

6 April, 2022

## SWOSU Biology Students and Tri Beta Chapter Earn Awards at South Central Convention



The SWOSU chapter of the Tri Beta Biological Honor Society was recognized as the Outstanding Chapter for District 1 at the recent South Central Tri Beta Convention. Among those attending were (from left): Joe Alcuitas, Nick Bauer, Megan Strotman, Payden Farnsley, Trey Cossey, Bryler Atchley, Uzziah Urquiza, Makayla Hicks, Dr. Vanessa Macias (keynote speaker), Andrew Trieu, Saraya Hunt, Annabelle Hawkins, Emily Foss and Ryan Agyemang.

Twelve Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) biology students recently presented their research findings at the 2022 Beta Beta Beta (Tri Beta) National Biological Honor Society South Central Region Convention.

Ten universities from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas had students participate in the annual convention. The SWOSU chapter, Delta Sigma, was recognized as the Outstanding Chapter for District 1, which includes chapters from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana.

Delta Sigma served as co-sponsors for the convention and had the honor of selecting the keynote speaker—Dr. Vanessa Macias from the University of North Texas who presented “Genetic Engineering and Small RNAs in Mosquitoes: On Discovery and Building Effective Tools in the Dark.”

SWOSU student Uzziah Urquiza of Guymon won first place for the Frank G. Brooks Award for Outstanding Oral Presentation. Additionally, Emily Foss of Elk City, Trey Cossey of Yukon, Nick Bauer of Guymon, and Bryler Atchley of Clinton won first, second, third, and honorable mention, respectively, for the John C. Johnson Award for Outstanding Poster Presentation.

Urquiza’s presentation was “Investigation of the molecular mechanisms underlying the cytotoxicity of novel lactate dehydrogenase A inhibitors against human pancreatic cancer.” His mentor for this work was Dr. Pragya Sharma, assistant professor in the SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences.

Foss’ poster was “Identification and Characterization of Bacterial Carbonic Anhydrases for Enzyme Accelerated Carbon Capture and Sequestration.” Her mentor for this work was Dr. Vijay Somalinga, assistant professor in the SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences.

Cossey’s poster was “Detecting Variations in Microbial Concentrations in Oklahoma Lakes.” His mentor for this work was Dr. Gina McGrane, associate professor in the SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences.

Bauer’s poster was “High Resolution Crystal Structure of Ro0101, a Dodecameric Dps-like Protein from *Rhodococcus jostii*”. His mentor for this work was Dr. Somalinga.

Atchley’s poster was “Syringafactin Increases Membrane Permeability in Gram-Negative Bacteria.” His mentor for the work was Dr. McGrane

Other SWOSU students presenting were: Ryan Agyemang, Joe Alcuitas, Annabelle Hawkins, Makayla Hicks, Saraya Hunt, Payden Farnsley and Megan Strotman. Also in attendance was SWOSU student Andrew Trieu, who served as the SWOSU chapter representative.

First place winners will receive financial support to attend the 2022 Tri Beta National Convention in Oklahoma City, which will also celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this honor society.