

*Setting off
that scientific
spark:*



Workforce
Development
& Education

Celebrating WD&E's 2019 and 2020 Outstanding Mentors



Do you remember the person who helped you take that first step towards your career? Who was your first mentor? Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's Workforce Development and Education (WD&E) department facilitates this crucial stage of professional development. Our team connects the Lab's scientists and researchers with interns from universities and colleges around the United States. WD&E facilitates eleven different internship programs at Berkeley Lab. Some of the most popular include the [Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internship \(SULI\)](#), the [Berkeley Lab Undergraduate Research \(BLUR\)](#) internship, [Visiting Faculty \(VFP\)](#) and the [Community College Internship \(CCI\)](#) programs.

We are very lucky to have researchers who volunteer their time and take our interns under their wing. In 2019, 162 interns worked closely with researchers at Berkeley Lab. Many mentors go above and beyond. In addition to teaching standard scientific practices — such as coding, compiling data, and preparing samples — they also help interns develop professional skills. The success of our programs depends on these generous STEM professionals.

In a normal year, we celebrate our mentors at an awards reception held at the Lab in September. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in lieu of our usual recognition ceremonies, we are virtually recognizing six of our upstanding mentors, who served in 2019 and 2020. We are grateful to all of the mentors who adjusted their projects in 2020, in order to work remotely with our interns during the pandemic.

*Our
Awardees:*





Spring 2019 awardee: Dr. Arun Persaud is currently a staff scientist in the [Accelerator Technology and Applied Physics \(ATAP\) Division](#) in the [Physical Sciences Area](#). Over the years, interns have helped the ATAP division meet their project milestones and contributed to the division's many papers. Persaud notes, "The WD&E program has been a great resource for our group to be able to find highly motivated students." Persaud's interns have praised him for being a good listener. He took the time to learn about their technical backgrounds. Persaud found ways to help his interns build a firm foundation in practical skills. A former intern explains that he, "has shown an extraordinary commitment to the success of his interns."



Summer 2019 awardee: Dr. Haruko Wainwright is a research scientist with the [Environmental Geophysics Group](#) in the [Earth and Environmental Sciences Area](#). Wainwright praises her mentees' creativity, noting that her interns have dreamt up ideas that she never even considered. "I know that I can have only a few students each year," she remarks, "but I believe that this is a very tangible contribution to the diversity and inclusion in the science community." Her mentees credit their success to her close guidance. One intern explained, "When I arrived at the lab in January, I was unsure I "belonged" in the sciences. Eight months later, I am proud of the research I have done, and I feel excited about a career in science."



Fall 2019 awardee: Tracy Mattox is a principal scientific engineering associate with the [Molecular Foundry](#) in the [Energy Sciences Area](#). "I started mentoring with WD&E," she says, "because I love sharing my excitement for science." Mattox's interns commend her skills as a leader. There are many times, they note, that Mattox went out her way to make herself available to them and help them feel comfortable at the Foundry. While many of them started the internship without a foundation in chemistry, Mattox encouraged their interest in the subject. She provided them additional articles that taught them the fundamentals and helped them understand the larger context of their research project. One of her interns writes that she, "always made sure that I was comfortable doing any experiment in the lab on my own."



Spring 2020 awardee: Dr. Edward Baidoo is a biochemist research scientist in the [Biosciences Area](#). His interns praise him for his generosity as a mentor. "I was motivated to serve as a mentor with WD&E internships," he explains, "because of their mission to inspire, motivate, and prepare the next generation of scientists and engineers." Baidoo provided his students with supplementary research materials that especially appealed to their own interests. In addition to coaching students in various analytical techniques, Baidoo offered advice on analytical experimental design. He helped students feel confident in expressing their thoughts on their research. One intern remarked, "Dr. Baidoo made my time at LBNL a profound and memorable experience which I will carry with me forever."



Summer 2020 awardee: Dr. Talita Perciano is a research scientist with the [Computational Research Division](#) in the [Computing Sciences Area](#). Perciano decided to become a WD&E mentor because she wanted to give back to her community. "As a woman in STEM," Perciano says, "I use this opportunity to cultivate as much as possible the presence of women and underrepresented groups in science." Perciano's students have observed her dedication as a mentor. Most impressively, Perciano continued to follow up with interns after their project came to an end. "By keeping in touch," one intern explains, "she kept me interested in my research and inspired me to want to come back again this summer."



Fall 2020 awardee: Dr. Michael Gerhardt is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the [Energy and Technologies Area \(ETA\)](#). He has recently accepted a position as a research scientist at SINTEF Industry in Norway. Gerhardt has seen just how mentors affirm an intern's decision to pursue a career in STEM. Gerhardt's intern appreciated how their mentor made them feel included in ETA. "I think it's important to pay this favor forward," Gerhardt emphasizes, "to seek out younger scientists who might be unsure or doubting themselves, and help them build the confidence they need to pursue a rewarding career in science and engineering."

WD&E is so grateful for these six mentors, who have created such a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere in their laboratories. Thanks to these scientists and researchers, our interns have grown their confidence in their own futures as scientists, engineers, technologists, and STEM professionals.