

More than 300 turn out for Faculty Research Day and find a world of discoveries across colleges and departments.

By Jackie Hennessey

If research begins with a question, a trail followed and chased for weeks, months, even years, then Beltina Gjeloši's began when she was a little girl in Albania, swept up in a national conflict she didn't understand. Her family lived in poverty and political persecution so she and her mother fled to Italy. At seven she wondered, "Why did it have to be this way?"

That question would become central to the research she presented at Faculty Research Day 2015. How could she affect change so other children didn't have to live through what she did? In her International Conflict and Management course, College of Public and International Affairs Dean Thomas J. Ward asked students to find a nation in conflict and find a solution to "calm the waters" there.

Gjeloši '13, who is pursuing a master's in Global Development and Peace, chose the Central African Republic (CAR) because it "had been in conflict and chaos since 1960," and is one of the ten poorest countries in the world, torn apart by warring rebel factions, with children often unable to go to school. "I felt this on my skin and in my heart and it took me back to my childhood, only this was ten times worse," she said. Her solution: a radio-based communications plan bringing BBC Media Action radio—used to empower and give voice to communities in other African countries—and UNICEF Radio educational programming to CAR.

Gjeloši placed third in the graduate category but the real prize, she said, was sharing her research with so many people and learning about other students' and faculty members' research. "I never stopped talking," she said. "The day was amazing."

The day brimmed with that kind of synergy as faculty and students shared research across disciplines and departments creating a palpable buzz. "It's a very academic day but it also had a festive feel," said Kathleen Engelmann, associate professor of biology and member of the FRD committee. "The day has always been structured around research posters so there would be dialogue, to get people talking about ideas, and that's what has happened. It shows just how valued research is at the University."

One hundred and twenty-nine research posters were presented in the faculty, PhD, graduate, and undergraduate categories at Faculty Research Day. Eight schools and colleges and 29 departments participated. "This is our



most diverse year yet," said Christine Hempowicz, director of the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs.

Tarek M. Sobh, senior vice president for graduate studies and research and dean of the School of Engineering, said having that level of participation and engagement on a campus of 5,000 students was "stunning."

"This day cements the fact that we are truly an emerging research institution," Sobh said. "The function of an eminent higher educational institution is to dispense knowledge but also to create knowledge, and this is what we are doing. It's about sharing intellectual property. It's about innovation."

Attendees and participants packed Littlefield Recital Hall for keynote speaker Mark A. Boyer, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut, who urged the researchers to "follow the good idea," to work across disciplines to solve real-world problems and to have fun while doing so. "It's what keeps you smart, alive, and intellectually engaged in what you are working on," he said.

More than 300 people turned out to view the posters and talk with researchers like faculty winner Stergios Bibis, a visiting assistant professor of biology, and undergraduates Luke DeRosa, Talissa Traverso, and Savari Divine from the Shintaro Akatsu School of Design, who won first place for research into "building green." Faculty winner Ashish Aphale, a post-doctoral researcher and adjunct faculty member in engineering explained the complexities of "Graphene Based Nanocomposite Electrodes for Energy Storage in Supercapacitors," while Bayan Hourani and Amanda Scott, undergraduates, shared their findings on "Cell Phone Addiction at UB? A Preliminary Survey."

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