard, and her clerk had been talking about my humility, including my little bows and how I always said, "Thank you, everyone, and bye-bye," when I left each day. Judge Breall told me it was something special and reflected the kind of person I am. This reminded me of the importance of staying true to myself and the values my parents raised me with.

Overall, I learned that I am interested in pursuing a future as an attorney or legislator advocating for immigrants, animals, or children. I am incredibly grateful to **achieve** and Judge Breall for making this opportunity possible, and I hope I have helped open the door for more students like me to intern in spaces that make such a meaningful impact.



COLLEGE TOUR | **achieve** juniors visit colleges and universities in the Midwest: Augsburg University, Carleton College, Macalester College, St. Catherine University, St. Olaf College, University of St. Thomas

BEHIND THE SCENES

This summer, I had an internship with the San Francisco Playhouse, a nonprofit theatre company that produces Broadway, Off-Broadway, and world premiere productions. The Playhouse describes itself as an "empathy gym," where they practice safety, love, and compassion through theatre, one play at a time. Everyone I met there was very kind and helpful, which made it a warm and welcoming place to work.

I worked in the production department, where I helped make sure the backstage area was clean and organized and handled anything that needed to be set up for upcoming shows or rehearsals. This included setting up wires, making space for a wig station, tightening bolts on the stage set, and helping the stage managers with props.

Two of my coworkers, Joel and Justin, were very supportive and helpful throughout my internship. They taught me the basics of backstage theatre and were very kind, funny, and patient. They showed me the proper way to tie up a cable, set up rolling carts, and use the turntable and backdrop on stage.

I also became friends with Cai, one of the actors in *Hairspray*. She graduated from Holy Names High School and majored in theatre at Emerson College. We bonded over growing up in the East Bay, going to Catholic schools, and our theatre experiences.



Ricardo Lieba
SJND '27

I learned that being part of the backstage crew of a professional theatre company is no easy feat. Even though I have been in many high school productions, everything I learned made me feel brand new to the world of theatre because there were so many details I had never experienced before.

I have been going to SF Playhouse since my freshman year, but I never felt as much satisfaction or joy watching one of their productions as I did when I saw *Hairspray* and witnessed my own hard work being used on stage.

This internship was everything I anticipated and more. I expected to learn a lot about the nitty-gritty of professional theatre, and I definitely did. I gained so much insight into what goes into professional theatre, both as an actor and as someone working behind the scenes.

Most importantly, this experience reinforced my love for theatre. I know it is something I will continue to be involved in throughout college and beyond.

UNEXPECTED LESSONS

This summer, I worked as an intern at Camp Keff through Jewish Family and Children's Services. Camp Keff is a Jewish-focused summer camp for children in preschool through 11th grade. Campers learn through fun and interactive activities such as swimming, sports, gardening, and much more.

My mentor, Yasmin, is the director of Camp Keff. Throughout my internship, both Camp Keff and Yasmin taught me a lot, professionally and personally.

I managed some of the camp's publicity, specifically information sent to parents. This included weekly newsletters, reminders, and calendars. I was also responsible for taking roughly 600 photos of the kids each day, which was, to say the least, a lot of pictures. As a daughter, it really put into perspective how much parents love to see their kids having fun, even when they aren't able to be there with them. As an intern, I was exhausted.



Malia Acosta
MHSB '29

Despite the challenge, it was really fun to see the bonds the kids formed with their counselors and other staff members. It was especially rewarding to watch kids who were new to camp, or initially shy, come completely out of their shells by the end of the week. Seeing their confidence grow showed me how meaningful a welcoming environment can be.

Although I wasn't required to interact with the kids, they had other plans. During my first week, I was taking pictures of campers playing an interactive version of Battleship when one of them came up and told me a knock-knock joke. I don't remember the joke, it had something to do with dinosaurs, but I remember being caught off guard while also admiring how brave kids can be.

I have three younger brothers, so you'd think I'd be used to the out-of-pocket things kids say, but these kids were on a whole other level. They reminded me that life is too short to worry about what other people think and that sometimes you just have to be yourself.

