

Puerto Rican scientist wins prestigious biology research award. [1]

Submitted on 17 March 2009 - 9:22am

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Calificación:



SEATTLE – Thirteen graduate students from North America have been chosen to receive the 2009 Harold M. Weintraub Graduate Student Award sponsored by the Basic Sciences Division of Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. Nominations were solicited internationally; the winners were selected on the basis of the quality, originality and significance of their work. The award, established in 2000, honors the late Harold M. Weintraub, Ph.D., a founding member of the Center's Basic Sciences Division, who in 1995 died from brain cancer at age 49. Weintraub was an international leader in the field of molecular biology; among his many contributions, he identified genes responsible for instructing cells to differentiate, or develop, into specific tissues such as muscle and bone. One of the awardees was the Puerto Rican scientist Walter Fischler, a doctoral student in the Molecular and Cell Biology department at UC Berkeley. He received his undergraduate degree in biology at MIT and worked in the lab of Dr. Susumu Tonegawa for almost five years, first as an undergraduate and then as a research assistant. Currently Walter is doing his thesis in Dr. Kristin Scott's lab studying the sense of taste in *Drosophila*. Walter explains that unlike humans, who have five known taste modalities in humans (sweet, bitter, sour, salty and umami, the taste of monosodium glutamate), the nature and number of taste modalities in the fruitfly "*Drosophila melanogaster*" are not fully understood. The group that Walter works with has identified for the first time a novel taste modality in this insect: the taste of carbonated water. The taste of carbonation may allow "*Drosophila*" to detect and obtain nutrients from growing

microorganisms. This work opens up the possibility that the taste of carbonation may also exist in other organisms. The awards recipients, all advanced students at or near the completion of their studies in the biological sciences, will participate in a scientific symposium May 1 at the Hutchinson Center. The symposium will include scientific presentations by the awardees as well as poster presentations by Hutchinson Center graduate students. The award recipients will receive a certificate, travel expenses and an honorarium from the Weintraub and Groudine Fund, established to foster intellectual exchange through the promotion of programs for graduate students, fellows and visiting scholars. CONTACT Kristen Woodward (206) 667-5095 kwoodwar@fhcrc.org [2]

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