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## Four Honors Students Presented at the 2016 VCHC Spring Conference

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## Four Honors Students Presented at the 2016 VCHC Spring Conference

Each spring, the Virginia Collegiate Honors Council hosts a conference for Honors students from the states of Virginia and West Virginia. This year's conference was held at Lynchburg College, April 15-16, 2016. Its theme was "The Magic of Honors." Four of our LU Honors students presented, while Dr. Jim Nutter (Director of LU's Honors) and Dr. Brenda Ayres (Assistant Director of LU's Honors) supported them with their presence, prayers, and provocative questions.

Two of our students presented papers. Emily Boyles' presentation was titled "Ambivalent Sexism, Religiosity, and Perceptions of College Majors in Christian College Students." This is her abstract:

This study seeks to determine if college students view certain majors as masculine or feminine and if gender perceptions influence their choice of major and subsequent vocation. The methodology will include analysis of predictive relationship between scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, the Ambivalence Toward Men Inventory, the Revised Religiosity Inventory, and a scale measuring perceptions of majors as masculine or feminine. A total of 492 Christian college students from a large east coast university have participated in this study by completing an online survey. Based on the university's degree offerings, 24 college majors were selected, and students were asked to rate them as masculine or feminine. The three that were rated the most masculine by the study participants and the three that were rated the most feminine were analyzed, using linear regression to determine if statistical relationships exist between scores on the ambivalent sexism inventory and benevolence toward men inventory and rating the majors as gendered.



Matthew Dalton's presentation, "Gene Expression Profiling in an Alzheimer's Disease Mouse Model" expanded this abstract:

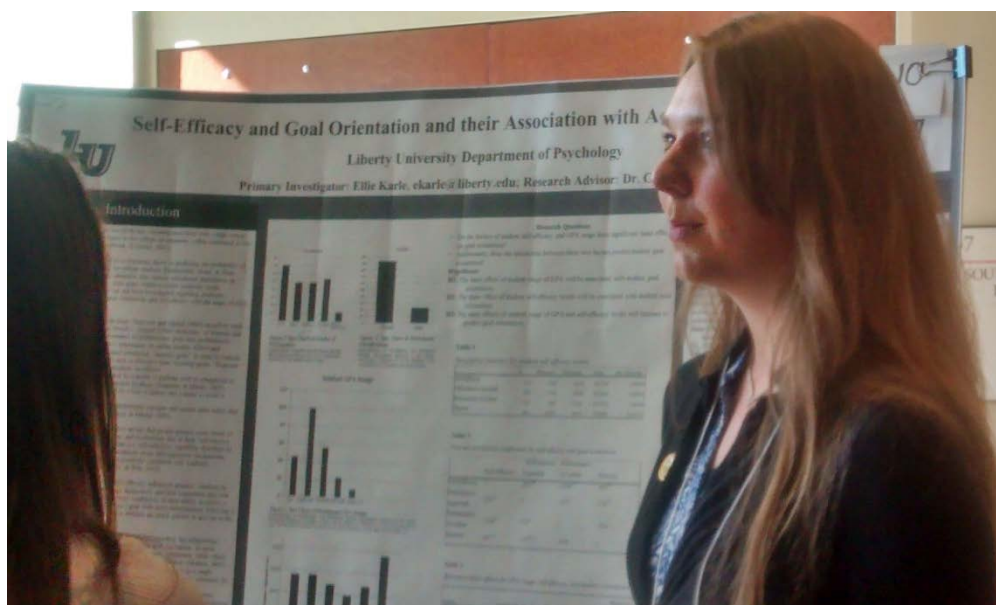
Explaining precisely how Alzheimer's disease (AD)—the world's most common form of dementia—materializes in the human brain has proven to be one of the most elusive *telos* in modern medicine. Progressive memory loss, neurodegeneration, and the presence of abnormal protein aggregates of amyloid-beta ( $A\beta$ ) and neurofibrillary tangles (NFT) characterize this disease. Intimate interactions between tissues have been observed in many diseases, particularly between the brain and blood. This analysis seeks to employ RNA sequencing techniques in the brain in order to identify potential drivers, molecular passengers, and significant contributors to AD, while overlaying this data with that of the

blood to identify candidate genes to be used as disease biomarkers. Ppia, Ercc2, Grn and miR-17 were revealed to be dysregulated in the AD brain. Hmgn1 was discovered to be dysregulated in both the AD brain and blood, highlighting its candidacy as a predictive biomarker for AD.

