

Amanda Breton

IDEA's Spotlight Engineer

Quick Facts

Grade: 3rd Year

Major: Bioengineering – Biosystems

Highlighted Student Event: SACNAS



What is SACNAS?

The society for Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science is a society of scientists dedicated to fostering the success of Hispanic/Chicanos and Native American scientists – from college students to professionals – to attain advanced degrees, careers, and positions of leadership in science

Questions about your SACNAS experience:

How did you get started in research?

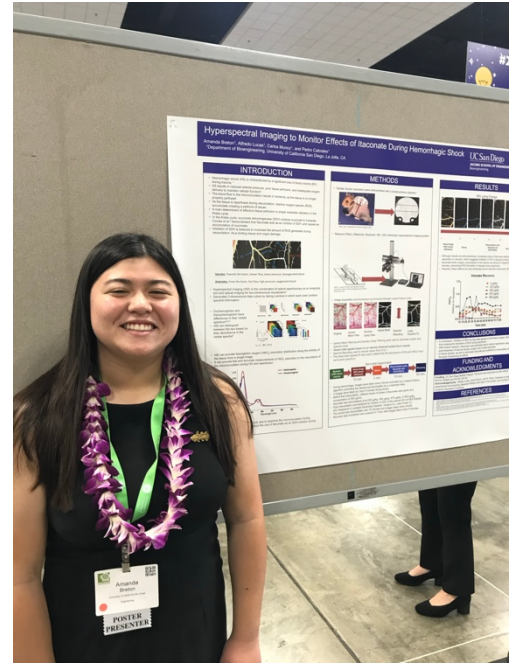
I originally got started in research because I had come across a lab whose research I thought was really fascinating and expressed my interest in it to Gennie Miranda during a 1x1 session for IDEA scholars spring quarter my freshman year. She reached out to the lab's Principle Investigator (PI) and a previous IDEA scholar who is now a graduate student in the lab and they accepted me into the lab. However, starting research often takes time to get set up, and it was after I was accepted into the McNair Scholars that I was officially started on experiments in the lab.

What has been your research experience like so far?

So far my research experience has been a very enjoyable one. Often times it can be tough, especially at the beginning when I was learning the ropes of how the lab was run and how to use the equipment, but the graduate students, researchers, and PI are very supportive and fun to work with. I really enjoy researching in lab because I can see the real world applications of what I am learning in class and because I can ask the graduate student I work with a lot of questions about the things we are researching as well as graduate school.

How did you get the opportunity to present your research at SACNA 2019? What was this experience like for you?

This past summer I was conducting research through the McNair program and the director of the McNair program sent out an email letting us know about an opportunity to present our research at SACNAS and if we were interested we should apply and the AEP office would help with funding. Presenting at SACNAS was an amazing experience because although I had presented at conferences on campus as well as the Biomedical Engineering Society National Meeting in Philadelphia, I had never experienced a research conference that also celebrated an intersection of culture and research. I was able to meet people with similar backgrounds, both in regards to culture and to research and science, but I was also able to experience other aspects of cultures such as Native Hawaiian traditions as well as a Pow Wow. In terms of scientific research, it was a really rewarding feeling to be able to explain the research I conducted to others and have them be interested in what I had to say, such as the Post Doc from Brown University who was conducting research with a similar background and told me to keep him in mind when I apply to graduate school.



What advice would you give to students who are interested in pursuing research?

Personally, I think the best way to pursue research is to conduct your research as a first step. Look up "(major, i.e. bioengineering) UCSD research" and go through the different research labs on campus and read through the descriptions of what they research and study. If any of the topics interest you, click and read through some of their publications. It may take you some time, which is okay because research publications are often very dense and can be hard to read if you haven't had a lot of experience reading papers. When you do find a lab and topic you're really interested in and would like to do research on, see if the lab is currently accepting undergraduates, or reach out and email the PI or graduate students in the lab. The main thing to remember if you are asked to come in for an interview is to talk about how you're interested in the research that lab does, you want to learn more, and that you have the time in your schedule to learn. It's really important to make sure that you're interested in the type of research that lab does because it's wasting both your time and the lab's time if you don't care about the research they love. Additionally, research experiments often take a good few hours to complete, so make sure you have good amounts of gaps in your schedule and the time to do research that quarter! If you don't it might be best to wait for another quarter when you have more time before beginning research.