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## Students Conduct Hands-on Research

**EXPRESS** shaped Mariah McClain's college experience.

*Story by Josh Murray*

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**B**efore her freshman year at MU, Mariah McClain received an invitation to join Exposure to Research for Science Students (EXPRESS), a research program for freshmen and sophomores from ethnic groups often underrepresented in the sciences.

Now a senior, McClain can see how that invitation shaped her



Mariah McClain is a senior biology major and EXPRESS mentor from Jefferson City, Mo. Photo by Nicholas Benner.

college experience.

The EXPRESS program teams students with faculty mentors who teach them how to conduct hands-on research. EXPRESS students also attend workshops and seminars that cover topics such as lab skills and research ethics.

“I’m well-prepared for what graduate school will bring,” says McClain, a biology and psychology major from Jefferson City, Mo. “I feel I have a large advantage over some of my peers who lack similar research experience.”

McClain conducted research in the lab of molecular microbiology and immunology professor Bumsuk Hahm. Based on that research, she co-wrote a paper that the *Journal of Immunology* published last spring.

After two years as an EXPRESS apprentice, McClain served as a peer mentor for the program, meeting with students on a weekly basis

“I wanted to give back and help students who were going through the same triumphs and problems that I dealt with,” McClain says. Those meetings can

cover everything from celebrating success with a lab experiment to finding the right major to dealing issues with a roommate.

“We talk about academic and personal issues,” she says. “So, it allows us to really get to know each other.

McClain continues to conduct research as an EXPRESS Fellow. She plans to graduate in May 2013 and pursue a doctorate in public health.

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