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USFSP News Center »

Student Research Colloquium Series begins at Poynter Library

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Elizabeth Southard worked on three research projects, including two summers spent studying the Gamo people in Ethiopia, before graduating in December with a B.A. in Anthropology.

William C. Nicks, a double-major December graduate in psychology and political science, spent a year studying near-infrared spectroscopy technology and is preparing the findings for publication in a scholarly journal.

On Wednesday they presented their work during the inaugural Student Research Colloquium Series at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.
Both said the chance to conduct research with top-flight professors as undergraduates was a highlight of their time at USF St. Petersburg and they encouraged their fellow students at the Colloquium to take advantage of such opportunities.

“I don’t think there are that many universities that give undergraduates the opportunities I’ve been given here,” said Southard. “Being able to work on three different research projects, one of which took me all the way to Africa, is a pretty amazing opportunity.”

Southard worked closely on her Ethiopia research with Anthropology professors John Arthur, Ph.D., and Kathy Arthur, Ph.D.. Nicks collaborated with Psychology Professor Christina Salnaitis, Ph.D.

Nicks said his research helped him decide his career path. Near-infrared spectroscopy technology is a non-invasive method to analyze the brain. His research found the technology is very reliable and “has so many applications, not just psychology.” He plans to attend graduate school and become a brain researcher.

Southard also plans to attend graduate school to become an anthropologist. Besides Ethiopia, Southard helped curate the “Butch” Evans artifact collection at the Poynter Library and studied ancient artifacts at Weedon Island in St. Petersburg. Earlier this year the Tampa Bay History Center awarded her the Leland Hawes Prize for best undergraduate research paper for “The Cultural Importance of the Prehistoric and Historic History of Weedon Island.” She also presented the paper at a conference of the Society for Ethnobotany in Denver.

Vivian Fueyo, Ph.D., interim regional vice chancellor for academic affairs, said the Student Research Colloquium Series underscores the importance of student-faculty collaboration at USF St. Petersburg. “Giving our students opportunities to conduct research one-on-one with professors is what USF St. Petersburg is all about,” she said. “It’s a great way for them to expand the knowledge they gain in the classroom and increase their engagement in learning.”

The library-sponsored colloquium series is designed to allow students to gain valuable experience by presenting their research, project or idea to their fellow students and to USFSP faculty, said Carol Hixson, Dean of the Poynter Library. “We are delighted to provide this opportunity for students to practice their presentation skills and to spread their knowledge with their fellow students,” she said. “In addition to providing the venue for a live presentation, we are further supporting student research by archiving the presentations in the USFSP Digital Archive.”

The series will be held in the library’s Poynter Corner on the third Wednesday of each month.
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