

# RESEARCH BRIEFS

## GSKYTEACH: PREPARING MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHERS FOR HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS



Roger Pankratz

Thanks to a \$5 million grant WKU received from the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Roger Pankratz and Dr. Vicki Metzgar

are recruiting applicants for the innovative GSKyTeach program. Dr. Pankratz, GSKyTeach Executive Director, and Dr. Metzgar, Program Director, plan to select the first cohort of twenty students by March, and begin the year-long training in June 2010. The grant is funded for five years.

In partnership with the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) in Louisville and WKU's Ogden College of Science and Engineering, the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences established the teacher residency program for graduate students, called GSKyTeach, to prepare and place new math and science teachers in high-need schools. GSKyTeach's primary

purpose is to improve teaching and learning in math and science in underperforming schools.



GSKyTeach is a graduate version of WKU's new and highly-innovative SKyTeach program that prepares science and mathematics majors for inquiry teaching and learning. A unique feature of the program is the use of the high school classroom as a laboratory for learning to teach under the guidance of Mentor and Master Teachers.

College graduates nationwide with majors or the equivalent in each of



Vicki Metzgar & David Erbach

the three content areas (mathematics, physics, and chemistry) will work alongside Mentor Teachers and receive instruction from Master Teachers as they learn to teach in high-need high schools. Teacher residents will be paid \$30,000 plus benefits during their year of preparation and will complete a Master of Arts in Education degree from Western Kentucky University with teaching credentials.

After their year in residency and preparation to teach, candidates will be employed as full-time, certified teachers in the Jefferson County Public Schools and must commit to teaching three years in a JCPS high-need high school. Teacher residents will continue to receive ongoing support from a mentoring team consisting of a Master Teacher in their content area, their high school principal, and WKU GSKyTeach faculty.

To read more about GSKyTeach, or to apply to participate in the program, visit the web site at <http://edtech.wku.edu/gskyteach>. ■



**THE WKU STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE:  
SUPPORTING A TRADITION OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**



Rodney King

Western Kentucky University has a long tradition of encouraging and supporting student engagement.

February 2010

marked the 40th annual WKU Student Research Conference.

The roots of this conference can be traced to the strong tradition of student engagement created by the WKU chapter of Sigma Xi, a national scientific research society dedicated to promoting the research enterprise, fostering integrity in science and engineering, and strengthening the public's understanding of science for the purpose of improving the human condition.

For many years, students engaged in scientific research at WKU showcased their accomplishments and perfected their presentation and public speaking skills at the annual Sigma Xi student research conference. The successful tradition established by this conference was a strong foundation on which to launch a new engagement initiative.

In 2007, Dr. Barbara Burch, WKU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, established the Student Research Council (SRC), a standing university committee charged with coordinating an annual WKU student research conference with broad appeal. For the first time, all academic disciplines were encouraged to present their scholarly activities and creative work to the academic community. That year twenty six different departments from across the WKU campus were represented. The SRC has continued to build and improve this new tradition.

Dr. Rodney King, Chair of the Student Research Council, explained the value of the conference:

"Students who participate in the WKU student research conference have been engaged in hands-on research and other scholarly and creative activities under the guidance of a faculty mentor.

They come together to share their accomplishments through oral presentations, poster presentations, and displays of their creative work. The WKU student research conference is a unique opportunity to showcase the talents of WKU's students and the rich variety of scholarly and creative activities in which they are involved."

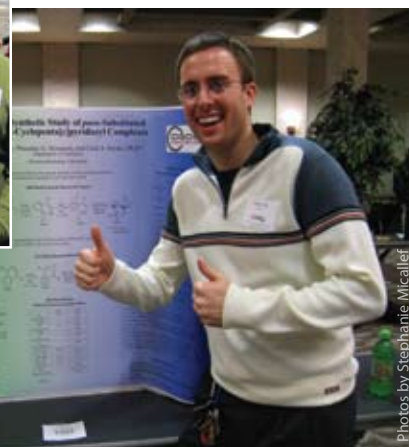
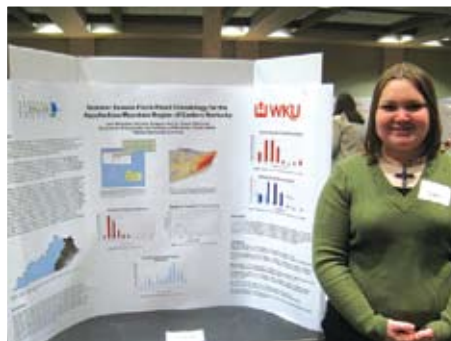
WKU graduate Ali Wright, who studied with Dr. King, said of her participation in an earlier conference, "As an undergraduate, the student research conference was one of the first places where I presented my research. This experience helped me learn how to present research and gain confidence as a speaker. I was also able to discuss my research with knowledgeable faculty. In addition,

the conference allowed me to learn about ongoing research in other labs and departments at the university."

Another WKU alumna, Katharine Stewart, stated, "Overall the experience helped prepare me for graduate school, and I would recommend it to anyone thinking about pursuing a graduate degree."

The organization of the WKU Student Research Conference is a collaborative effort. The conference is sponsored by the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, College of Health and Human Services, Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, Gordon Ford College of Business, Graduate Studies and Research, Potter College of Arts and Letters, Ogden College of Science and Engineering, Honors College, Student Government Association, University College, Bowling Green Community College, University Senate, the WKU chapter of Sigma Xi, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Provost's Office through a Provost's Initiatives for Excellence grant.

Learn more at [www.wku.edu/studentresearch](http://www.wku.edu/studentresearch).



Photos by Stephanie McCallie