

## **GTEC Experience Makes PhD Student a Valuable Intern**

Chris Lessing's experience at the Georgia Tech/Emory Center for the Engineering of Living Tissues (GTEC), an NSF-supported Engineering Research Center, made him an excellent choice for a trainee position with the Cellular and Tissue Engineering Training Program, an NIH training grant administered by GTEC faculty member, Dr. Andres Garcia. Part of the grant allowed Lessing, a PhD candidate, to intern with Depuy Spine Biologics Group (now Johnson & Johnson Regenerative Therapeutics) in Raynham, MA, a GTEC Industrial Partner.

Depuy Spine Biologics Group was seeking an intern who could contribute to two early-stage projects involving in vitro investigation of therapies for Parkinson's disease and congestive heart failure. Chris's status as a fifth-year PhD student and his exposure to the cross-disciplinary environment at GTEC gave him the ability to switch gears between the Parkinson's and congestive heart failure projects on a daily basis and provide meaningful input to DePuy.

"Chris added a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm to the project. He refocused our efforts and, in some cases, brought a new way of thinking or a new depth to the project. He was used to thinking of science from an angle different from ours, so it was refreshing to see his point of view as well," said Dr. Cynthia Coleman, Lessing's supervisor and mentor at DePuy Biologics (now at REMEDI, a GTEC research collaborator). Coleman indicated that a big benefit was Chris's ability, as an intern, to dedicate 100% of his time to the practice of science and engineering without being distracted by the normal administrative tasks of a corporate researcher. This allowed him to give a considerable depth of critical thought to the experimental direction and data analysis.

The internship requirement of the training grant is somewhat unique in the PhD educational environment. Twenty-nine internships have been facilitated so far through Dr. Garcia's training grant with host companies such as: Advanced Tissue Sciences, Axogen, Baxter Cardiovascular Group, CenterPulse, Cordis/J&J, DePuy, Edwards LifeSciences, Ethicon/J&J, Genzyme, Guidant, Medtronic, National Science Foundation, Osiris Therapeutics, Porex and Smith & Nephew.



*As an intern with Depuy Spine Biologics Group, GTEC PhD student Chris Lessing investigated potential new therapies for Parkinson's disease and congestive heart failure.*

**Georgia Tech/Emory Center for the Engineering of Living Tissues (GTEC)**  
**<http://www.gtec.gatech.edu>**