

Congratulations to the 2020 Taylor M. Brown Award Recipients!

The Taylor M. Brown Memorial Award was established in honor of biosciences graduate student Taylor M. Brown. Taylor was a long-standing and vibrant member of the UCLA community. As a UCLA undergraduate, she majored in Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics, receiving her B.S. in 2015. She then joined the Immunity, Microbes, and Molecular Pathogenesis Home Area in the Molecular Biology Ph.D. program, where she pursued her interest in understanding host-pathogen interactions. Taylor was deeply committed to increasing diversity in the biosciences, serving as an active member of the Association for Multi-Ethnic Bioscientists' Advancement (AMEBA) and the UCLA SACNAS Chapter (SACNAS@UCLA). She was passionate about teaching, mentoring, and outreach. Her kindness and compassion made a lasting and widespread impact on the UCLA biosciences community. Taylor's many accomplishments, her promise as a scientist, and her strong dedication to diversifying the biosciences were recognized by her selection in 2018 as a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Gilliam Fellow.

The Taylor M. Brown Award recognizes exceptional Ph.D. students in the biosciences who reflect the characteristics that made Taylor such a special member of the UCLA community. The awardees are well-rounded, with strong interpersonal skills and broad interests, and are passionate about mentorship, leadership, teaching, and science. They are highly engaged with the UCLA biosciences community and have a powerful commitment to increasing diversity in the biosciences.



Raquel Aragón, 2020 Awardee

Raquel is a Ph.D. student in Cell and Developmental Biology in the lab of Dr. Melissa Spencer. Raquel's thesis research investigates the role of the protein osteopontin in muscular dystrophy. Raquel is highly involved in recruiting students to the Cell and Developmental Biology Home Area of GPB. She was Co-Outreach Coordinator for SACNAS@UCLA from 2017-2018. She is currently Co-Chair of the Scientific Excellence through Diversity Seminar Series (SEDS) and Chief Financial Officer for AMEBA. Raquel is passionate about teaching, with students describing her as a "fantastic TA" who was "always very kind and approachable." Raquel is a 2018 HHMI Gilliam Fellow.



Blanche Wright, 2020 Awardee

Blanche is a Ph.D. student in Clinical Psychology advised by Dr. Anna Lau. Blanche is conducting policy-relevant research aimed at improving the quality of mental health care for low-income families, especially those from Latinx and immigrant backgrounds. Blanche is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Research Scholar and the recipient of an F31 NRSA Fellowship. Previously, Blanche was the Undergraduate Outreach Co-Chair for the Underrepresented Graduate Students of Psychology (UGSP) organization and a Diversity & Outreach Ambassador for UCLA Graduate Division. Currently, Blanche is a Student Representative on the UCLA Psychology Diversity Issues Committee and the Life Sciences Anti-Racism Taskforce.



Roy McReynolds, 2020 Honorable Mention

Roy is a Ph.D. student in the Neuroscience Interdepartmental Program (NSIDP) in the lab of Dr. Gal Bitan. Roy's thesis research investigates the role of non-neuronal cell types in Alzheimer's Disease. Roy is a member of the Brain Research Institute (BRI) Neuroscience Outreach Advisory Board. Roy also serves as a graduate student mentor each summer for the BRI Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (BRI-SURE) and UCLA-HBCU Neuroscience Pathways Summer Programs. He is an active member of Black Scholars in Biosciences and served as his Ph.D. program's representative for the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) last year.

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