

Student Spotlight



TIM JACOBS, KUHLMAN LAB

GREGG RICE, WEEKS LAB

MATT SMOLA, WEEKS LAB

Tim Jacobs (left), Gregg Rice (middle), and Matt Smola (right), all of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), served as Teaching Assistants for the 2011 Biophysical Society Summer Course in Biophysics hosted on the campus. All are graduate students in UNC-CH's Program in Molecular & Cellular Biophysics.

Did you enjoy your TA experience? Why or why not?

Tim: I thoroughly enjoyed my TA experience, in large part because the students were so great. There were always lots of challenging questions which helped me learn a lot more than I expected.

Gregg: Absolutely. It was even better than I could have hoped for. The students were a joy to work with. Getting to see all the work that they did with the help of the sponsoring labs was an incredible experience. I never thought I'd learn so much from them!

Matt: I really did enjoy the experience. Tag-teaming with Tim and Gregg meant that instead of one person bearing all the responsibility for teaching, we could split it up and allow ourselves to dig deeper into the material with the students. It also meant that we could spend more time getting to know the students. It was really fun learning with and about everyone in the course.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone just starting their undergraduate science career, what would it be?

Tim: Try as many things as you can to figure out what you like. You'll have plenty of time later in life to become an expert, it'll be a lot less painful if you love what you do every day.

Gregg: Follow your dreams, but make sure they're yours. A lot of people I know, myself included, have all sorts of expectations placed on them from their parents, friends, and even themselves. Keeping an open mind along the way and following your passion will get you far.

Matt: Get involved early, memorize your unit conversions, those things are important, but above all: there will be a handful of very stressful times in your scientific career; lighten the mood by keeping a repertoire of science jokes in your back pocket. Then you can have a good laugh, even if no one else does.

Barry Lentz, Summer Course Program

Director, says:

Matt Smola, Gregg Rice, and Tim Jacobs volunteered to teach in the Summer Course because of their interest in teaching. All of the Summer Course teaching assistants are Biophysics Trainees who have given a great deal of themselves to challenge our students and help them grow as people and biophysicists, but these three young men were really special. Gregg is from Illinois and earned a BS in chemistry from Loyola University in Chicago. Matt is from Ohio and was a BS biochemistry major at Miami University in Oxford Ohio. Tim hails from upstate New York and came to UNC with a BS in bioinformatics from SUNY Buffalo. All three were eagle scouts, and this showed as they stepped up to introduce their own ideas into the Course and make fundamental changes in the way it functions, I believe much to its improvement. Their students praised them for their dedication and patience, and all of us associated with the Summer Course appreciated very much their efforts on behalf of the students.

To view this interview in its entirety, visit www.wordpress.com/biophysicalsociety.

Suggest a Student to Spotlight

Pls, do you have a spotlight-worthy student in your lab? Send his/her name to society@biophysics.org.