Provost’s inaugural research showcase is a big success

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The inaugural Provost’s Student Research Showcase, held Tuesday, Oct. 28, in the University Union’s Redwood Room, revealed Sacramento State’s “best-kept secret.”

“We are doing a lot of innovation and research on this campus that, in many cases, involve our students,” says Provost Frederika “Fraka” Harmsen, who conceived of the annual poster exhibition to present ongoing research projects by graduate and undergraduate students.

“Study after study has shown that when faculty involve students in their research, the students are more likely to succeed academically, more likely to graduate in a timely fashion and more likely to go on and be successful in graduate school and in the work force,” she says.

The showcase also served as a test run for the Sacramento State Student Research Symposium to be held March 6, 2015, in the University Union. Students will compete for Provost’s Awards for Research Excellence and for cash prizes, and as many as 10 outstanding oral presentations will be chosen for the CSU Student Research Competition, May 1-2, 2015, at CSU San Bernardino.

The Provost’s Student Research Showcase attracted more than 200 students, who presented 95 explanatory posters in partnership with 60 faculty-mentors. The students hailed from 26 departments – as diverse as psychology, music, engineering and biological sciences – across six academic colleges.

Their research topics ranged from “Doctor Who: An Ideological Analysis” (Andrea Carli, communication studies) to “Perirhinal Cortex Involvement in Fear Conditioning to a Discontinuous Light Stimulus” (Aaron Beckner, psychology), “Brain Computer Interface” (Roberto Chacon, mechanical engineering) and “Rethink Your Drink” (Anjanpreet Pander, family and consumer sciences).

Andrew Carhart (public policy and administration) explored the effects of income equality on academic performance, and Nathan Sweem (mathematics and statistics) captured the audience’s attention with his poster titled “Two Salmon Walk into a Bar: An Assessment of Salmon Habitat on the Feather River.” A group of Sac State student-athletes listened intently as Wyatt Andersen (kinesiology) talked about his case study, “The Anterolateral Ligament of the Knee.”

“There were so many posters that impressed me, a number of them related to sustainability, particularly in aquaponics,” Harmsen says. “Water and climate change had some interesting ones, including the feasibility of groundwater banking in the central
Sacramento County basin using 3D modeling. Some in biomedical research I thought were very interesting, as well, such as exploring novel ways regarding wound-healing applications.

“I also was impressed with some research that came from outside science and engineering. There was a fascinating one called the ‘Anxiety of Female Authorship.’ I talked with Rachel Huizar about it in-depth. She was very articulate and passionate about her research, as were all of the students,” Harmsen says.

Because of limited space in the Redwood Room, the event’s organizers had to turn away some student researchers who had hoped to display their posters. The much-larger University Union Ballroom already has been booked for the 2015 Provost’s Student Research Showcase.

Harmsen was happy with the large number of participants and the diversity of their research at her inaugural namesake showcase.

“A lot of that research is addressing compelling questions and problems,” she says. “We’re solving human problems. The students’ creative endeavors inspire and probe humanity.”

The showcase also was presented by the Division of Academic Affairs, the Office of Research Affairs, Associated Students Inc., and Undergraduate and Graduate Studies.

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