Oct. 10, 2011

NSM recognizes undergrad research projects

The fourth annual Undergraduate Research Reception sponsored by Sacramento State’s College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics on Tuesday, Oct. 4, featured 38 presenters. The project, begun by Dean Jill Trainer in 2007 when she came to Sacramento State, is designed to encourage students to develop their research skills.

The festivities in the University Union Redwood Room showcased students, a few of whom came from community colleges, and their professors who had worked together on the projects. They displayed their findings via posters that ran the gamut of scholastic explorations, including astronomy, biology, chemistry, geography, mathematics, physics and statistics. Eighteen of the students received stipends ranging from $2,000 to $5,000 for their efforts thanks to the generous sponsors, led by The Hedda and Thomas Smithson Science/Math Scholarship of $15,000.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy’s Feynman Award was established by Emeritus Professor Gene Barnes in 2008 to foster a culture of student research in the department and to recognize outstanding projects. Alexandra Moskaleva and A.J. Sisneros shared the prestigious prize.

Moskaleva was recognized for “Characterization of the Resistive MicroMegas Muon Detectors.” She performed this work in summer 2010 as an undergraduate researcher at CERN, the European high-energy research laboratory in Geneva. The detectors she tested are prototypes for those that will be used when the Large Hadron Collider is upgraded in the future.
Sisneros’ “The Effect of Math Skills in the Physics 5A Course” examined the mathematical background of students enrolled in Physics 5A, a course taken by, among others, biology, chemistry and geology majors. Responding to test and survey results, he developed a mathematics refresher course to ensure that the students have the tools to succeed in this important gateway course.

Dean Trainer and University Provost Joe Sheley were among nearly 100 attendees who spoke with students about their projects.

For more information on the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, visit www.csus.edu/nsm/.

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