

## **Internships Begin at SIU's Simmons Cancer Institute**

Three college students who plan careers in medicine with an interest in cancer research have begun their summer internships at Simmons Cancer Institute (SCI) at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield.

The students who plan a career in medicine or research will have the opportunity to learn basic lab techniques with supervision during the 10-week program. This is the second year for the summer research program.

“We view the purpose of these internships as two-fold. They provide a hands-on experience for undergraduate college students who may want to focus on cancer research as they pursue their medical degree. It is also an investment in cancer research because it may lead another bright young person to the field of research,” said Dr. K. Thomas Robbins, SCI director. Twenty students applied for the positions that were awarded on a competitive basis.

Two of this year’s applicants said that personal losses led them to seeking a degree in a medical field.

Gina Osburn, Chatham, is a student at Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Mo. She is majoring in biology with a chemistry minor and an emphasis on pre-medicine. Osburn said her interest in medicine began at age five after losing her own mother to cancer and “that interest has grown over the years.” Her future plans include combining the practice of medicine with scientific research. Osburn is working with Edward Gershburg, Ph.D., assistant professor of medical microbiology, immunology and cell biology.

Ravindra “Ravi” Reddy, Springfield, is a student at Pomona College in Claremont, Calif., where he is majoring in chemistry. Reddy said losing his father at age six impacted his pursuit of a medical career. “Since then, I have had the desire to help improve the lives of people and prevent other young children from losing a parent.” Reddy is working with Randolph Elble, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacology.

Nicole Zapata, Orland Park, is a student at Bradley University in Peoria, majoring in biology. Zapata wants to pursue research on diseases after receiving her degree and “work on finding vaccines and treatments.” Zapata is working with Sophia Ran, Ph.D., associate professor of medical microbiology, immunology and cell biology.

The Simmons Cancer Institute at SIU is focusing the medical school’s efforts in cancer research, physician and public education, and treatment for patients from across central and southern Illinois. The Institute’s Web site is [www.siumed.edu/cancer](http://www.siumed.edu/cancer) and its phone number is 217-545-6000.