

## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2023

CONTACT: Suzanna Cisneros, [suzanna.cisneros@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:suzanna.cisneros@ttuhsc.edu)  
(806) 773-4242

### **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Hosts TTUHSC's 35th Student Research Week**

Student researchers from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) hosted the 35th Student Research Week Feb. 28-March 3. Student Research Week, which is organized by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, provides an opportunity for TTUHSC student investigators to showcase their work and hear presentations from distinguished national speakers related to the year's specific theme.

Student Research Week Committee members for 2023 included Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences students Morgana Kellogg (director), Brent Kisby (vice director, marketing), Tasmin Omy (vice director, operations), Melissa McHann (vice director, poster competition) and Elisa Biondo (medical school liaison).

Kellogg, who has been involved with Student Research Week for the last four years, said the 2023 event was the first where she saw things returning to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic made its mark the last several years.

"We still used the hybrid system with virtual judging versus in-person judging, and we had a hybrid system for the speakers with one in-person and one virtual," Kellogg said.

The 2023 event theme was, "Lord of the Genes: Cell Biology and Biochemistry." Kellogg said the theme was chosen because the committee wanted to be inclusive of everyone in the Department of Cell Biology and Biochemistry (CBB).

"The School of Medicine Cancer Center is part of CBB, so for them, one of the Lord of the Genes is p53, which guards the genome against damage," Kellogg explained. "For our lab, the Signal Recognition Particle — our Lord of the Genes — targets approximately 30% of all proteins in the genome. For others, it is their specific tumor suppressor or oncogene. So we wanted to make a pun, but also not leave anyone out."

The event also featured two keynote speakers: Robert A. Weinberg, Ph.D., the Daniel K. Ludwig Professor for Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); and Peter Walter, Ph.D., an emeritus professor at the University of California, San Francisco.

Weinberg, also a core member of the MIT-affiliated Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, focuses his research primarily in the area of oncogenes and the genetic basis of human cancer. Walter, who also directs the Bay area Institute of Science at Alto Labs, researches how cells control the quality of their proteins and organelles during homeostasis and stress by identifying the molecular machinery and mechanisms that lead to proper protein synthesis, folding and targeting.

"Dr. Peter Walter and Dr. Robert Weinstein are top scientists in their respective fields," Kellogg emphasized. "That they gave us their attention and were willing to give the students seminars, and then give extra time for student questions is a huge honor. I think the university can be proud we had such distinguished guests."

*TTUHSC Media Relations*

<https://www.ttuhsc.edu/communications-marketing/media>

- more -

The highlight of Student Research Week was the poster competition with 259 posters submitted for the 2023 contest. Entries were received from all five TTUHSC schools representing the Lubbock, Abilene, Amarillo, Dallas and Permian Basin campuses. Students from TTUHSC's distance learning program and undergraduate researchers on the Texas Tech University (TTU) campus also submitted posters. To change things up from previous years, Kellogg said there was a 50-word minimum word requirement for each submitted poster abstract.

"I think this improved the quality from previous years, as students really had to define what they were doing and why," Kellogg said.

Kellogg said each category was required to have a minimum of 10 entries to be considered for a prize. As a result, the categories were different than last year, as those that did not have enough entries on their own were combined with other such categories.

"Student Research Week is an ever-evolving conference; we strive every year to improve upon the last," Kellogg said. "A lot of that is due to the work of the officers and the volunteers who help make the week happen. Ultimately, Student Research Week is a student-run volunteer organization; we largely make every decision, and it is something we can be proud of in the end."

### **2023 Student Research Week Poster Competition Award Winners**

#### *Basic/Translational Science Years 1-2; Biotechnology; TTU Undergraduates*

1st Place: Flavia Sardela de Miranda

2nd Place (tie): Andrew Ibrahim, Roberto Mendoza

3rd Place: Ava Oliver

#### *Basic/Translational Science Years 3+; School of Medicine Research*

1st Place: Alejandra Gomez

2nd Place: Rebecca Gabriliska

#### *Clinical Research – Case Studies*

1st Place: John Wolpert

2nd Place: Caezaan Keshvani

3rd Place: Jaxon Baum

#### *Medical Education*

1st Place: Emily Bernstein

#### *Clinical Research – Chart Reviews*

1st Place: Simmone Spielman

2nd Place: Sia Pranthi Bingi

3rd Place: Brandon Youssi

#### *School of Nursing*

1st Place: Caroline Overman and Crystal Johns

2nd Place: Emily Hardy and Brittany Jo Jordan

3rd Place: Jessica Aguilar and Amy Valenta

#### *Lorenz O. Lutherer, M.D., Ph.D., Clinical Research Award*

Brandon Couch