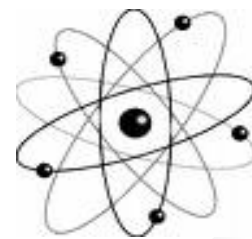


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Mr. Smith Presents at the State Capitol in Jefferson City

By Alisa Warren

On April 17th Dante Smith presented his research at the Forum at the state capitol in Jefferson City. The Forum is intended to expose Missouri legislators to statewide undergraduate research and Dante Smith is one of the best. Although he will graduate with a B.S. in Biology in May 2007 he has already presented his research over six times. Dante is conducting research on plant parasitic nematodes that infect plants and secrete proteins, which cause cell death. He is trying to characterize one of the specific genes responsible through DNA sequencing and real time PCR by utilizing over-expression in RANI techniques. The anticipated outcome of this research is the creation of a genetically modified soybean plant, which will help farmers maximize crop yields and increase their economic viability.

As an experienced research presenter, Dante has a depth of knowledge, poise, and professionalism that can match many graduate students. "The first time I presented my research I realized that I did not know enough about the topic itself. After that I began to read recent publications on my topic to understand the research more broadly. I have learned not to be nervous when I am presenting because I have become very knowledgeable about my research. The judges often ask very in-depth questions and offer suggestions, which have caused me to dig deeper and make improvements. I have really come to love presenting,

making posters, and talking to people about my research. It can be a tedious, but I got a template on posters, added my own information and it was all good," he explained.

Dante attended Morgan Park High School in Chicago, Illinois and originally wanted to be a medical doctor. "I wanted to be a doctor since the 5th grade because of the hustle and bustle, the respectably of the profession, not to mention the high pay. Once I came to college at Mizzou and experienced research through the Express program, bench work became my first love," says Smith. His freshman year he worked in Dr. David Setzer's lab, and Dr. Melissa Mitchem's lab for the last three years. Both Setzer and Mitchem played an essential role as his mentors in his life. As an only child, Dante also had tremendous support from his parents and seven aunts and six uncles. They all had the foresight to know that science and technology was the next "big thing" and Dante had what it took.

"My advice is to be prepared to work hard-if you are a slacker you won't make! It is hard work but if you use every available resource you can make it. I really enjoy gaining knowledge I can use everyday that can be applied it to many situations in science, math and a broad range of things. Other success strategies include time management, self-control, adhering to a strict regimen of going to class and turning in your assignments. There is no handholding in college. There are still many challenges that I have to overcome such as overcoming my fear

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Website of the Month: Check out this useful website for undergraduates, graduates, post-docs, and faculty mentors!

of public speaking. I plan to deal with that head on in graduate school by speaking at professional meetings in preparation to defend my dissertation. Shyness is not an option!" Dante reflects. "God Almighty has brought me; the love of family has supported me; the joy of friendship has uplifted me; and with the guidance given by the Holy Spirit, I have arrived!"
Dante O. Smith

