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Program seeks to display student research

Forum highlights research of Clemson faculty and students throughout the month of April.

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For the second year in a row, April will be Clemson's Focus on Research Month.

The program, started by Frankie Felder, the associate dean of graduate students, began 10 years ago as a one-day event with just a poster forum. It has turned into a month-long celebration of research on campus.

When Felder arrived at Clemson, she noticed there was a lot of loyalty to the University, but it was mostly towards the athletics department. "I thought ... this is fabulous that people are so loyal to Clemson athletics; I wonder if there is anything I could do to get a fan base of people excited about coming to Clemson to see what we do on the academic side," she said.

Felder began this program as a way to create more interest in academics. "We needed to do something to bring forward to the public eye what graduate students do at Clemson," she said.

About seven years ago, Calhoun Honors College asked to have its students participate in the research forum along with the graduate students. Soon after, departments from across campus began to participate in the forum as well.

"One of the things I like most about it is that it's a huge collaborative effort across campus," said Dana Irvin, assistant director of Calhoun Honors College.

The program has continued to grow over the past ten years. The first year there were about 66 students who participated in the forum and now more than 200 students participate. The program has gotten so large it had to relocate to LittleJohn Coliseum.

The poster forum is a contest where graduate, honors and undergraduate students create posters to showcase their research.

The posters are displayed at an expo in LittleJohn Coliseum, and the students are there to discuss their research with the public. The posters are then judged within each college and awards are given out.

Select posters will be displayed in libraries across the state and in a few high schools.

The program is reaching out to high school students across the state by opening labs. Faculty and graduate students will host tours of research lab facilities. "The idea here is for high school students to begin to make some real connections," said Felder.

Some of the facilities participating in this year's tours are driving simulation lab, photomechanics lab, computer assisted phone interviewing lab and the wind load test facility.

A new event this year and special project of Calhoun Honors College is the Brainstorm. Middle school students and parents and teachers from area schools get to participate



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANA IRVIN

LOOK WHAT I DID: Ned Smith presents his research ideas to, from left to right, Mary Darnell, Jill Smyth, and Professor Mary Palmer Dargan, ASLA.

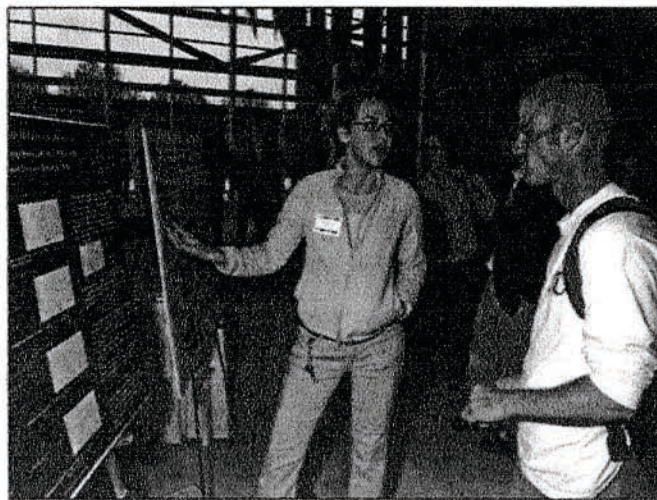


PHOTO COURTESY OF DANA IRVIN

SHOWING OFF: The poster forum will be held in Little John Coliseum this year due to the number of entries. Posters will be judged separately within different colleges.

in activities hosted by different departments.

Workshops will be held for faculty and staff throughout the month, and there will be several award ceremonies including one held by Clemson University Research Foundation and the Rising Stars Reception.

Research, Felder says is significant to the University. Besides attracting some of the top undergraduate students, she says it will be what catapults the university into the top 20.