

Fall 2022 | Biology Scholars Program Wins CIRM Compass Award

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Biology Scholars Program Wins CIRM Compass Award

By Kirsten Mickelwait



BSP students present their research poster

In August, the Biology Scholars Program (BSP) and the Berkeley Stem Cell Center received a \$2.9 million COMPASS (Creating Opportunities through Mentorship and Partnership Across Stem Cell Science) Award from the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM).

The grant will support BSP in developing its COMPASS Scholars Program, which will provide research opportunities and mentorship for undergraduate students in regenerative medicine. Twenty-six students—representing the range of majors eligible for BSP—will be selected to be mentored in science and professional skills to prepare them to succeed in research. They will then join Berkeley Stem Cell Center laboratories as undergraduate researchers, paired with graduate-student or postdoc mentors.

BSP has already launched a series of workshops—including an overview of the COMPASS program, getting started in research, and careers in regenerative medicine—and will soon be starting the application process for its first cohort to begin research in 2023.

“I see this as a unique opportunity to provide structured change for both students and the institution,” says BSP Director John Matsui (*top left*) who, along with BSP Research Coordinator Emily King, will lead the “beyond the bench” training and support for both students and their mentors. This training will include such topics as research ethics, science researcher identity, culture and cultural capital in the research lab, and diverse careers in regenerative medicine.



“For low-income students from under-resourced communities, who might not have the strongest test scores or GPAs when they first enter Berkeley, it’s a chance to experience bench research and to get paid to support themselves in college,” Matsui says.

The COMPASS program's benefits will last well beyond the individual trainees. "We'll be working with faculty and postdocs to help them advance their mentoring practice in the research lab," Matsui says. "So, this is a more enduring sort of change. Students come and go, but if we can strengthen our research mentoring capabilities as an institution, then we've built something to last."



Stem Cell Center Director Dirk Hockemeyer (*bottom left*), associate professor of MCB and lead for the lab research component, agrees. "This important program will ensure that Berkeley trains the world's best cohort of new stem cell biologists, reflecting the diversity of the State of California," he says.

"This award will impact science across the Berkeley campus," Matsui adds. "It's about inclusive excellence, making Berkeley better able to support the success of all students with a passion for science."

To learn more about the CIRM COMPASS Award, you can read the [press release](#) from CIRM.

