Shane Ardo leading effort to build research bridges for underrepresented minorities

The project, with the help of a $25,000 grant, will create connections between UCI graduate students and minority-serving universities.

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Shane Ardo expects that, by this summer, graduate students from places like UCI could be visiting and forming connections with labs at minority-serving institutions.

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Professor Shane Ardo of the UCI Department of Chemistry recently won an award from the Research Corporation for Science Advancement to help foster the participation of underrepresented minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The aim of the award is to create research exchange bridges between top research, or R1, universities like UC Irvine and first-year undergraduates at historically Black or Hispanic-serving universities.

The award started in the fall, and, Ardo explained, there're already eight "eager" undergraduate students from participating undergraduate institutions (PUI) and minority-serving institutions participating in the effort. The undergrads hail from Cal State University L.A., University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Prairie View A&M University, and Ardo's leading a group of six other scientists at universities across the country, that, with the $25,000 the award gives them to do their work, will open R1 doors students that may not've existed before.

"Ideally, this summer, grad students from R1 schools will visit will visit the PUIs to interact with undergrads, build rapport, and assist assistant professors in running their labs — it'll be a win-win!" Ardo said. "In summer 2022, these undergrads will take part in a meaningful and detailed summer research experience at an R1 institution, to prepare them to ideally apply for grad school, get accepted into an R1, and most importantly, be wholly prepared for R1-level research."

The award adds to the panoply of awards and initiatives seeking to stimulate minority participation in STEM fields that're already happening at Physical Sciences, including an action plan in the Department of Physics & Astronomy that aims to, among many things, stimulate previously-nonexistent collaborations between its researchers and historically black universities and colleges.

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