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April 15, 2014



William Bennett, left, and Nicholas Daanen present their poster at the annual Student Research Symposium.

Student research featured at IU Kokomo Symposium

KOKOMO, Ind. — Before this semester, Darion Daugherty thought research was something scientists did — not elementary education majors like herself.

She learned from experience, though, that research is part of all majors, and completed her own project, studying how different wavelengths of light impact plant growth.

Daugherty, a freshman from Peru, was among the 52 students presenting at the annual Indiana University Kokomo Student Research Symposium. The annual event showcases research conducted in the last year by graduate and undergraduate students from a variety of majors, including chemistry, psychology, fine arts, education, biology, English, and others.

She now has a better understanding of how to conduct research, a skill she can share with her own future students.

“This would be a great experiment in an elementary school classroom,” she said. “I see how research allows you to dig deeper and get a richer understanding of a topic.”

That is the purpose of the Student Research Symposium, said Netty Provost, event co-chairperson.

“The symposium is a wonderful event for our students to share their excellent academic research and creative work with a wider audience on campus,” she said. “By participating in the event, students gain valuable experience with presenting their work to an audience, in both posters and presentation sessions, and develop skills to explain their research and creative work to an audience who might not be familiar with the discipline.”

Chemistry majors William Bennett and Nicholas Daanen’s project had a long, complicated title, that essentially translates to “shining a light on electrodes to make hydrogen,” as they explained to the non-chemistry majors examining their poster.

They conducted their research with Kasem Kasem, professor of chemistry, studying potential ways to mass produce hydrogen, as an alternative to gas energy.

“Hydrogen is more efficient, and less harmful to the environment,” Daanen said, adding that they’ve both researched with Kasem for three semesters. The work allows them to apply what they’ve learned in class, in a more meaningful way than class lab exercises.

They received one of two awards given for poster presentations at the symposium. Alison Morgan also was honored for her poster of her project, “The Allure of Virtuality.”

Presentation award winners were Noah Cicalo for “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Exposure Treatment for Soldiers,” and Angelina Gurney for “Personality Traits, Perceived Stress, and Coping Styles.”

Candy Thompson, co-chairperson, said these experiences are essential for students like Daanen and Bennett, who plan to attend graduate school.

“Part of academia is to research, and to present your research,” she said. “It’s exciting to see the level of engagement on our campus. It’s a great opportunity for people to see the excellent research happening here.”

For April Name, making a presentation is a way to educate the campus about what new media majors do. She displayed her graphic design portfolio, including notecards, a travel poster, and a literary journal she redesigned, and talked about her creative process and inspiration.

“For me, it’s about creating awareness of the new media program,” she said. “A lot of people don’t understand what we do. Being able to get in front of people, and talk about what we do, and the process we do, is exciting, and it’s fun to show off your hard work.”

It also helps her prepare for her future, after she graduates in May.

“It’s like a job interview,” she said. “Employers will want me to be able to talk about what I’ve done, and what my creative process was for my work.”

The IU Kokomo Student Research Symposium is sponsored by the Office of Academic Affairs, the Center for Student Research, the Honors Program, and the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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