While this internship taught me about time management, knowing your audience, writing, interviewing, and communicating with different audiences, it also taught me valuable life lessons. The best part was that those lessons didn't come from people they were "supposed" to come from, like adults, teachers, or parents. One came from a kindergartener telling me a knock-knock joke about dinosaurs.

I hope to apply these skills to a career in public relations, which is one of the careers I am interested in. I am forever thankful for my internship at Camp Keff and the opportunity to give back to a community that welcomed me. Most importantly, I learned that sometimes the people who teach us the most are the ones we least expect.



Students attending "Noises Off" at SF Playhouse



Students participating in Backpack Giveaway at BRIDGE Housing

LEARNING AND GROWING

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern with the UC Berkeley Information Technology Department. It was a very valuable experience that gave me a better understanding of how technology supports a large university and the important role IT professionals play in keeping systems secure, reliable, and accessible.

One of the most rewarding parts of my internship was working alongside experienced IT professionals who were always willing to answer my questions and share their knowledge. I saw how different departments collaborated to solve problems and support the Berkeley community, and I learned the importance of teamwork, communication, and problem-solving in a professional environment.

I also had the opportunity to assist with a variety of projects that gave me hands-on experience in IT. Each task challenged me to think critically, pay close attention to detail, and work collaboratively with others. I strengthened both my technical and interpersonal skills and gained insight into potential career paths. I also learned the importance of continuing to learn because technology is always changing.

In addition to my internship, I attended a week-long college program at Northern Arizona University, where I participated in the health sciences track. I explored different careers in healthcare through interactive, hands-on experiences. One of the most memorable activities was working with cadavers and medical simulation dummies, which gave me a better understanding of the process of medical training. I also had the chance to observe and interact with infants, an experience that was especially meaningful to me because I am interested in pursuing a career in pediatrics.



Robyn Salmond
HNHS '28

Both experiences helped me become more confident. I became more comfortable communicating with adults in a professional setting, asking thoughtful questions, and adapting to new tasks and challenges. I also learned the importance of staying organized and approaching problems with patience and a willingness to learn from others. These are skills I will use not only in a future career, but also in school and in my everyday life.

These experiences showed me that even though I may not choose IT as my career, technology plays an important role in almost every field, including healthcare. Most of all, I am grateful for the people who took the time to teach and support me throughout the summer.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern at LBA Realty, one of the top commercial real estate companies in the United States. My supervisors were Courtney, Andy, Sean, and Taylor, who introduced me to different areas of commercial real estate. My internship gave me an inside look at how a large real estate company operates.

I was the only high school intern working alongside college juniors and seniors from universities such as USC, Cornell, and Villanova. At first, this was a little intimidating, but it challenged me to learn quickly and step outside my comfort zone.



Knox Noa
ARHS '28

Throughout my internship, I rotated through different departments and sat in meetings with professionals to understand how each team contributes to the business. I learned how to use Microsoft Excel and Argus Enterprise, a software program used in commercial real estate. I also reviewed IC books to better understand investment opportunities and participated in hands-on activities. One was a mock property transaction where I had to negotiate with a potential investor who was undecided about making a purchase. These experiences showed me how analytical thinking, financial knowledge, and strategic decision-making are used in real business situations.

One of the biggest lessons I learned was that commercial real estate involves much more than just buying and leasing buildings. Every investment requires in-depth research, financial analysis, teamwork, and careful planning. Watching professionals evaluate opportunities and solve complex problems taught me the importance of thinking critically and considering multiple perspectives.

I also learned a lot about myself. Being surrounded by older interns from highly respected universities motivated me to push myself, ask thoughtful questions, and take advantage of every opportunity to learn. By the end of the internship, I had become more confident in my ability to adapt and contribute in a professional environment.

Overall, this internship was one of the most valuable experiences I have had. It strengthened my analytical thinking, attention to detail, and ability to learn new technical skills while giving me a realistic view of the professional world. I am grateful to my supervisors and everyone at LBA Realty for investing their time in teaching me and making me feel like part of the team. This experience expanded my knowledge of commercial real estate and gave me confidence that I can succeed in challenging environments and continue developing skills that will benefit me in college and wherever God takes me!



Picture of Freshmen Orientation: Class of 2030 visiting murals in the Mission and touring Angel Island