



MICHELLE D. SCONCE



Michelle D. Sconce is a doctoral student in the Institute of Molecular Biology under the mentorship of biology professor Karen Guillemin.

Sconce's research focuses on understanding the interactions between gut bacteria and the host, specifically how gut bacteria influence the development of the pancreas. For this work, she uses zebrafish to study how a bacteria-secreted protein found in select gut bacteria induces expansion of insulin-producing beta cells.

Prior to her graduate work at the UO, she received a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a minor in biology from Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. Her research there focused on cholesterol metabolism and was supported through the Murdock Heart & Research Foundation in collaboration with Oregon Health & Science University.

Sconce was drawn to UO because of the graduate program's emphasis on rigorous training to help students think creatively,

critically, and independently in pursuit of fundamental science questions. She also was attracted to the Science Literacy Program for graduate students interested in pursuing college-level teaching. Through the program, a graduate student is paired with a professor to create and co-teach a science curriculum for general undergraduate classes.

As a native Oregonian who grew up in a small rural town, her long-term goal is to give back to the local communities that helped her grow as a person and as a scientist by pursuing innovative research and mentorship. Sconce holds an officer position in the UO's Women of Graduate Sciences organization that strives for gender equality in the professional development of women in all disciplines of science by hosting workshops and community outreach. Sconce wants to bridge basic science and community outreach to improve the health and well-being of other Oregonians.

She is the first member of her family to pursue a doctorate.