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4-26-2011

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University Relations, "Sixteen Morris students attend the National American Chemical Society Meeting" (2011). *Campus News Archive*. 703.

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Sixteen Morris students attend the National American Chemical Society Meeting

Summary: The Morris group was one of the largest contingencies representing one college—large or small—to attend.

(April 26, 2011)-Sixteen University of Minnesota, Morris students traveled to Anaheim, California, in March 2011 to attend the National American Chemical Society (ACM) Meeting. The Morris group was one of the largest contingencies representing one college—large or small—to attend. Under the theme of “Chemistry of Natural Resources,” the Morris students, Jennifer Goodnough, associate professor of chemistry, and Ted Pappenfus, associate professor of chemistry, presented research, viewed presentations, listened to lectures, and networked, including interacting with Morris alumni who also attended.

The trip to the spring national convention is a long-standing Morris tradition, according to Goodnough. “The first trip to the ACS national convention was led by Jim Olson, professor emeritus of chemistry. It was Olson who decided it was important for students to be exposed to the unique and broad opportunities offered by the national meeting and helped establish a culture of attending the national meeting rather than smaller regional meetings.” Since that time more than 100 Morris students have made the annual trek, most of whom presented undergraduate research conducted on the Morris campus.

Student presentations

Deborah K. Schneiderman '11, Luverne, Matthew D. Lovander '12, Willmar, presented “Oligothiophene tetracyanobutadienes as alternative donor-acceptor materials” authored with Pappenfus. Schneiderman also presented “Assessing the bioenergy potential and genetic diversity of yeast strains in Lincoln, NE” authored with Steven D. Harris, Ph.D.

Guinevere P.E. Bitker '11, Le Sueur, presented “Isoergic hydrogen bonding in substituted acetic acid dimers” authored with Professor Jim Togeas.

Rebecca J. Lindquist '11, Plymouth, presented “Carbon dioxide adsorption on zinc oxide nanomaterials” authored with Chia-Ming Wu and Vicky H. Grassian, Ph.D.

Alex T. Madsen '11, North Branch, presented “Teaching electrochemistry: Addressing misconceptions by the development of educational materials that promote conceptual understanding” authored with Associate Professor Maria Oliver-Hoyo and Sorangel Rodriguez, graduate student.

Josie Skala '11, North Mankato, presented “Effects of temperature and concentration of Hofmeister series ions on hydrogen bonding in liquid water” authored with Goodnough.

Rachel Harstad '11, Hampton, presented “Semi-empirical study of the effects of temperature on hydrogen bonding strength and liquid salt water dynamics” authored with Goodnough.

Elizabeth Vold '11, Rice, and Yehia Khalifa presented "Science Sensations: A sensational program by the University of Minnesota, Morris Chapter," and Carly R. Dukart '11, Lakeville, Stephanie L. Ranzau, and Karl Schliep '12, Howard Lake presented "University of Minnesota, Morris ACS: A successful student chapter" both authored with Togeas. The Morris Chemistry Club received the ACS Commendable Chapter Report award during the conference.

Ryan E. Koehn '11, Willmar, Jennifer A. Schmidt '12, St. Cloud, presented "Renewable energy and sustainable chemistry across the undergraduate chemistry curriculum" authored with Pappenfus, Professor Nancy E. Carpenter, Professor Timothy J. Soderberg, and Caleb Power, St. Paul, and also "PBC-DFT: An efficient method to calculate energy band gaps for conducting polymers used in solar cells" authored with Pappenfus and Joseph D. Alia, Ph.D.

Students Chris Droske '11, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and Amanda Dunbar '11, Rochester, also attended the conference. Alumni who attended included Mandy Albrecht '08, Notre Dame grad student, Bess Vlasisavljevich '07, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities grad student, and Ed McIntee '92, St. John's University associate professor of chemistry.

Gifts and grants support ACS opportunity

Funding for attending the event was provided by a number of grants, awards, and organizations. Gifts from alumni to the Division of Science and Mathematics helped fund some of the trip. As the inaugural recipient of the Chemistry Undergraduate Research Fund award, Bitker's travel to present research was supported in part by that fund. Harstad's travel to present research was supported in part by a Bos Research Award. The Chemistry Club received a National ACS Fund travel grant. Schmidt, Koehn, and Lovander's travel to present their research with Pappenfus was funded in part through a grant from the University's Initiative for Renewable Energy. A Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Talent Expansion Program (STEP) grant funded Skala's travel to presented research. The University of Minnesota, Morris Commission on Women provided a grant for the 11 women conference participants to attend the Women in Industry Breakfast hosted by the ACS Women's Chemist Committee.

ACS is a congressionally chartered independent membership organization, which represents professionals at all degree levels and in all fields of chemistry and sciences that involve chemistry. More than 15, 000 members attended the national meeting in March 2011, including more than 4,000 graduate and undergraduate students.

"The ACS has been ahead of its peer organizations in terms of providing opportunities for undergraduates. They provide specific programming and events for the undergraduate students which in turn benefits the graduate schools and industries where these students end up in a year or two," said Goodnough. "What is especially impressive about our Morris student presentations is that they are often mistaken for graduate students."

Photo below from left, row one: Pappenfus, Schneiderman, Bitker, Madsen, Schliep, Ranzau, Droske, Schmidt, Albrecht, Lovander, row two: Koehn, Khalifa, Vlasisavljevich, Dunbar, Skala, Harstad, Goodnough, Dukart, Lindquist, Vold

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