



LEFT. Alexis Bergman maintains an educational reef tank in the Zoology Department at Southern Illinois University - Carbondale. MIDDLE. Melissa Pierce shows off some of her research subjects in the lab. RIGHT. Christopher Mealey finishing loading a 96-well plate for his research.

STUDENT AWARDS AT WORLD AQUACULTURE 16

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT COMPETITION

A special Student Spotlight Competition was conducted at World Aquaculture 2016 in Las Vegas. Twelve student scholars presented their research at the conference and represented the multiple societies present at this meeting (World Aquaculture Society / US Aquaculture Society, National Shellfisheries Association, and the American Fisheries Society — Fish Culture Section). Students presenting at this year's competition were selected by their respective societies based on evaluations and merits of their scholarly work (abstracts, scholarship applications, etc.). Each student created an abbreviated version of their research presented in only 3.5 minutes with five slides. The panel of judges consisted of leaders and executive board members from the different societies. The winner of the Spotlight Competition received a check for \$500, while 2nd and 3rd place were each awarded \$200.

The winner of the Student Spotlight Competition was Alexis Bergman from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Her talk was about "Cultivation of white worms *Enchytraeus albidus* using low- or no-cost feed resources." Alexis is currently working on a Master's degree under the direction of Drs. Jesse Trushenski and Michael Schwarz that focuses on optimization of rearing techniques for clownfish and similar marine ornamentals with live diets and diet enrichment. She plans to investigate the stamina of clownfish larvae fed different fatty acid enrichment products and envisions that this research could be extended to other captive marine ornamentals in the future. After graduation she would like to pursue a career in education and outreach to help others understand the importance of conservation of marine resources.

Second place was awarded to Melissa Pierce, a Ph.D. student in Oceanography at the University of Connecticut, for her presentation titled, "The blue mussel and the eastern oyster: A tale of two gut microbiomes." Melissa's research, with advisor Dr. Evan Ward, is centered on the dynamic interactions between microbial communities and commercially important bivalves. This work seeks to determine the relationship between the microbiome and overall health of the organism within the context of several environmental factors that can change throughout different seasons. Much of the focus is on susceptibility and transmission of shellfish diseases. Melissa has recently accepted a postdoctoral position at the University of Chicago,

where she plans to explore the microbiome of cultured sablefish.

Third place in the Student Spotlight Competition went to Christopher Mealey for his presentation titled "Assessing the genetic impacts of stock enhancement of red drum *Sciaenops ocellatus* on the wild population in South Carolina using estimates of genetic diversity." Christopher is working on a Master's degree in Marine Biology at the College of Charleston under the direction of Dr. Michael Denson. He is very interested in assessing the impacts and effectiveness of the red drum juvenile stocking program that began in 1999 in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. Christopher hopes to further his interests in science communication and outreach by obtaining a future position as an extension specialist and facilitate communication between scientists and policy makers.

ORAL PRESENTATION AND POSTER AWARDS

1st place Oral Presentation (\$600) – Md. Mursalin Khan, Department of Biology, Indiana University-Purdue University, In-vitro Analyses of Lymphocyte Proliferation Extracted from Spleen and Thymus of Nile Tilapia Using Natural Elderberry

2nd Place Oral Presentation (\$400) – Hisham A. Abdelrahman, School of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences, Auburn University, Influence of Variation in Water Temperature on Survival, Growth, and Yield of Pacific White Shrimp *Litopenaeus vannamei* in Inland Ponds for Low-Salinity Culture

1st place Poster (\$600) – Duane Friedman, Department of Biology, Texas State University, Ionic Requirements of Blue Crab *Callinectes sapidus* in Environments Containing Low Concentrations of Total Dissolved Solids

2nd Place Poster (\$400) – Constanza del Mar Ochoa-Saloma, Centro de Investigación Científica y de Educación Superior de Ensenada, Genome Size of Aquatic Animals of Economic and Biological Importance from Baja California, Mexico

OTHER STUDENT AWARDS

There were 160 student abstracts submitted for the WAS meeting in Las Vegas. Less than five points separated the top ten winners. Winners of the best student abstract pre-meeting travel awards included:

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