

Hands-On, Minds-On creates research opportunities for undergraduates

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(Phys.org)—"There is a lot more to research than just coming up with a question and solving it," said Patricia Coia of Dumfries, Va., a junior majoring in human development, and one of 10 students selected to participate in the Hands-On, Minds-On summer research project at Virginia Tech. The undergraduates, who hailed from community colleges and institutions across the South, paired with Virginia Tech faculty members to research the causes and consequences of violence.

"We worked really hard over 10 weeks to learn about our labs, get hands-on experience, and develop full research projects to present at the end," noted Coia.

Students focused their research in one of four areas: socialization of emotions; bullying prevention; responses to [media violence](#); and technology and [conflict management](#).

"This experience prepared me for working with others to learn more about a common area of interest," said Coia. "I met so many amazing individuals, from other undergrads to the deputy chief of police. This program also opened my eyes to other labs and projects across Virginia Tech."

The Undergraduate Research Institute in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences received a \$365,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to fund this project for three summers. Collaborative in approach, it brings together scholars from three colleges at Virginia Tech

(Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Engineering, and Science), and several departments, including communication, computer science, human development, and psychology.

Diana Ridgwell, principal investigator and director of the Undergraduate Research Institute, noted that the partnership included the Virginia Community College System to "encourage underrepresented groups to consider the study of human and social sciences, which is part of the NSF's mission. This program provides students, who may not have an opportunity to participate in research at the undergraduate level, a chance to work alongside faculty and students at a research university."

"I absolutely loved working with students from other institutions," said Coia. "One of the best parts was that every lab had one student from a four-year school and one student from a community college. It gave all of us the chance to work with students from different backgrounds and with different levels of experience."

Students are selected through a competitive application process that begins in November of each year. The faculty members review applications and decisions are made based on academic performance, interest in project topic, and program fit with student future goals.

"I especially loved being the only Virginia Tech student in the program," said Coia. "It was a lot of fun showing other undergrads our beautiful campus and surrounding area. I love this university so much and ... I think everyone left with a newfound appreciation for Virginia Tech."

Provided by Virginia Tech

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