

# Hardin's Breden, SIUE sports medicine student-researchers earn national recognition

by Megan Wieser

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville undergraduate and graduate students represented the Schools of Education, Health and Human Behavior (SEHHB), and Pharmacy (SOP) on a national stage, earning top prizes for their research

activities. Five students were invited to present their scholarly work during the annual meeting of the Texas chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine (TACSM) held Feb. 16-17 at Baylor University in Waco.

Three of the students are participating in the University's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) program under the faculty mentorship of Joshua Wooten, PhD, and Brianne Guildford, PhD, both assistant professors in the SEHHB's Department of Applied Health. The students are Girard native Dakota Kamm, and Marcus Breden, of Hardin, along with Claire Maciejewski, of Carbondale.

Two graduate students and research assistants in the Department of Applied Health, Megan Schaller, of Ferris, and Matt Harris, of Germantown, Md., also presented their research in the master's judged category.

"These are the most students we have had represent SIUE at this conference, and they deserve an immense amount of credit for being pre-selected to present their research posters in a judging category," said Wooten. "Only the top eight submitted abstracts are selected for judging, out of more than 40 submissions in each category."

Schaller earned first place for her presentation, "Fish-oils increase BAMBI expression to protect against fibrotic activity in LPS stimulated hepatic tissue." Kamm earned second place for his poster presentation, "Dietary enrichment of fish-oils attenuates diet-induced obesity and hepatic steatosis."

"These students enjoy the challenge of learning and exploring difficult questions that often have extremely vague answers due to the complexity of human metabolic diseases," Wooten added. "The experiences and skills our students gain are transferable, and in the end, make them well prepared for careers in the biomedical and health sciences."

"The data generated for these student-led projects is part of a larger study investigating the effects of different dietary fats and affiliated mechanisms during states of inflammation on proteins that compose the blood brain barrier. This project is supported by a National Institutes of Health (NIH) R21 grant held by Dr. Kenneth Witt, associate professor in the SOP's Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Concomitantly, my lab is evaluating the effects of dietary fats on mechanisms that regulate inflammation and fibrosis observed in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease."

According to Wooten, the group's achievements are supported by a multi-disciplinary partnership between the SIUE SEHHB and SOP.

“The TACSM chapter is one of the best student-focused meetings for our majors,” explained Wooten. “Our students have more exposure to the field and a greater audience for sharing their research than any other chapter in the country. At the annual meeting, TACSM provided more than \$14,000 in award and grants.”

“The students that work in the laboratory with my colleague Dr. Brianne Guildford and myself are looking for opportunities to apply what they learn in the classroom. Our colleagues in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences have been an extraordinary resource and have helped expose our students to what multi-disciplinary research looks like as they progress through their studies at SIUE.”