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Hunsaker, Lewis

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MCI Lewis Hunsaker

NPS, CSUMB Interns Close-Out Summer With Research Symposium

By MCI Lewis Hunsaker

NPS summer intern Amanda Coleman presents her waveform research project during the Monterey Bay Summer Research Symposium at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), Aug. 11. The symposium highlighted the STEM – or science, technology, engineering and mathematics – research of nearly 80 interns participating in summer programs at NPS, CSUMB and Hartnell College.

“Today we were able to highlight the summer work of these interns,” said NPS Dean of Research Jeff Paduan. “Some of them are interning at NPS, some at CSUMB, and some are overlapping and cross-pollinating. This joint event allows the interns to show off what they have done, while allowing us to see the results of their hard work.”

NPS has maintained an internship program for years, but significantly expanded in 2013 through the efforts of STEM Internship Coordinator Alison Kerr, who strengthened partnerships with regional institutions, and the Office of Naval Research. This year, a total of 80 interns from four different programs spent approximately 8-10 weeks on campus, working on the very same research endeavors the university's faculty and students do.

“One of the most effective contributions that NPS can make to the STEM program is to open our labs to train and excite young potential scientists in the areas of STEM,” added Paduan.

NPS Provost and Academic Dean Dr. Steven R. Lerman participated in the annual symposium, offering interns his congratulations for their hard work over the summer.

“It's amazing what can be accomplished over a relatively small period of time, in the right environment, and with the right mentors,” said Lerman.

“I believe that there are two, primary reasons for why we engage in STEM programs,” he continued. “The first is curiosity, which is core to what it means to be human. The second is to develop new technologies. Clean water, for example, saved enormous numbers of lives, but you cannot have clean water without developing technology. The process of invention, exploration and creating new things, ultimately, is to better humankind.”

The Navy and DOD have long recognized the need to resupply the pipeline of students who will pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers, with NPS' robust internship programs providing the university's contribution to that effort. Over the course of their time on campus, interns partner with volunteer university faculty, and are assigned projects that focus on areas of national security, such as computer science, space systems, renewable energy, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), and the modeling of virtual environments, among many others.

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