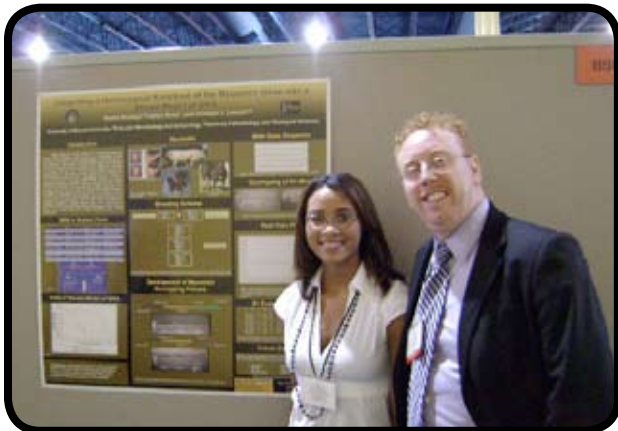


The Deal With Academic Conferences

By John Hendel



MU undergrad *Desirè Buckley* and Mr. *Brian Booton* at ABRCMS

Sooner or later comes that announcement: conference deadline approaching, apply to present your research! Here learn why you should, as well as some recaps from two 2008 conferences, ABRCMS and SACNAS.

Conferences have cachet. In both the academic and professional worlds, conferences are what bring people with similar passions together. For university students, undergraduate or graduate, this is especially important. As some recent MU students expressed, the benefits range from checking out the exhibits, the opportunity to see what's happening outside your immediate sphere, charismatic speakers, and especially the chance to talk to recruiters and to network with the right people, those folks actively engaged in your field of interest.

The formula for conferences is simple: it begins with a call for abstracts or papers a few months in advance and ends with a poster session, where conference participants present their research. People chat, ask questions, and often find themselves making new connections

beneficial to their work. At MU, Life Sciences Week, research days, and the Spring and Summer Undergraduate Forums operate in just this way, which is perfect practice for presenting at professional conferences. Conferences happen all over the country, often centered around a theme or focus.

MU undergraduates have taken advantage of many conferences around the country, sometimes with the financial help of travel grants. In November, four MU undergraduates traveled to conferences as far away as Costa Mesa, California, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The conference subjects ranged from psychology to chemical engineering, to speech-language issues to immunology. One former EXPRESS student even attended a conference in Iceland in August!

This fall, groups of graduate and undergraduate students traveled to the

ABRCMS and SACNAS conferences to present. ABRCMS, the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, attracts 2,600 people: 1,650 undergraduates, 280 grad students, 30 postdoctoral scientists, and 750 faculty and administrators, according to the conference's Web site.

This year the conference took place in Orlando, Florida from November 5th through the 8th. 10 MU undergrads, 7 grad students, and five faculty members and staff attended.

"I got a much better understanding of what research and development in the pharmacology field demanded," says MU undergraduate Kenneth Bennett. "It was helpful to speak with professionals that do

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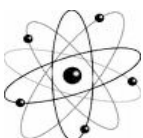
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Ph.D Comic:

In need of a laugh? Check out the comic on page 3!



Be in the Know

Achievements, News and Announcements for our community members



Dr. Candace Wakefield visits with Dr. Blockus during 2008 Homecoming Weekend. Dr. Wakefield is an EXPRESS alumna, conducted summer research with Dr. George Kracke (Anesthesiology) and Dr. Mark Kirk (Biological Sciences), and graduated from MU in 1995. She earned her dental degree from Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine and served as chief resident of the Howard University Department of Pediatric Dentistry. She owns her own pediatric dental clinic in St. Louis (www.thechildrensdentalzone.com) and is an adjunct faculty member at SIU School of Dental Medicine.



“Greetings from Washington DC! I had lunch with EXPRESS and peer mentor alumna **Lauren Lewis** today (12/4/08). Lauren is a first year med student at George Washington University. She took a break from her studying and met me for lunch. The White House was a half way point for us to meet, and while we were there we took a snapshot of the viewing stands going in for the Inauguration Parade. They are massive structures with concrete, steel beams and lots of wood. An earthquake wouldn't shake them down! Street vendors have been selling Obama t-shirts and First Family t-shirts on every other street corner. Lauren is doing well. We talked about how different it is to live in Washington compared to Columbia (high rent, lots of people, no Wal-Mart) and caught up with each other. It was a great visit.” ~Dr. Linda Blockus, director of the Office of Undergraduate Research

Website of the Month

<http://www.allconferences.com/>

This is a directory focusing on conferences, conventions, trade shows, exhibits, workshops, events and business meetings, a unique search directory that serves users looking for specific information on conference or event information while at the same time provides services to the meeting planners, such as online registrations and payment processing.

Final '08 Photos

Our last photos of the year feature EXPRESS students and their visit with Cornell's Dr. Bynoe as well as the Nexus graduate students.



Meet Grad Student Roderick Pomfrey



***Where did you earn your undergraduate degree?**

Southern University at New Orleans

***Where are you from?**

9th Ward, New Orleans East

***Is anyone in your family a scientist?**

Not really, but my family atmosphere was very scientific

***What led you to Mizzou for your graduate work?**

A supplemental stipend of \$3000 that was more than my other graduate school choices. Former mentors Dr. Murty Kambhampati and (Dr. Carl Johnson a former Mizzou alumni).

