Lake Forest Students Present Their Research at Regional and National Symposia

Michael White
Lake Forest College

Follow this and additional works at: https://publications.lakeforest.edu/eukaryon

Part of the Educational Methods Commons, and the Neuroscience and Neurobiology Commons

Disclaimer:
Eukaryon is published by students at Lake Forest College, who are solely responsible for its content. The views expressed in Eukaryon do not necessarily reflect those of the College. Articles published within Eukaryon should not be cited in bibliographies. Material contained herein should be treated as personal communication and should be cited as such only with the consent of the author.
Lake Forest Students Present Their Research at Regional and National Symposia

Michael White*
Department of Biology
Lake Forest College
Lake Forest, IL 60045

During the fall of 2006, undergraduates from Lake Forest College (LFC), including myself, organized their research into posters and PowerPoint presentations to exhibit at regional and national academic symposia. Specifically, participants conducted laboratory or field research on either Parkinson’s disease, cell volume regulation, RNAi, addiction, or avian biology. Fourteen LFC students presented this great diversity of biological study at the Argonne National Laboratories Undergraduate Symposium in lecture form. Lokesh Kukreja, Michael Zorniak, and myself went a step further and traveled to San Diego, California to present two posters on our fission and budding yeast models of Parkinson’s disease at the American Society for Cell Biology. Whether presenting on the regional or national scale, young scientists from LFC demonstrated their individual research in biology and enjoyed the fellowship of other undergraduate and graduate students.

The Argonne symposium consisted of undergraduate research, organized into mini-symposia consisting of several twenty-minute individual talks. Hundreds of students from the states surrounding Illinois attended. There were many presentations to choose from, and it was interesting to learn about a vast array of topics. I noticed that the structure of each talk differed significantly between colleges, indicating differences in teaching styles. Michael Zorniak said that Argonne, “strengthened my communication skills by challenging me with a diverse audience.” In the morning, a local high school physics teacher conducted a series of insightful demonstrations on the characteristics of shadows. The evening lecture was given by a chemist and, like the first, used a series of colorful chemical reactions to demonstrate the digestive functions of the stomach. Humorously, his chemist’s view of acid digesting food neglected most of the biology behind the process.

On the final day, Michael and I presented our posters on budding yeast and Lokesh on fission yeast. Initially, I felt that the graduate students would be extremely critical of our work but once several visited and discovered we were undergraduates and our research was respectable, their comments were insightful and full of praise. A young scientist from Mayo Graduate School also worked with yeast and gave great suggestions for future experiments, one of which I am currently performing. In addition, all three of us found these conversations very beneficial. This experience increased our confidence and demonstrated that undergraduate research can be presented alongside more advanced studies. When Michael Zorniak was asked what he liked most about attending the ASCB he said, “I was able to interact with scientists from as far as Tokyo, Japan that were interested in the same research questions. Even as an
undergraduate, I was able to propose experiments to graduate students in the same field."

Together, presenting undergraduate research on both regional and international levels, provided others and myself with an indispensable asset to our intellectual growth as well as peer fellowship. Furthermore, it allows students to gather perspective on the broader research community and realize that they are a significant part of it. And of course, a trip to Tijuana adds a little more excitement to an already intriguing experience.

Note: Eukaryon is published by students at Lake Forest College, who are solely responsible for its content. The views expressed in Eukaryon do not necessarily reflect those of the College. Articles published within Eukaryon should not be cited in bibliographies. Material contained herein should be treated as personal communication and should be cited as such only with the consent of the author.