

UH-Downtown Takes Three First-Place Prizes at the ASM Conference, Texas Branch

Congrats to the Winners of the Poster and Oral Competitions

(Houston, Texas, April 30, 2007) UHD students found themselves in Jeopardy at the Texas Branch of the American Society of Microbiology conference on March 22-24, 2007 -- Microbial Jeopardy, that is! Eleven UH-Downtown students, along with Dr. Catherine Horton and Dr. Poonam Gulati attended.

Along with the many professional activities of the conference, Drs. Gulati and Horton introduced Microbial Jeopardy, complete with buzzers and timers. Everyone loved it. It might become a tradition there as it is at UHD. The UHD team came second in Jeopardy to the Stephen F. Austin team comprised of graduate students.

But that wasn't the only highlight of the conference for Henia Abid, whose research with Shafeeq Noorudeen under the direction of Dr. Gulati, entitled *Biofilm Formation of Staphylococcus Aureas In Vitro and Inhibition with Antibiotics*, won first place in the poster competition.

"There were a lot of biofilm experts at the conference," Abid notes. "They asked us questions and gave us a lot of input on our results. Two of the experts suggested different stains to use, and we're going to check on those for future work. *That was interesting!*"

Mesias Pedroza who did research in Dr. Phil Lyons' laboratory won first place in the oral competition, based upon his project entitled *The Structure of Basidiomycete Communities on Roots and Rhizospheres of Native Coastal Prairie Grasses*. Elizabeth Magreola is continuing that work.

UHD also won the highest attendance award at the conference. Professors and students received T-shirts saying, "We outnumber them 1 trillion to One" (of course referencing microbes).

The awards were just part of Abid's and Pedroza's high points this semester. They both graduated and walked in commencement ceremonies May 12. We salute their success!

