

NCERC Introduces Two New Visiting Research Fellows

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE - The National Corn-to-Ethanol Research Center at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (NCERC at SIUE) recently welcomed two new Visiting Research Fellows: Blas Quiroga III and Krystin Polhemus.

Funded by the Illinois Corn Marketing Board, the nine-month fellowship program is intended to provide training and hands-on experience to prepare the next generation of engineers and scientists for work in mid- to high-skill jobs in the bioeconomy.

“NCERC is pleased to announce the hiring of Blas Quiroga III and Krystin Polhemus as NCERC’s newest Visiting Research Fellows,” said NCERC Executive Director John Caupert. “NCERC benefits greatly from mentoring recent college graduates who have specialized areas of study in biology, chemistry and engineering. NCERC extends a special thank you to the Illinois Corn Marketing Board for providing the funding necessary to conduct the fellowship program.”

Quiroga, a graduate of Texas A&M University and Cleveland State University, has both a bachelor’s and master’s in chemical engineering and will utilize his skillset to assist on projects in NCERC’s larger-scale laboratories, including the Fermentation Suite and Pilot Plant.

“I’m excited to join NCERC’s research team and take the next step in scaling-up my fermentation expertise,” said Quiroga. “During my time as a student, I conducted research at the bench-scale and was able to learn different facets of a successful bioreaction. I’m eager to see how that works in NCERC’s pilot-scale fermenters and play an integral role in conducting contractual research projects.”

Polhemus received her bachelor’s in biology from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in December 2021. As an undergraduate, she joined NCERC as a laboratory intern and worked closely with NCERC’s research team to support contractual research and sponsored projects taking place in NCERC’s Fermentation and Analytical Laboratories. As a fellow, she will expand upon this role as a full-time member of NCERC’s staff.

“During my time as an intern, I learned to appreciate NCERC’s unique business model and dynamic team of researchers,” said Polhemus. “I look forward to jump starting my career through the Visiting Research Fellowship Program at NCERC.”

The Visiting Research Fellows will serve under the guidance of two supervisors who will provide them with the technical expertise needed to thrive in their research environments and the leadership skills they need to ramp up the trajectory of their careers. This joint supervisory model ensures the connection of theory to practice, and builds upon the Fellow’s academic degree through applied, hands-on learning in an industrial setting. Upon completion of the fellowship program, graduates will be qualified to work in the biofuels, pharmaceuticals, bioprocessing, brewing, and refining industries. To learn more about NCERC’s fellowship program, visit EthanolResearch.com.

About the NCERC

The NCERC at SIUE is a nationally recognized research center dedicated to the development and commercialization of biotechnologies. Their unique research laboratories house bench- to demonstration-scale bioreactors and pretreatment and downstream processing equipment, making it the perfect partner to companies in the biotechnology industry. Through their contractual research services, NCERC has played an instrumental role in commercializing more than eighty products that are now used in the commercial marketplace. In addition to its research and development services, NCERC leverages its experienced staff and unique facility to provide a variety of workforce training and education initiatives to train the next generation of bioeconomy professionals. For more information, contact Jackie Hayes at jhayes@ethanolresearch.com, or visit www.EthanolResearch.com.