When Duc Le started college, he wasn’t sure what biochemistry was.

“I just picked it as a major because it sounded cool,” he said. “And likewise, I did not even know how to conduct research or what it entailed during my third year at CSULB. Due to a lucky student referral, I joined Dr. Paul Weers’ lab in my fourth year and started my research career.”

Since then, Le has presented two poster presentations and one oral presentation. He won the Fred H. Dorer Research Scholarship last summer and in February he won first place in the CSULB Student Research Competition for the Biological Sciences & Agriculture category. He will compete in the CSU Student Research competition on May 6 and 7.

His research focuses on apolipoporphin-III, a protein from the insect *Locusta migratoria*. This protein was discovered for its role in lipid transport, but now it is also known to function in innate immunity. Apolipoporphin-III destabilizes bacterial cell membrane and essentially kills the pathogen. The mechanism of how apolipoporphin-III mediates this process is not known, therefore Le is studying the effects of the amino acid lysine on the protein’s antimicrobial property.

Le is active on campus and in the community. He has volunteered at St. Mary’s Medical Center for three years, and was in charge of volunteers working in the operating room. He has worked on campus in the Jensen Student Access to Science and Math Center as a student-tech and currently tutors at the center as a Peer Mentor. He is involved with the CSULB club MAPS (Minority-Focus Alliance for Pre-Health Students), which hosts semi-annual health fairs for the underserved in the City of Bell.

Le, who was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the U.S. in 1995, plans to apply to medical school next year.