Undergrads share work

Researchers focus on various topics

Mariah Stubbs-Johnson
DeKalb | Undergraduates addressed real-world issues through research while presenting at the annual Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day on Tuesday. Undergraduates who participated in a faculty-mentored research project were able to showcase their work at the event. The programs allow faculty members to get involved with undergraduates in their research and artistry. It allows students to work with faculty on expanding their field of knowledge. The event was held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Holmes Student Center’s Duke Ellington Ballroom.

It was the fourth annual Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day, said Julia Spears, director of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning. "This event started after the Great Journeys Strategic Plan," Spears said. "We thought it would be nice to have all undergraduate students come together.

The Great Journeys Strategic Plan was proposed by NIU President John Peters in 2007 to improve academic success for students. The annual event is important for students, Spears said. "For one, it provides NIU undergraduates with presentation skills they are going to need once they exceed to become graduates," Spears said. "Two, as for the 2020 Vision of becoming a student-centered public research university, this can also help bring students together."

Rachel Trippoli, assistant director of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning, was assisting students at the event. "This is important for the DeKalb and Sycamore community," Trippoli said. "Just to let people know that student research is being conducted by undergraduates.

As participants showed off their research in various topics, judges took the floor to see what the undergraduates conducted over the year. "It’s very enjoyable," said Mandi Wescott, second-year judge of the Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day. "All the research is so interesting and well conducted that it is hard to conduct a winner."

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Julia Spears
Director of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning

Wescott said what each judge was looking for. "We have criteria that are laid out," Wescott said. "Clear presentation is one of them. Is the poster clear and is the explanation clear so that others could understand? Is it original? I also look for if they have a next step such as what is going to happen next after the problem is proposed.

Participants waited by their research boards to present their projects to those who stopped by their spaces. "Basically we are trying to see what the role of p62 is in cellular ‘garbage’ collection and disposal," said biology major Katie Allen. "In other words for brain cancer... We are trying to figure out ways you can better treat this deadly brain cancer."

Allen said it took her a year to gather her research and put things together. Psychology major Tiffani Scott conducted her student research through improving memory for historical text. "My research is mainly from how different reading tasks and writing affect the learning of history," Scott said. "It can help teachers realize what to give students being that history is a hard subject to grasp.

There were many participants and many issues presented through research in this year’s event. Spears said. "Research is the creation of new knowledge," Spears said. "There are no limits."