



PRESS RELEASE

Ten Teams Compete for National Collaborative Research Prize

Little Rock, Ark.—Missouri Western State University’s research team, comprised of student members of the Missouri Lambda chapter of Alpha Chi, received the first place \$5,000 Collaborative Research Prize announced online April 15, 2020. Competition guidelines required chapters to assemble a team of three to five student researchers from at least three different departments to develop a research problem from the general topic announced last fall—Cultures of Conspiracy.

Ten multidisciplinary teams, representing 20 different academic majors, were to present their research to delegates and judges in Albuquerque at Alpha Chi’s national convention in March, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to the event’s cancellation. However, each team was still able to submit its detailed research paper and a formal poster to visually represent their findings.

With the research project titled, “Culturally Transmitted: Conspiracies and Controversies Plaguing the Modern Vaccine,” Missouri Lambda’s winning team members were Breanna Hancock, nursing major; Devin Mattoon, mathematics major; Rebecca Prest, biochemistry and molecular biology major; Becca Smith-Grantham, sociology and social work major; and their history faculty mentor Dr. Angela Haas, who is also a chapter sponsor.

Winning the second place prize of \$2,500 with a project titled, "Interdisciplinary Factors That May Support the Spread of Misinformation in the Era of Social Media: Building an Interdisciplinary, Multi-dimensional Model," was the team from the Nebraska Delta chapter of Alpha Chi at Peru State College, comprised of Dylan George (health sciences), Kaylee Gill (education), and Sara Vance (social science and education), assisted by Dr. Kate Trout, chapter sponsor and faculty mentor.

The eight other teams conducting research projects this year were:

- Angelo State University, Texas Alpha Iota, presented, "Boomerang Effects in Mental Healthcare Outreach Messages." Team members were Madasen Briggs (psychology), Baxter Krug (communications), and Ian Stark (healthcare management). Faculty mentor was Dr. Karl Havlak.
- Carson-Newman University, Tennessee Delta, presented "Weaponizing Whispers: The Seth Rich Conspiracy." Team members were Thomas Fodor (philosophy), Gracie Keel (communications), and Luke Patton (political science). Faculty mentor was Dr. Kip Wheeler.

- East Central University, Oklahoma Gamma, presented "Crazy or Curious: Re-thinking Our Perspectives of Conspiracy Theorists." Team members were Alexis Benitez (political science), Constance Green (molecular biology), Carly Heitland (English education), Ginger Johnson (English and mathematics), and Andrew Kelly (psychology and political science). Faculty mentor was Dr. Christine Pappas.
- Gardner-Webb University, North Carolina Zeta, presented "The People's Princess, Gone Too Soon." Team members were Madeline Bame, (music), Makayla Fewster (IT), Olivia Simmons (biology), Samantha Wilkie (English), and Avery Woods (discipleship studies). Faculty mentor was Dr. June Hobbs.
- Grand Canyon University, Arizona Alpha, presented "Sedona Vortices: A Multidisciplinary Investigation." Team members were Jaxson Adams (psychology and pre-law), Gabriela Calhoun (biomedical engineering), Jennifer Falcon Cruz (business administration), and Kaylor Jones (English). Faculty mentor was Dr. Breanna Naegeli.
- Lyon College, Arkansas Iota, presented "A Shifting Perspective of Conspiracy Theories: Meme Culture's Effect on Legitimacy." Team members were Ellie Embry (biology and Spanish), Olivia Lynch (English and anthropology), Haley Reed (English and psychology), and Luke Shackelford (biology). Faculty mentor was Dr. Allyn Dodd.
- Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas Beta, presented "Authority-colored Lenses: Perceived Authorities' Roles in Promoting Conspiracy." Team members were Taryn Bewley (political science), Tucker Douglass (philosophy and history), Lesley Howard (studio art and psychology), and Rylee Roberts (communications). Faculty mentor was Dr. Myra Houser.
- Westminster College, Missouri Delta, presented "Anti-vax Culture of Conspiracy: Where Does it Begin and Where Does it End?" Team members were Abigail Beach (biochemistry), Destri Eichman (biochemistry and Spanish), Jacob Hansen (history), Missy Rolseth (political science), and Stacia Schollmeyer (education). Faculty mentor was Dr. David Jones.

Alpha Chi National College Honor Society invites to membership juniors, seniors, and graduate students from all disciplines in the top ten percent of their classes. Active on nearly 300 campuses nationwide, chapters induct approximately 10,000 students annually. Since the Society's founding in 1922, Alpha Chi members have dedicated themselves to "making scholarship effective for good." Alpha Chi is a member in good standing of the Association of College Honor Societies, the only national accrediting body for collegiate honor societies.

##