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NEWS

For Immediate Release

Ouachita natural science students bring back awards from Arkansas INBRE conference

By McKenzie Cranford

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. —Two Ouachita Baptist University natural science students received awards for their presentations at the annual Arkansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) research conference held recently in Fayetteville.

Winning awards were seniors Kelley Ballard, a biology major from Colleyville, Texas, and Baronger Bieger, a biology and English double major from Rockwall, Texas. Bieger was awarded first place in biology poster presentations among the 83 biology posters at the conference and Ballard received second place for her biology oral presentation.

"Kelley and Baronger are both confident and good communicators," noted Dr. Tim Knight, dean of OBU's Patterson School of Natural Sciences. "The faculty worked with them and prepared them, but the students did a great job of actually presenting their work. We are very proud of them!"

In total, 20 Ouachita students gave biology, chemistry and physics presentations alongside students from 27 educational institutions across Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

"Completing a research project requires that the students connect concepts and ideas from many different courses," Knight explained. "The opportunity to attend a conference and present your findings is the icing on the cake."

"The conference affords our students the opportunity to hone their communication skills," added Dr. Marty Perry, OBU's Nell I. Mondy Professor of Chemistry. "Communicating science effectively is an integral piece of the scientific discovery process."

Bieger's research, titled "Effects of Apolipoprotein E on Alternatively Activated Microglia," came out of his research with University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences professor Dr. Stephen Barger.

"Since I'm a relative newcomer to the sciences, getting first place in the biology poster presentations was exciting because it made me feel I have begun to get my scientific feet underneath me," Bieger said.

"Although winning the award was nice, the most rewarding part of the conference was being able to present and discuss my research with like-minded and curious people who use their unique perspective to make brilliant connections and suggestions. What could be more fun?"

Ballard's research presentation, "The Effects of Ajulemic Acid on Cell Viability and Angiogenesis in Ewing's Sarcoma Tumors," was a result of research she performed this summer as part of Ouachita's Patterson Summer Research Program with Dr. Lori Hensley, professor of biology and holder of the J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology.

"It meant so much to get the award after putting much hard work into the research," Ballard said. "I get nervous for public speaking, so this was an attempt to take the fear head on and present the great results we found, which I believe are extremely relevant research."

Other students representing Ouachita at the conference included: Jordan Burt, a senior biology major from Texarkana, Texas; Bailey Chitwood, a senior biology major from North Little Rock, Ark.; Tyler Fugere, a senior biology major from Benton, Ark.; Nathan Hall, a junior biology major and chemistry double major from Jonesboro, Ark.; Brad-Hunter Heird, a senior dietetics and nutrition major from Pine Bluff, Ark.; Jesse Kitchens, a junior biology major from Lewisville, Ark.; Joseph Koon, a senior biology major from Hensley, Ark.; Logan Kuhn, a senior biology major from Little Rock, Ark.; Neelie Lee, a senior biology major from Glenwood, Ark.; Jeb Little, a senior biology major from Warren, Ark.; Trevor Meece, a junior biology and chemistry double major from Arkadelphia, Ark.; Brian Monk, a senior biology major from El Paso, Texas; Alex Morrison, a senior dietetics and nutrition major from Monticello, Ark.; Paige Onyuru, a senior biology and chemistry double major from Hot Springs, Ark.; Rachel Pruett, a senior biology and chemistry double major from Harrison, Ark.; Sarah Rogers, a senior biology major from Camden, Ark.; Colby Smith, a senior biology major from Texarkana, Texas; and Joel Ubeda, a senior biology major from Shreveport, La. Hendrix student Stephen Shrum also presented research he conducted through Ouachita's Patterson Summer Research Program.

In addition to Knight, Hensley and Perry, other professors who served as research mentors include: Dr. Detri Brech, professor of dietetics; Dr. Robert Griffin, associate professor of radiation oncology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; Dr. Tim Hayes, associate professor of chemistry; Dr. Sara Hubbard, assistant professor of chemistry; Dr. Nathan Reyna, associate professor of biology; Dr. Douglas Rhoads, professor of biological sciences at the University of Arkansas; and Dr. Jim Taylor, professor of biology.

For more information, contact Dr. Tim Knight at knight@obu.edu or (870) 245-5528.

PHOTOS OF BALLARD & BIEGER AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

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