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The Society for the Promotion of Undergraduate Research
Justin Kolasa, President

RESEARCH. That word was more intimidating to me than my first college chemistry exam only a few short years ago. Now when I hear or see it, I am only able to think of the knowledge gained, the discoveries being made, and the future understanding that will certainly be acquired. It is a word that I once shunned in ignorance, but now embrace as a way of life and learning. This change in attitude has not been just a unique experience for me, but it has also been felt by many others who have wished to expand their knowledge and develop a deeper level of understanding. At SPUR (The Society for the Promotion of Undergraduate Research), we serve to bridge the gap between curiosity and involvement for other such undergraduates. Along those same principles, we bring together all those at UK who participate in such scholarly activity to provide mentoring, opportunities to network, and arrange various meetings for social interaction.

Under the guidance of Dr. Robert S. Tannenbaum, the SPUR organization was founded in 2004. The ideologies of the four student founders were established during a class workshop to form a type of union among students involved in scholarly activities. The Society initially focused directly on increasing the population of students participating in research, but we have since expanded our efforts to play a more active role once the student has become involved. Today, just as before, the mission of this organization is fulfilled through the great passion and drive each officer and member possesses. In accordance with undergraduate feelings, we have received significant support from the offices of eUreKa! and UKURP. Without such aid, all of our achievements would not be possible.

Entering the spring of 2008, there are many evident changes within our organization. As the only returning officer and senior, I am very proud to say the future leadership of SPUR is more promising than ever. This group of officers has worked more diligently than any I have witnessed during past organizational experiences. Their efforts are beginning to become more apparent as we start to achieve many of the goals we listed when we first entered our respective positions. The development of a completely new website, increased enrollment at our member gatherings, and an early start on this year’s Showcase of Undergraduate Scholars are just a few of our most prominent accomplishments thus far. As I end my term as SPUR President, I will have no reservations or concerns regarding the future of this group, and I can only be grateful to have had such an incredible opportunity.

As I previously mentioned, we have begun work on the 3rd annual Showcase of Undergraduate Scholars. Looking back to the development of the first Showcase, I could not be more excited with the ever-increasing involvement of undergraduates not only presenting their work, but also with those who put their time and energy toward the design and management of the actual event. Previous Showcases have been catered by students in the Department of Nutritional and Food Sciences, the floor plan and lighting was by students in the College of Interior Design, and the presentation of the Oswald awards. This year we plan to include UK’s Intercollegiate Debate Program in the opening ceremonies, which promises to be a wonderful event all its own. In its inaugural year the Showcase had over 120 participants, with last year’s reaching 150. This year we are continuing to grow and increase the number of student presenters from all areas varying from the fine arts to chemistry. This year’s Showcase will take place on Wednesday, April 23, 2008, and we look forward to seeing you there.

I would also like to recognize Dr. Tannenbaum, Evie Russell, and the AMSTEMM staff for all the time they contribute and direction they provide to the SPUR organization. It is greatly appreciated.