***Whose lab are you working in and what are you doing?**

Dr. Silvia S. Jurisson. My research is in nuclear medicine. We try to make radiopharmaceuticals- drugs which contain a radioactive atom. I work in an extremely interdisciplinary area of research. Our ultimate goal is to publish scholarly literature which is supported by definitive data in hopes of FDA approval and patents. We rely on data obtained from both simple techniques and instruments that cost in the range of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

***What is your degree program (dept) at MU? Masters or Ph.D?**

Ph.D Radiochemistry

***What is the best thing about Mizzou/Columbia?**

Mizzou is a very rich place. This University has a vast surplus of resources. Additionally, the surrounding community is also rich. Being from New Orleans East, the #1 thing I like about Mizzou/Columbia is the low murder rate, and the prevalence of tolerance of interracial couples and peoples' differences

***What advice do you have for younger students?**

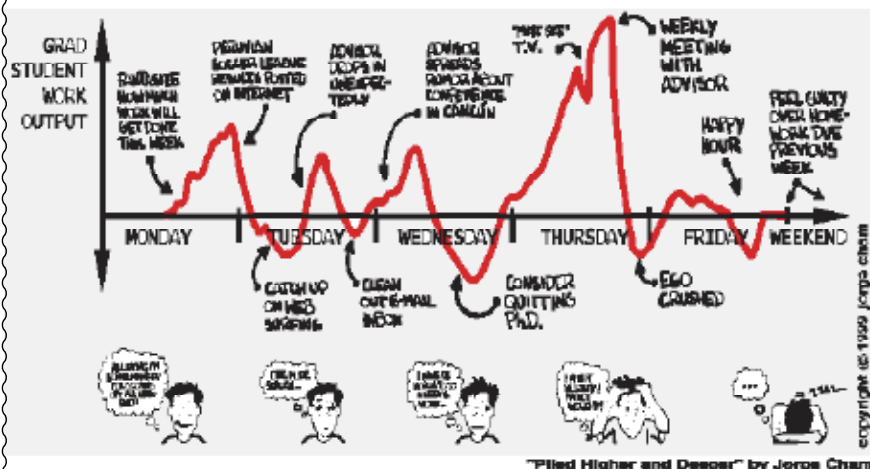
Life is what you make it. You have the power to shape some things around you, but you are not in control of anything. Study hard, keep GOD first, and give more than you expect to receive, but remember Galacians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows is what he reaps."

***What is one thing about you that people might not know?**

My city is not anything like it was before Katrina, and I intend to return to make a powerful positive contribution.

***What's the next big step for you?** Graduation is my immediate focus, but I've got to take 1, 2, or 3 reactions at a time. In the meantime outreach is good to do. We need more blacks in science.

WHERE ARE YOU?



Cardiovascular Day

Date: February 16

Location: Reynolds Alumni Center

Abstract Deadline: January 26

Contact: Melissa Peterson,
petersonm@health.missouri.edu

www.phdcomics.com

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what I want to do.”

Many of the students expressed an appreciation for the conference and the wider range of opportunities they became aware of after dealing firsthand with recruiters, faculty, and scientists.

“ABRCMS opened my eyes to the various ways to achieve a goal,” explains undergrad Desirè Buckley. “You can take as many routes as you want based upon your personal needs and wants...I have now learned a lot about true testimonials from current participants of various programs. I think I’m more aware of opportunities and better prepared for my next step.”

Several students also attended the SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science) on October 9-12 in Salt Lake City, Utah. The poster submission deadline for the 2009 SACNAS conference already approaches, set for May 1st, 2009.

Other local opportunities to present on the MU campus include Cardiovascular Day on February 16, Nutrition and Exercise Research Week on March 31, Life Sciences Week on April 13-17, of course the Undergraduate Research Spring Forum on April 27, and the 26th Annual Missouri Plant Symposium on May 27-29. More information on those events and their abstract deadlines can be found at undergradresearch.missouri.edu.

Beyond the networking, speakers, and presenting, the conference experience marks a rich addition to any resume and is especially relevant for any students considering graduate degrees.



What is the NEXUS newsletter anyway?

Our purpose is to create a network for minority undergraduate students, graduate students, post-bac students, post-docs and faculty in the life sciences on this campus. We believe that purposefully creating a network and community will have several benefits: (1) younger students can benefit from older scientists through networking and role modeling; (2) older scientists can have the satisfaction of helping those younger through the pipeline, all members can benefit from mutual support; (3) the community can work together to host speakers of common interest; (4) information on programs, grants and other opportunities can be effectively shared; and (5) the university can take pride in the ongoing campus efforts to diversify the biomedical/life sciences research workforce from the undergraduate to faculty level.

Nexus (nex·us n)

1. a connection associating two or more people or things
2. a group or series of connected individuals or things
3. the center or focus of something
4. a specialized area of the cellular membrane that helps cells to communicate or adhere

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The Office of Undergraduate Research, located at 150 Bond Life Sciences Center, composes and designs the newsletter. If you would like to contribute something to the newsletter (award announcement, science joke, story, etc.), contact graduate assistant John Hendel at JDHendel@gmail.com or 314-920-5880.

