

## Student to Learn From Top Scientists

May 27, 2011 11:15 AM Keith Brannon

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A promising young Tulane researcher will get a chance to learn from some of the world's brightest minds this summer. Catherine Howard, an MD/PhD student, was selected to attend the prestigious Nobel Laureate Meetings at Lindau, Germany.



MD/PhD student Catherine Howard is investigating the effects of aliskiren, a new drug for the treatment of high blood pressure, on kidney function in a unique animal model of hypertension. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Howard is one of only 80 U.S. students who will spend a week with 26 Nobel Laureates and 570 other young researchers from 80 countries.

“Catherine is probably the most outstanding graduate student that I have ever supervised, and I have been at Tulane for 22 years,” says her mentor [Kenneth Mitchell](#), associate professor of physiology.

Getting an invitation to the meeting is a tremendous honor extended only to distinguished junior researchers who show great promise in their fields, says Gabriel Navar, professor and chair of [physiology](#) at the Tulane School of Medicine.

Howard, who studies experimental models of hypertension, is the first author of two published articles and is working on a third. She is investigating the effects of aliskiren, a new drug for the treatment of high blood pressure, on kidney function in a unique animal model of hypertension.

Howard says the Lindau meeting is unique because it is designed to promote interactions between researchers. "It's not just being lectured to," she says. "I'll get to pick the brains of people who have literally formed the way that we think. It's incredible."

From a young age, Howard knew she wanted to study human disease, particularly hypertension, which is a big problem in her hometown of New Orleans. Hypertension and heart disease are the No. 1 killers in the United States. Despite having more than 200 drugs to treat the conditions, the problem continues to grow and more people are diagnosed each year.

"There is something big that we are missing," she says. "It's a simple problem to understand but an unbelievably complicated one to solve."