

September 14, 2015

Kennesaw State's College of Science and Mathematics recognizes 2015 Birla Carbon Scholars

Junior Eric Gabilondo wins Birla Carbon Top Poster Award

KENNESAW, Ga. (Sept. 14, 2015) — KSU student Eric Gabilondo's research project studying the use of vanadium catalysts to convert methane into feedstock chemicals won the Top Poster Award at the Birla Carbon Symposium, at which the College of Science and Mathematics (CSM) officially recognized the 10 new 2015 Birla Carbon Scholars.

A large crowd of students, faculty, staff and Birla Carbon executives reviewed the posters on display in the KSU Center, which featured comments from College of Science and Mathematics Dean Mark Anderson and Birla Carbon's North American Region President John Loudermilk.

"It's terrific to see so many people here to support our student-scholars and learn more about their research over this past summer," said Anderson. "I want to especially thank Birla Carbon for providing this incredible opportunity for our students. Many of them would not otherwise be able to explore summer research programs, because they must work full time between the spring and fall semesters."

The event marked the second year of a five-year partnership with Birla Carbon, which has allowed the College's 10 Birla Carbon Scholars to participate in summer research opportunities.

The scholars program was developed in April 2014 with a \$250,000 pledge from Birla Carbon, a global manufacturer and supplier of Carbon Black, to support research opportunities for students in Kennesaw State's College of Science and Mathematics. The program kicked off last year with 10 Kennesaw State students each receiving a \$4,000 stipend.

"This stipend allows them time and financial freedom to expand their research skills outside of the classroom and continue Kennesaw State's tradition of academic excellence," Anderson said. "Kennesaw State is proud to celebrate Year 2 of this integral partnership."

This year's scholars include sophomores Garrison Kohler, biology; and Jacob Michelis, mathematics; and juniors Aqsa Adnan, chemistry; Tara Allen, biology; Eric Gabilondo, chemistry; Sydney Green, biochemistry; Cody Padgett, chemistry; Myles Robinson, chemistry; Kirt Ronig, biochemistry; and Abdelsalam Sharkaski, biology.

Gabilondo, whose research was led by Assistant Professor of Chemistry Heather Abbott-Lyon in CSM's Abbott-Lyon Laboratory, took the top prize for his project entitled, "Preparing to Measure the Reactivity of Methane on Vanadium Surfaces Using a Heated Effusive Molecular Beam."

His project explored developing experimental and theoretical methods, including a heated effusive molecular beam doser, to investigate vanadium catalysts in methane conversion to feedstock chemicals.

"Methane, the primary molecule in natural gas, is an abundant and efficient resource," Gabilondo said. "Converting methane to liquid feedstock chemicals such as formaldehyde is highly desirable."

Along with the \$4,000 stipend each scholar received, Gabilondo received an additional \$2,000 in travel funds to present his research at a national or regional conference of his choice.

Applicants for the annual scholarship must be freshmen, sophomores or juniors during the spring semester in which they apply for the program and have a minimum 3.0 GPA. In addition to the scholars program, funds from the Birla Carbon gift will be used to provide research supplies needed for faculty assisting students and supplies needed for the end-of-the term symposium.

Three recent CSM graduates in chemistry and biochemistry, now working for Birla Carbon, attended the symposium. They included: Jennifer Hackley (Biochemistry '14), Kaleb Nottke (Chemistry '14) and Zobia Qureshi (Chemistry '15).

###

Kennesaw State University is the third-largest university in Georgia, offering nearly 150 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees. A member of the University System of Georgia, Kennesaw State is a comprehensive university with more than 33,000 students from over 130 countries. In January 2015, Kennesaw State and Southern Polytechnic State University consolidated to create one of the 50 largest public universities in the country.

— Robert S. Godlewski
— Photo by Anthony Stalcup