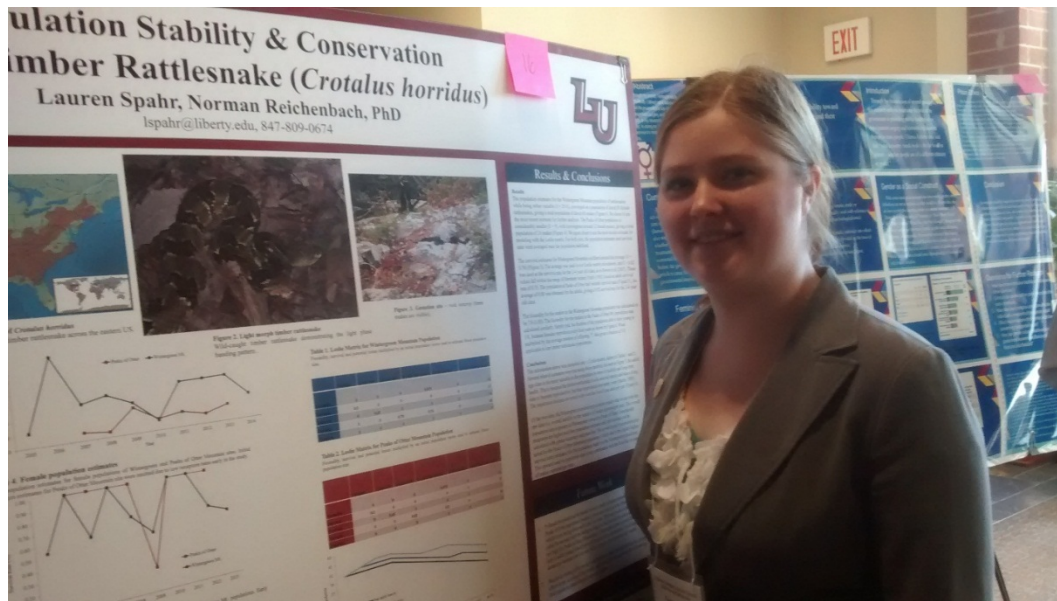
Two Honors students presented posters as well. Ellie Karle's abstract for "Self-efficacy as a Moderator Between Goal Orientation and Academic Achievement" follows below:



Much research has focused on the variables associated with student academic outcomes indicated by class grades. This study explored the influence of student goal orientation on academic achievement based on a trichotomous model: mastery goals (motivated by a desire to master a task or subject), performance-approach goals (motivated by a desire to perform well compared to others), and performance-avoidant goals (motivated by a fear of failure). As the literature demonstrates, a myriad of personal factors may influence the connection between goal orientation and academic achievement—variables such as intrinsic motivation, commitment to goals, perceived competence, and affect. The hypothesis of this study was that the construct of self-efficacy, which encompasses several of these variables, moderates the relationship between goal orientation and academic achievement. Based on the results of the study, implications were discussed regarding the importance of parent and teacher involvement in promoting student self-efficacy and appropriate assignment related goal getting, particularly during high school for those planning to attend college.



Lauren Spahr worked with Dr. Norman Reichenbach on her poster presentation, “Population Stability and Conservation of the Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*). This was her abstract:



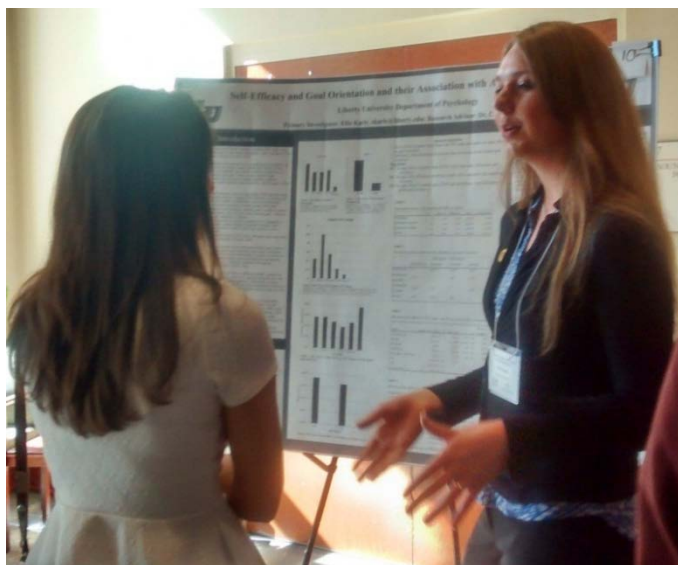
Timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) have become extinct in several states and are a species of concern in others. The Leslie matrix provides a method to model populations and assesses the impact of losing different age classes and different numbers of animals on long-term population stability. The method requires obtaining survival rates and fecundity values for each age class, and an initial population vector. We estimated population size, survival rates, and fecundity using the Jolly-Seber method and our mark-recapture data on adult females, collected over the last eleven years along the Blue Ridge Parkway. What-if projections using the matrix showed both populations incapable of sustaining losses of more than one adult yearly, and losses of adults had a greater impact on the population stability and size than losses of juveniles. Thus these populations are sensitive to extirpation from adult losses and gestation sites in particular, and therefore should be monitored.

All four students were fantastic ambassadors for Liberty University. Their rigorous research and professional presentations brought much honor to LU, the Honors program, and to God.

We hope that more of our Honors students will participate in conferences next year, including the Undergraduate Research Symposium held by Liberty University each spring. Why would undergrads want to present at conferences?



This is Emily Boyles' reply: "The ultimate goal of doing research is to contribute to the knowledge of the world. Why do all that work only to let your paper sit, unread and unknown, in a lonely folder on your computer? Presenting at conferences provides the opportunity for you to share your research with others, and it allows you to experience presenting information in a professional setting. Also, it's a whole lot of fun!"



Ellie Karle's poster won first prize in the poster category

Matthew Dalton said, “I enjoy presenting at conferences.” He offered several reasons as to why undergrads should present their research at conferences: “Meeting peer researchers from different schools on different projects with different experiences—what other setting allows you to do that? It’s an enjoyable opportunity that ought to be a part of every academic experience. Communicating your findings is also an essential part of research. The free-flow of information about a certain topic is what allows that field to advance. Presenting your findings at conferences like VCHC is one way of doing that and, in my opinion, the most exciting.” Matt was asked by one of the executive committee members for VCHC to give a workshop for students on how to write abstracts at the Spring 2017 Conference, which will be held at Old Dominion.



Our Honors students brought so much honor to our program and to the Lord. Those are the best reason that Honors students ought to leap at every opportunity next year to present their work.

