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Volwiler Lecture: Dr. Joan Steitz Uncovers an Extra Step in the Central Dogma

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Argonne Undergraduate Symposium: A New Challenge, Yet Another Success

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Professors Karen Kirk and Pliny Smith with LFC students at the 2007 Argonne Symposium.

Argonne National Laboratory hosted the Eighteenth Annual Argonne Symposium for Undergraduates in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics on November 1st, 2007. Undergraduates from all over the Midwest represented their individual colleges and the extensive research they had accomplished at each institution in ten-minute presentations.

The day long event kicked off with registration, breakfast, and tours around Argonne Laboratories. Following was a keynote lecture by Dr. Charles E. Catlett, the Chief Information Officer and Director of the Computing and Information Systems Division at Argonne National Laboratory, which was attended by all conference participants. Shortly after the speech, students headed towards specific conference rooms assigned to them according to their area of study. These included such topics as general physics, biochemistry, molecular biology, evolutionarily biology, engineering, and mathematics.

Around noon, each section was ready for its first presenter to take the stand. Attendees consisted of professors, scientists in the field, students, and laboratory professionals. Each presentation was followed by a question and answer period in which the audience had a chance to delve further into the research. Presenters and listeners were encouraged to migrate from one committee to another so all could appreciate and gain knowledge about the plethora of scientific fields represented at the meeting.

Among the approximate 200 undergraduates, ten were Lake Forest College students, representing five of the six distinct labs in the biology department. Each laboratory is specific to its area of study: behavioral ecology, cell physiology, developmental genetics, molecular biology, neuroscience, and public health. Throughout the day, Lake Forest College students were accompanied by professors Pliny Smith and Karen Kirk, and great thanks is owed to both.

Each student excitedly approached the challenge of presenting their summer-long research. Along with the excitement were butterflies in the stomach and nerves; however, Lake Forest College

students rose to the challenge, managing their unease quite professionally and receiving compliments for jobs well done. Professor Kirk put it nicely when she said, "Although there were many good talks in a wide range of topics, the talks done by Lake Forest College students were a cut above." It was clear that Lake Forest College students were fully prepared, determined to show their knowledge and ready to tackle any questions posed to them.

At the end of what seemed to be an endless, but gratifying day, the students gathered together one last time to hear an outstanding keynote presentation titled "Where Credit is Due; The Black Heritage in Technology" by Dr. James E. West, a Research Professor at Johns Hopkins University. His lecture gave insight into the importance of mentors and advisors on the road of every student's scientific career, and the importance of science awareness among the college community today. The Division of Educational Programs at Argonne Laboratories provided a perfect end to the symposium.

The Undergraduate Symposium was a great success and an experience well worth the effort. Students discovered their ability to presenting their research to a scientific community, including professionals within their field. It was a learning experience that promoted research, science, and knowledge. Without a doubt, Lake Forest Students stood out at the conference and were truly the attraction to the main attraction of many of the conference rooms.

Participants:

Alexandra Ayala '09, Shaun Davis '09, Andrew Ferrier '08, Michael Fiske '10, Nengding Wang '09, Shruti Pore '08, Lital Silverman '08, Lavinia Sinitean '08, Stephanie Valtierra '08, and Jennillee Wallace '09.

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