Dear Chancellor’s Club Fellowship Committee:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for your financial support through the 2006-2007 Chancellor’s Club Fellowship. My graduate work in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology focuses on the development, structure and function of calcified cartilage in sharks and rays as a means of understanding the evolution and mechanics of skeletal tissues and biomaterials. Your funds have allowed me time and resources to delve into my own research topic, but with a broader scope than I would have been able to otherwise. My work is necessarily integrative; the fellowship supported collaboration with the Department of Engineering, allowing me to deepen the biological implications of my work by looking at it through the lens of biomaterials. In addition to supporting my attendance at annual scientific meetings, Chancellor’s Club funds supported two visits to the Argonne National Laboratory to investigate the microstructure of calcified cartilage using the synchrotron radiation source. This dynamic technique is only recently used for biological study; my pairing of cutting-edge materials science technique and skeletal biology was featured by Argonne researchers at a symposium on x-ray tomography.

Chancellor’s Club funds have also allowed me to broaden my approaches to other topics. For example, while on the Chancellor’s Club Fellowship, I completed a project with my advisor and a friend from Brown University on how modifications to “typical” tendon shape (like the twisted tendons in some of our muscles) greatly reduce strains in muscle, allowing them to operate closer to peak potential. Further, during my year of funding, I was able to undertake an additional project with my advisor and a friend from Moss Landing Marine Laboratories CT scanning the skeletons of more than half of the nearly 80 living genera of stingrays and their relatives. By comparing the anatomies of the skeletons with what is known of the animals’ ecologies, we were able elucidate some of the “laws” of evolution at work in this ancient group of fishes. These works led to publications and invitations to guest lecture at universities and conference symposia nationally and internationally.

These achievements would not have been possible without your generous funding. In my opinion from working at other institutions, my department and the university as a whole distinguish themselves by encouraging and supporting broad-reaching, integrative and innovative work; the Chancellor’s Club deeply underlines these goals with their support of graduate students. I am honored to have received this fellowship and interacted with the Chancellor’s Club throughout the year.

With the highest regards,

John Anteater
2006-2007 Chancellor’s Club Fellowship Recipient