I had the privilege of attending the Symposium on the Immune System of Bacteria in Boston, MA this past April. While there, I had the opportunity to present a poster on my research as well as listen to fascinating talks relevant to the field of bacterial immune systems. The poster I presented at the conference was entitled "*CRISPR-Cas13b communicates to membrane pore Csx27 to enhance anti-phage defense*." I was asked very insightful and thought-provoking questions on my project that led to new experimental ideas on how to best address the main questions of my project. I was also able to talk to some of the scientists who had previously studied Csx27, including Kira Makarova and Eugene Koonin. They gave me valuable feedback on how to best determine if Csx27 causes cell death or cell dormancy in response to bacteriophage infection. In addition to the valuable advice I was given about my research, the conference allowed me to obtain a GFP lambda plasmid which will allow me to use microscopy to visualize phage infection in single bacterial cells. I would never have known about this plasmid if I had not introduced myself to Luciano Marraffini and invited him to come and see my poster.

I enjoyed all of the talks given by other scientists, but my favorites were the talks about novel bacterial immune systems. The field is rapidly growing. Attending a conference like this one is essential for keeping up with the plethora of new discoveries. This was my first opportunity to meet students, postdocs, and PIs from other labs who work in this field. The conference greatly expanded my network and gave me ideas about labs that I might like to train in as a postdoc. A new PI in the field actually invited me to email him after the conference because he is looking to hire postdocs in his new lab and thought my skill-set would be a good fit with his research goals. Due to the amazing talks, the opportunity to present a poster, and the networking, I am very grateful to GWIS for giving me a travel award so that I could attend this conference.