Graduate Student Kelsie Eichel Wins 2017 Weintraub Award

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The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center has awarded Kelsie Eichel, a graduate student in the Tetrad Program [1], with a prestigious Harold M. Weintraub Graduate Student Award. Student awardees were chosen based on the quality, originality and significance of their work, and for representation across a diverse range of research topics.

The 13 students and recent graduates who received the Weintraub Award this year will present their research at a scientific symposium on May 5 at the Hutchinson Center in Seattle. Each awardee will also receive an honorarium and certificate.

Asked to describe her dissertation research, Eichel said, "Cells need to constantly sense their environment so that they can alter their programing to respond to their surroundings. To do so, cells use receptors to detect physiological and pharmaceutical stimuli and initiate appropriate responses within the cell. G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs), the largest class of signaling receptors, are responsible for an extensive number of physiological processes and comprise a large class of pharmaceutical targets. Despite their importance, much remains unknown about how GPCRs function in the context of the cell. My thesis work developed a new understanding of how, when, and where GPCRs function in cellular signaling."

Mark von Zastrow, MD, PhD, professor of psychiatry and of cellular and molecular pharmacology, is Eichel's adviser at UCSF. When she graduates from UCSF, Eichel plans to do postdoctoral work in cellular neuroscience with Dr. Kang Shen, an HHMI investigator at Stanford.
The Weintraub award and related symposium honor the late Harold M. Weintraub, PhD, a founding member of the Basic Sciences Division at the Hutchinson Center, who in 1995 died of brain cancer at the age of just 49. Weintraub was an international leader in the field of molecular biology and was regarded as an unpretentious leader and exemplary mentor.

“By nurturing colleagues, students and postdocs, and helping all of us become better scientists, Hal was instrumental in establishing the collegial atmosphere at the Hutch. We believe having a symposium recognizing the achievements of young scientists is a great way to honor Hal and the recipients of this award,” said Dr. Mark Groudine, molecular biologist and special adviser to the director’s office at the Hutchinson Center.

As of 2017, UCSF’s Tetrad Program, directed by Dr. Dave Morgan, boasts Weintraub winners three years in a row. Last year, recent Tetrad alumnus Trevor Sorrells received the award; and in 2015, Tetrad grads Scott Coyle and Silvia Rouskin were both recipients.

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[1] https://graduate.ucsf.edu/programs/tetrad