

Metroplex Day showcases research from area schools

Written by Erika Rizo

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Hundreds of research posters were displayed Friday in the University Center Bluebonnet Ballroom for the third annual Metroplex Day.

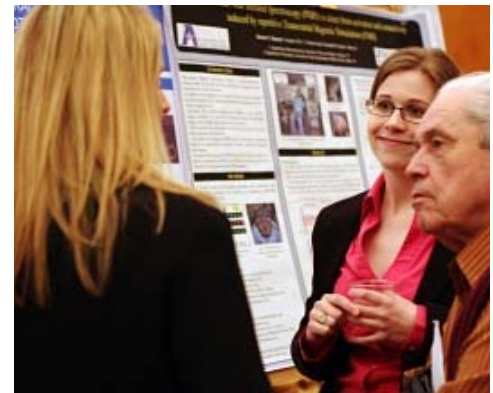
The goal was to stimulate thoughts about scientific opportunities and establish collaborations among UT Arlington, UT-Dallas and UT-Southwestern Medical Center, according to the Metroplex Day Web site.

President James Spaniolo said the annual event is an opportunity to share ideas.

"Lawmakers are stunned when I tell them about the powerhouse of intellectual wealth here," he said during the opening address. "The optical imaging lab at UT-Southwestern is a prime example of that collaboration."

The day included a research poster contest and research-related lectures.

Biology assistant professor Cedric Feschotte lectured on the evolutionary history of transposable elements found in humans' and other mammals' genomes, pieces of DNA that can move and replicate within the cell. He explained how people determine the impact they have had on shaping the



Bioengineering postdoctoral fellow Jennifer Seifert, left, speaks to bioengineering doctoral student Jennifer Stearns and mathematics professor emeritus Irinel Dragan on Friday at Metroplex Day poster session in the University Center Bluebonnet Ballroom. Seifert is supervising Stearns on her research regarding the evaluation of neuroprotective treatments. (The Shorthorn: Monica Lop

architecture and function of the genome over the past 100 million years.

“The talks and poster session provided a great opportunity to showcase the exciting research carried out on the three campuses and to foster future collaborations among these institutions,” Feschotte said.

Other UT System professors also gave lectures. Psychology Department chairman Robert J. Gatchel said about 275 people registered, and there was record 120 posters. He said judges indicated the scientific posters were the most they’ve had.

The posters were judged on the research and the display, with a \$200 cash prize awarded to each of the top three.

The winners were: psychology senior Samara Bobzean for “Sex Differences Molecular Changes and Behavioral Effects of Cocaine in Long Evans Rats,” bioengineering doctoral student Jennifer Stearns for “Evaluation of Neuroprotective Treatment Using Multielectrode Arrays and an Animal Model of Spinal Cord Injury” and bioengineering graduate student Aydin Farajidav for “Real-Time In-Vivo Recognition and Inhibition of Pain.”

Bobzean’s poster was with psychology assistant professor Linda Perrotti. The poster summarized a possible molecular mechanism and the behavioral effects of cocaine in laboratory rats under a conditional place reference paradigm.

The dose-dependent changes in areas of the brain associated with reward could be a mechanism by which environmental cues have an effect on drug relapse, she said.

“I could not have done it if there was nobody there to teach me the techniques,” Bobzean said. “It’s an area where it takes a big team of people do it correctly.”

Farajidavar’s poster was with electrical engineering professor Jung-Chih Ch

and psychology associate professor Yuan Peng. It was about pain management and was a result of collaborations between the Bioengineering, Electrical Engineering and Psychology departments.

“Clinical studies have shown that spinal or brain neurostimulation could significantly relieve pain,” Farajidavar said. “Many existing neurostimulators work as an open loop, hence they depend on the patients’ or physicians’ comprehension of pain.”

He demonstrated a system that can recognize pains from spinal cord records and control pain by brain stimulation.

Recording, stimulating and signal processing were integrated in a real-time loop.

College of Science Associate Dean Krishnan Rajeshwar said the event was a success.

“The name of the game here is collaboration rather than competition. After all three campuses belong to the UT-umbrella system,” Rajeshwar said. “We like to foster an atmosphere in the college where both undergrads and grads can engage in high-quality research. The undergrads especially get to spend quality time with their faculty research mentors.”

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