



Small brains lead to big ideas

Scientific workshop highlights the value of using invertebrates in research

When recent Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences graduate Yuly Fuentes, PhD, (pictured left) was growing up in Chile, she had no idea that huge scientific discoveries could be made studying extremely small organisms. Now that she's completed her PhD in neurobiology, she wants to spread the word and create opportunities for budding scientists in her native Chile and other Latin American countries where science struggles because of underfunding.

According to Dr. Fuentes, invertebrate model systems are the source of many discoveries in neurobiology research and many other areas of scientific inquiry and are well suited for use in parts of the world where funding for science is very limited, because their use and maintenance is relatively inexpensive and they are amenable to genetic manipulation that can yield tremendous results.

Supported by the UMMS Department of Neurobiology, Fuentes has teamed up with scientists Jimena Sierralta, PhD, of the University of Chile, and John Ewer, PhD, of the University of Valparaiso (since 2010), to introduce young Latin American scientists, including graduate and undergraduate students and junior faculty, to this rich scientific resource and at the same time help foster a global community of invertebrate researchers similar to the community at UMass Medical School.