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Month of Events Explores Research Opportunities
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(St. Petersburg, Fla.) April 18, 2008 - With the goal of building awareness and opportunity for undergraduate research, Research Month events gave faculty and students a platform to discuss trends and showcase current research. Research Month ran from mid-March to mid-April and included a lecture with renowned biologist Paul Ehrlich, a faculty research expo and discussions focused on women and research and building undergraduate research opportunities.

The Undergraduate Research Symposium on April 17 featured the innovative research, scholarship and creative work produced by USF St. Petersburg undergraduates.

Forty-six students presented 28 exhibits on studies ranging from Haitian emigration to archeological findings in southwest Florida. One of the day’s presenters, senior Caitlin Kuleci, won first prize in the symposium for her research on the media’s portrayal of corn ethanol, a topic she discussed during an April 2 panel discussion on undergraduate research.

She undertook the year-long research project for an honors scholarship and found herself immersed in an initially foreign topic that she has become well-versed in. “People are impressed,” Kuleci said. “You become more confident in yourself through your research. Yes, it’s great for grad school, but also good to do anyway. You become more knowledgeable.”

Kuleci was joined by several faculty members at the April 2 discussion.

The panelists agreed on several themes: undertaking a research project as an undergraduate helps a student build strong qualifications for entrance into graduate school, helps a student determine whether they are interested in graduate studies and offers a student the opportunity to challenge themselves in a way not possible through traditional course assignments.

“It’s very important to us, not to just have faculty research, but to also get undergraduates involved. Undergraduates are amazingly able to get to the heart of an issue,” said Dr. Chris D’Elia, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. “Sometimes a lack of familiarity results in the best questions being asked. It’s active learning at its best.”

-USF St. Petersburg-

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