



May 1, 2017

Students and faculty present research in Chicago

PLATTEVILLE, Wis. – Two students and two faculty members from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville presented their research at the 89th annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association April 20-22 in Chicago, Illinois.

Presenters included Sakara Wages, a senior psychology major and political science minor from Chicago; Chelsea Washburn, a senior double psychology and criminal justice major from Keokuk, Iowa; Dr. Julie Hill, assistant professor of psychology; and Dr. Joan Riedle, professor of psychology.

“Research experiences like conducting independent study projects, presenting research at a conference and also attending a conference give undergraduates the opportunity to strengthen and refine key skills such as critical thinking and written and oral communication,” said Hill. “Throughout the research process, students must be creative and think critically to overcome the unforeseen obstacles that always arise.”

Wages presented “Religiosity, Parental Relationship Qualities, and Depressive Symptoms During Emerging Adulthood,” a research project that she, Washburn and Kristen Kopp, who graduated from UW-Platteville with a Bachelor of Science in psychology in December 2016, had been working on since last fall. Hill was faculty mentor for the project.

The three researchers investigated if the relationships between religiosity, parental relationship qualities and positive youth outcomes found in early and mid-adolescence continue to exist during the early college years. They found that depressive symptoms were predicted by the three-way interaction of parental instrumental aid (how much parents help their college-aged children fix

problems), intrinsic religiosity (how much internal motivation a person has for living life according to religious teachings and maintaining a close relationship with God) and biological sex.

“In addition to viewing fresh emerging ideas, I especially enjoyed networking with such curious peers,” said Wages. “I made new friends while learning new concepts.”

Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology, of which all presenters are members, organized the poster session in which Wages and Washburn presented. Wages received a Psi Chi travel award to help pay for the expense of attending the conference.

Washburn presented **“Framing and Perception of Eyewitness Testimony.”** Her research explored how wording the same information differently can affect people’s perceptions of eyewitness testimony. **She found that participants who received information in a positive way thought courts should put more weight on eyewitness testimony than those participants who received the information negatively or no information at all. Washburn received a Psi Chi Regional Research Award for her poster.**

“Going to MPA was a really important experience for me since I want to continue in a career in research,” said Washburn. “It was nice to see and learn about other projects people have done and what new things are happening in the world of psychology.”

“Chelsea's combined interests in criminal justice, social psychology and psychological research led to her conducting a project on a criminal justice topic (eyewitness testimony) from a social psychology perspective (framing of information by focusing on what could be gained versus what could be lost),” said Riedle, Washburn’s faculty mentor for the project. “In the process, she began what could become an ongoing program of research and she shared her findings with the academic community. These experiences and skills should serve her well in graduate school.”

Hill said that professional conferences give students the opportunity to practice and refine their written communication skills, both when they apply to present and when they make their poster, as well as their oral communication and networking skills while presenting and attending the conference. “Through these experiences, undergrads not only add to their résumés experiences that make them stand out, but they also gain and practice valuable skills that will help them in both graduate school and their future careers,” she said.

Hill presented her research in a session organized by the Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Her research focused on a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project she conducted during the fall 2016 semester in her Introduction to Experimental Psychology course. She sought to make abstract research methods concepts more concrete and gave students the opportunity to practice the techniques using instructional manipulatives that she created. Hill said that the feedback from students was positive; most students enjoyed the manipulatives and felt they aided their learning.

Written by: Laurie A. Hamer, Communications Specialist, College of Liberal Arts and Education, 608-342-6191, hamerl@uwplatt.edu