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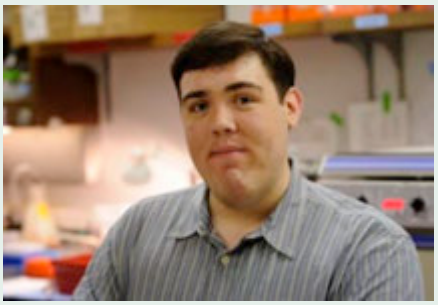
Amiya Ahmed and Kenneth Gray, both juniors from Birmingham, were awarded 2012 Goldwater Scholarships by the Barry M. Goldwater Excellence in Education Foundation. The award recognizes outstanding achievement and potential of students who wish to pursue research careers in the natural sciences, engineering or mathematics.

Amiya, who is double majoring in molecular biology and philosophy and minoring in chemistry, has been involved in research since high school. He began working in the lab of his father, Dr. Ali Ahmed, in the UAB Center for Aging, where he studied the predictors of in-hospital mortality for nursing home residents. His projects evolved to include other aspects of geriatric health, including the impact of prior smoking and income on propensity for cardiovascular disease. Amiya has also researched under Dr. Trygve Tollefsbol in the Department of Biology, where he focused on methods of breast cancer treatment.

Amiya Ahmed



Kenneth Gray

However, his experiences are not limited to the classroom and the lab. In addition to his involvement in the University Honors Program and the Biology Scholars Program, Amiya serves on *Inquiro's* Editorial Board and works at the McWane Science Center giving science demonstrations to younger students. He also feels drawn toward opportunities that enhance his exposure to worldwide cultures, working as an International Mentor to help foreign students transition to life at UAB and serving as Executive Vice President for the UAB Multicultural Council.

"I have strong ties to Bangladesh, where my parents grew up," explains Ahmed. "I hope to train talented and motivated young people from developing countries in research." To this end, he plans to obtain a combined M.D./Ph.D. degree and specialize in pediatric oncology at a leading medical research university. His parents' experiences and support have provided strong motivation for his life and career choices. "[They] have inspired me to pursue my passions and dedicate my life to help others," he says.

Kenneth, a molecular biology major with minors in chemistry and Spanish, studies protein signaling in relation to glioblastoma and breast cancer. He works in the lab of Dr. Etty (Tika) Benvineste, Chair of the Department of Cell, Developmental and Integrative Biology, where he investigates how the kinase CK2 regulates JAK/STAT3 and NF-κB pathways by using a very specific synthetic CK2 inhibitor called CX-4945, which is currently in Phase II clinical trials. Kenneth hopes to continue his training in translational research and earn a Ph.D. in biomedical science. Currently, he is on track to earn an M.S. in Biology with certificates in Global Health Studies and Translational and Molecular Science in addition to his B.S. degree in May 2014.

Besides his studies, Kenneth is involved in various organizations on campus. He is a member of the Honors College Student Executive Council and is Director Emeritus, formerly Director, of the UAB Regional Science Olympiad Tournament for high school students. He is also a Teaching Assistant for honors leadership courses and a Research Ambassador for the newly formed Undergraduate Research Association, a position involving mentorship of younger students who are starting research at UAB.

Kenneth's ultimate goal is to become a professor researching therapeutically exploitable cancer cell signaling, and he says he has been fortunate to be influenced by a lot of strong role models. "For example, Dr. Benvineste is the embodiment of everything I want my career to be," he says. "She maintains and leads a lab with a dozen members researching multiple sclerosis and cancer, and even with everything she does, she is completely tireless and has no plans of ever slowing down. I think if I could be half as successful as her, I would be content."