DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

SUMMER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 03/01/2020

PROJECT TITLE: <u>Modeling of protein-protein interactions during cellular processes</u>

Ruxandra Dima
Department of Chemistry
304 Crosley
Cincinnati, OH 45221
Phone: (513) 556-3961
Fax: (513) 556-9239
Email: ruxandra.dima@uc.edu

Project Description

Research in the Dima group focuses on understanding the role of various structural and cellular factors in the mechanical response of biological molecules ranging from small multi-domain proteins to large fibrillar assemblies that play crucial roles in fundamental processes such as the maintenance of the cell shape, cell mobility, cell-cell adhesion, axonal growth, and cellular division (mitosis).

A project for a REWU student is â€•Modeling of protein-protein interactions during cellular processes". Microtubules, large multi-filament polymeric complexes which are the main component of the cell cytoskeleton, play fundamental roles in cellular processes ranging from cellular transport to mitosis. These roles are all intimately connected with microtubules' ability to depolymerize under controlled cellular conditions. This control is exerted by a large array of molecular machines (300 or so species), which form transitory complexes with microtubules over different timescales. Recent experimental results strongly suggest that these protein cofactors work by converting chemical energy into mechanical work which is then applied to the microtubule polymer lattice, but little is known about the details of the process. The goal of this project is to determine the main types of interactions between molecular machines and microtubule filaments responsible for changes in the mechanics of these filaments upon the start of mitosis or during cell-cell adhesion processes.

The WISE student will gain experience with (1) data science methods in biochemistry, (2) simulation software designed to follow protein structure deformation under applied forces, and (3) data analysis that couples results of simulations with experimentally derived data.