**Meet MCB! Program Opens Molecular and Cellular Biology Labs to Arizona High School Students**

This Halloween, the Life Sciences South building will be transformed. Not by ghosts or ghouls, but by 180 high school students from throughout Arizona participating in the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology’s annual Meet MCB! outreach day.

“Meet MCB! is our opportunity to share the scientific research of Molecular and Cellular Biology with Arizona high school students,” explains Dr. Joyce Schroeder, Head of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology. “Students tour research labs working on cancer, aging and neurodegenerative disease, receive information about applying to the UA and learn about the MCB major. Our goal through this event is to showcase the excitement of UA Science and give them a glimpse of what life is like as a MCB major at the University of Arizona.”

This year’s event is considerably larger than in past years as the popularity of the program as grown.

“This year, we’re excited to host 180 visiting students and 20 teachers and chaperones at Meet MCB! from 11 high schools in Phoenix, Tucson, Marana, and Vail,” enthused Jennifer Cubeta, Assistant Director of the Undergraduate Biology Research Program and the organizer of Meet MCB!. “We wanted to give as many students as possible the opportunity to learn more about MCB at UA, and so we came up with *Meet MCB!* as a way for them to visit our department to see for themselves what we do here on campus. Visitors will have the chance to tour our labs, meet faculty and current students, learn how to apply to UA and garner financial aid, and find out about the requirements for the Bachelor’s degree in MCB.”

After reviewing very positive feedback from previous years’ programs, Cubeta knew the department had to expand the opportunity to more students. The support of the Associated Students of the University of Arizona (ASUA) Senate was critical to making the expansion of the October 31, 2017 day-long program possible.

The students participating in Meet MCB! are already linked to the MCB Department through the BIOTECH Project, which Nadja Anderson directs.

“The BIOTECH Project has been working with high school teachers and students throughout Arizona for 20 years,” explained Director Anderson. “Our main goal is to offer updated, relevant, hands-on science in the high school classroom, so that students can experience what science is and how researchers conduct it.”

Anderson underscores the importance of connecting with a cross-section of Arizona students through the BIOTECH Project. “One of our missions is to open the possibility of pursuing postsecondary education for our underrepresented population of students, preferably in a STEM field.”

For some of the students attending Meet MCB!, applying to college may not be on their radar. MCB’s Senior Academic Advisor Marisa Lester hopes the event will motivate students to pursue their STEM interests and realize that college is within reach.

“Transitioning to college can be a very stressful time in a student's life,” explains Lester. “By hosting Meet MCB!, we hope to dispel some of the stigma about big universities and show that our department is a big family of people who truly care for their students.”

For additional information, please contact MCB Engagement Coordinator Zoja Bazarnic. zdbazarnic@email.arizona.edu

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