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Cal Poly Kinesiology Student Wins \$67,000 NIH Award

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly Kinesiology major Adrian Mercado received a \$67,000 Diversity Supplement Award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Mercado, a sophomore, is Cal Poly's first recipient of this award.

While still a freshman, Mercado volunteered as a team member on Kinesiology Professor Suzanne Phelan's NIH-funded Healthy Beginnings study, which investigates how lifestyle intervention can promote healthy weight gain in overweight and obese women during pregnancy. "Adrian is the only student who's ever approached me as a freshman, having already developed a strong interest in research," said Phelan, Mercado's mentor on the grant.

The grant, which supports diversity in the biomedical field, will now fund Mercado's work on the project and enable the research team to collect placentas and umbilical cord blood from women participating in the study.

"Adrian's on the ground implementing NIH-funded, cutting-edge research," Phelan said. "He's not just looking at data on placenta functioning."

Mercado, a first-generation student, will gain a wide range of clinical and scientific experience, including conducting interviews, recruiting participants, processing placentas and analyzing data.

Mercado credits his research experience thus far with teaching him a host of real-world skills, including networking and biochemical analysis. "I can process placentas and blood. I don't know too many people who can do that," Mercado said. "I'm already doing a lot of things people often wait until their fourth year to do."

This opportunity has also expanded his view of career options. "Research has opened my eyes to a lot of possibilities," Mercado said.

Link

Healthy Beginnings Study: <http://stride.calpoly.edu/content/research/healthy-beginnings>

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