



Conference to showcase research, inspiration of a new generation of R.I. scientists

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Research networks, universities pool to promote growth of research in RI

KINGSTON, R.I. – July 29, 2010 – The scientific conference being held at the University of Rhode Island on Friday, July 30, isn't standard fare in the academic world. Instead of presentations by seasoned researchers and faculty members who are well over thirty years old, this one features the fresh voices of an entirely new generation of scientists. The presenters are undergraduate students who have been involved in an intensive high level, grant-supported research experience for 10-weeks in laboratories with mentors statewide.

The majority of the students were awarded competitive internship positions by the Rhode Island's IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (RI-INBRE) and the Rhode Island Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) and this is their conference, the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows Conference.

The 94 fellows presenting are not just from URI. They are from all colleges in the State of Rhode Island -- Brown University, Providence College, Salve Regina University, Roger Williams University, Rhode Island College, Bryant University, and the Community College of Rhode Island.

Free and open to the public, the conference will be held at the University's Thomas M. Ryan Center, One Lincoln Almond Plaza, Kingston Campus. Set up on the concourse, students will present their multidisciplinary research findings using posters that graphically depict their results. The first session runs from 9:15-10:45 a.m. and the second session runs from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Opening remarks begin at 9 a.m. and feature:

- Elizabeth Roberts, Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor
- Vinny Browning, Senior Manager, Quality Analytical Laboratories, Amgen
- Donald DeHayes, URI Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Peter Alfonso, RI EPSCoR Project Director & URI Vice President for Research and Economic Development
- Zahir Shaikh, RI-INBRE Program Director, URI Pharmacy Professor

The RI-INBRE and EPSCoR Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program offers summer research opportunities to undergraduate students who are considering careers in biomedical or behavioral research. The goals are to expose undergraduates to laboratory research and to familiarize them with the opportunities that exist for careers in biomedical and behavioral research. Students receive a stipend for their work.

The shared goals of EPSCoR and INBRE are to promote and support scientific research in Rhode Island.

In addition to leading the undergraduate research fellows program, the INBRE and EPSCoR have established core laboratories for work in pharmacology, molecular toxicology, genomics, proteomics and marine life sciences. They have also supported efforts at participating schools to enhance their scientific research capacity by hiring faculty and graduate students, purchasing equipment and running lecture programs.

INBRE, which focuses on biomedical research, is funded by \$42 million in grants from the National Institutes of Health.

EPSCoR is a joint effort of the state's 11 institutions of higher education, and is funded through a four-year, \$6.75 million National Science Foundation grant.

Student research is covering a range of biomedical, life sciences and marine research topics from things like conversion of oil extracted from algae into biodiesel fuel to research looking into mercury accumulation in brain, muscle and liver tissue in fish; to a study of the elderly and addiction, a strategy for sensitive electrochemical detection of cancer to determining the quality of Aquidneck Island's watersheds, to amplifying the brain's electric potentials, and to storytelling as a therapeutic technique for recovery. Students are partnered with faculty mentors from each institution and this conference is the first presentation of their results.

For more details about the research, view the [program online](#).