

FVSU students win first place awards at research conference

By ChaNae Bradley, public information specialist

Agricultural Communications Department

Three FVSU National Science Foundation STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) scholars won first place awards during the 10th Anniversary of the NSF Historically Black Colleges and Universities Undergraduate Program's 2009 National Research Conference in Washington D.C. Oct. 29-Nov 1.

Alyssa Moore, a FVSU junior biology major, won first place poster award in the biological sciences category. Charlie Ponder III, a FVSU senior biology major, won first place oral presentation in the environmental science category. Also Daniel Ogbefho, a FVSU senior plant science biotechnology major, won first place poster award in the ecology, environmental and earth science category.

Both oral and poster presentations represented compiled research conducted on campus or in summer research programs. The oral presentations were five to 10 minute PowerPoint presentations, while posters were on display in an auditorium with the student on hand to answer questions. Each presentation was critiqued by judges and audiences members with impromptu questions.

Moore said she was excited about her award and is glad she could represent FVSU.

Ponder said he spent many hours working on the research he presented. "The project I presented has prepared me for graduate school, and attending this conference allows me and the students to see the different opportunities for STEM majors," Ponder said.

Ogbefho added, "These conferences can open doors of opportunity for minority students. Winning this award motivates me to do more research."

Dr. Sarwan Dhir, director of FVSU's Center for Biotechnology and an associate professor of biotechnology, said he brings his students to conferences such as this to strengthen their academics.

"Research conferences like this one strengthen their professional character and networking skills. It also provides insight for internships and information about graduate program. In addition, it allows them to interact with different program directors," Dhir said.

Dhir said he is very proud of his students, and winning awards shows their passion for research.

"For students to attend such an important conference and walk away with honors is a clear example of their academic prowess as young scholars and an acknowledgement of the unwavering support, work and preparation of our excellent faculty."

All three students conducted their summer research internships at the University of Florida under the NSF HBCU-UP and Research Experience for Undergraduates-Site collaboration projects. This program was developed under the leadership of Dhir.

Also, Dhir made a presentation called: Developing Technology Based Degree Programs and Curriculum in Plant Biotechnology during a faculty and administrator workshop.

Twenty-three FVSU STEM majors attended the conference. They competed against more than 400 students from HBCU's across the U.S in nine oral competitions and 14 poster presentations.

The following students attended the conference and presented oral and poster presentations:

- * Turquoise Alexander, senior biology major
- * Brian Bell, senior plant science biotechnology major
- * India Brown, junior plant science biotechnology major
- * Porscha Bumpus, junior plant science biotechnology major
- * Brandon Crumsey, junior biotechnology major
- * Keena Hudson, senior biology major
- * Keeona Lawrence, junior plant science biotechnology major
- * Kiara Little, junior plant science biotechnology major
- * Justice Mason, junior biology major
- * Alyssa Moore, junior biology major
- * Mia Nash, junior biology major
- * Daniel Ogbefho, senior plant science biotechnology major
- * Lillian Oglesby, junior plant science biotechnology major
- * Charles Okonkwo, junior plant science biotechnology major
- * Ulysses Pickard, senior plant science biotechnology major
- * Charlie Ponder III, senior biology major
- * Naml Shabazz, senior plant science biotechnology major
- * Renisha Thompson, junior biology major
- * Mario Turner, junior plant science biotechnology major

* Arturo White, senior plant science biotechnology major

* Satoyia White, junior biology major

* Horecia Williams, junior animal science major

* Jared Williams, sophomore plant science biotechnology major