

Posters in the Rotunda Remarks
President Kevin P. Reilly
April 22, 2009

- Good morning, everyone. I'm Kevin Reilly, President of the University of Wisconsin System. It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this year's "Posters in the Rotunda: A Celebration of Undergraduate Research." This is the sixth annual "Posters" event, and we are delighted to be joined again by members of the Board of Regents, university leaders from around the state, legislators and their staffs, and, of course, our students and faculty. I encourage everyone to look around, ask questions ... and be prepared to be impressed!
- This is one of those times when we get to toot our horn a bit. We often talk about our universities as founts of creativity and innovation, as places where new ideas are nurtured and explored. Here today, we get to witness some of the fruits of this work, as we meet students and their mentors, and see firsthand the exciting breadth and diversity of the research projects being done at our UW institutions by motivated and innovative students.
- Today's celebration – and that's an apt description – is an opportunity for students and their faculty advisors to showcase their research and how that work connects to real-world concerns like healthcare, education, environmental sustainability, and many other critical issues.
- Particularly in challenging economic times such as we're now facing, academic research and development can be a shining, inspiring example of the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit that is so necessary for economic recovery, and the future growth of our communities, state, and nation.
- As many of you probably know, our celebration also happens to coincide with the annual observance of Earth Day. It's an appropriate convergence. Many of our UW students are doing research related to creating a healthy, sustainable environment.
- From UW-Milwaukee, Ryan Goetz and Alyssa Hartson have been looking at rooftops in a whole new way, doing research that evaluates the feasibility of growing edible plants on urban green roofs. Amanda Liesch, from UW-River Falls, is here presenting her research on the relationship between earthworm survival and biochar, a derivative of biofuels that is used to improve soil quality. From UW-Madison, Erin Conrad has been doing research investigating the effect of inert ingredients on pesticide absorption.
- The scope of our students' research goes far beyond Earth Day, of course. There's Joanne Ehrmantraut, from UW-Stout, who is here presenting her research on the attitudes of teachers and others toward inclusion of children with special needs in public elementary schools. From UW-Whitewater, Naomi Szpot presents her research on Chippewa Treaty rights in northern Wisconsin. And Ryan VandeYacht, from UW-Green

Bay, has been investigating the feasibility of connecting the Port of Green Bay to ocean carriers providing global container service accessing the Great Lakes.

- While the practical applications of the research you see here today may or may not impact you directly, academic research in general benefits all of us. In fact, according to a recent report by the Wisconsin Technology Council, academic research and development generates \$1.1 billion annually for our state's economy. It also creates more than 38,000 jobs right here in Wisconsin. A vibrant research culture not only supports existing Wisconsin businesses, but it can attract new high tech industry, and create new business spin-offs as well.
- For our students, getting involved in undergraduate research projects enriches their overall UW education. These students, armed with creative, problem-solving skills, and backed up by hands-on experience, will become the sought-after workers of tomorrow, whether they go on to careers in research, or apply the skills and knowledge that they've gained to other enterprises.
- If today's celebration shows us anything, it is that if we can give our students the right resources and support, UW System undergraduates are capable of extraordinary things.
- At this time, I would like to thank two legislators who are showing their support today by hosting our visit in the rotunda – Senator Dan Kapanke and Representative Jennifer Shilling. Last week, they also hosted the 23rd annual National Council on Undergraduate Research Conference, which was held for the first time at UW-La Crosse. Thousands of undergraduate researchers from more than 30 states participated in the event.
- Senator Kapanke, Representative Shilling, and other legislators will be meeting personally with many of our students and alumni today. I know that our Assembly members and Senators love to see these bright, young, enthusiastic constituents. At the same time, our students feel privileged to get a glimpse of their government at work.
- Speaking of bright young students, I would now like to hand the podium over to UW-La Crosse student Matthew Groshek. Matthew, a biology major, has been investigating the competition between Reed Canary grass and Silver Maple seedlings. His faculty mentor is Dr. Meredith Thomsen. Matthew...

[Matthew speaks...]

- Thank you, Matthew.
- I am also very pleased to introduce Tim Murray, a 2002 graduate of UW-Platteville. For the past six years, Tim has been an electrical engineer working with UW-Madison's IceCube project, an international project to construct a massive telescope at the South Pole, that will look for extremely high energy neutrinos that come from supernova explosions, gamma-ray bursts, black holes, and other extra-galactic events, and here I thought that all the extra-galactic events happened in this building!. Tim has made four

trips to the South Pole with the project – so I think it’s probably safe to say that Wisconsin winters don’t faze him much. To tell us more, here’s Tim ...

[Tim speaks....]

- Thank you, Tim.
- As we’ve just heard from Matthew and Tim, UW students today are engaged in the kinds of exciting research that captures the imagination, and holds real promise for shaping future advances in science.
- These student researchers embody the talent and strong Wisconsin work ethic that can flourish with proper support and prudent investments. We should all be excited about the bright futures they have ahead of them, and hope those futures will lead each into thriving careers here in our state.
- I would encourage everyone here today to spend some time with these students and their faculty mentors. I think you’ll find, as I have, that it’s an uplifting experience.
- Universities these days are asked to fill many roles, but one of our primary goals has always been to arm our students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to greet the future, with all its unknown challenges, with confidence and optimism.
- This mission, this purpose, lies at the heart of what happens in our classrooms and laboratories every day, in the formal and informal discussions groups, and in the overall UW experience.
- As you walk around today and see the amazing work that is being done at our institutions all across this state, please think about how supporting the university can provide tremendous benefits for all of us in Wisconsin, and how crucial an investment in the UW System is to the future economic strength of our state.
- We look forward to working with Governor Doyle and members of the state Legislature to make sure that higher education remains accessible to all of Wisconsin’s residents, and that this university maintains the high-quality academic performance for which it is known.
- Thanks again to all of you for being here, and especially to those involved in preparing for this event. I’d invite everyone to check out all the wonderful work that’s being done at UW – and enjoy learning about it.
- Thanks for listening.