Michele Stretch was among 30 undergraduate students from nine colleges and universities in Nebraska who joined the INBRE program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

These bright young men and women make up the new class of science novices who will spend two years learning the language, techniques and culture of laboratory research.

For 10 weeks this summer, the students conducted research alongside scientists at UNMC, Creighton University Medical Center and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where they embarked on their own careers in biomedical science.

At the end of their summer research experience, the students presented at the annual INBRE conference in Grand Island in early August, where they mingled with scientists from all three campuses and shared ideas.

Upon returning to school this fall the students will continue to conduct research on their home campuses.

The Institutional Development Award Program (IDeA) Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) program is overseen by James Turpen, Ph.D., professor of genetics, cell biology and anatomy at UNMC. Dr. Turpen is the principal investigator of the $17.2 million National Institutes of Health grant that funds the program.

Established in 2001, the INBRE Scholars program was created to expose students to serious biomedical research and build a statewide biomedical research infrastructure between undergraduate and graduate institutions.

The students, referred to as INBRE scholars, enter the program after completing their sophomore year of college upon recommendation by their college professors.

Each undergraduate school nominates approximately three students a year for the program. Once in the program, the students are given two-year scholarships worth $11,000. The scholarship provides students with $2,500 during each of their next two undergraduate years and $3,000 during each of the two summers they are in the program.