

College Capstone Program Brings Money to Big Ideas

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The campus of Centralia College is a bit quieter now as commencement has been held and many students are off to enjoy the summer away from academics.

Last month, though, many students were making a lot of noise with innovative and inventive projects made possible from an investment by the Centralia College Foundation.

The Capstone Project Fund allocated \$10,000 to 18 projects headed by students. They presented their progress June 5 during the third annual display of the fruits of an important investment program.

The celebration of student excellence highlighted advances in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, a grouping of topics known as STEM. Projects were not limited to that scope, though.

“The backing of the foundation to fund some of these projects was a big step in making this event even larger,” associate chemistry professor Karen Goodwin said. “The campus community is realizing, ‘Oh it’s not just STEM, any project is welcome.’ We’re a celebration of student excellence and we all have excellent students. Let’s show off their work.”

The projects undertaken by students were as interesting as they were innovative.

Here are a few examples of the work completed by some of the brightest student minds at Centralia College:

- One team joined to investigate the submerged forests in Lake Kapowsin, collecting wood tissue and using radiocarbon dating in the lab.
- A student’s project revolved around finding the most environmentally friendly option to synthesize copper of two choices — using a hot plate or a Bunsen burner.
- Using parts found online, another student created an inexpensive robot to rival the college’s \$40,000 robot, Fanuc, on a smaller scale.
- A local coach attending classes at the college was inspired to create a sensor that registered scored hockey goals after finding that there is no definitive way of detecting when a goal was made except for the naked eye of the lone referee. A small scale sensor was created that successfully lights up when a puck makes contact with the net.
- Another student created a locking pet door that allows the pet to go outside without letting unwanted pests in. With a unique code embedded in the tag on the pet’s collar, the door will only unlock when the pet is in the direct vicinity of the door, bringing security and convenience to the household.

As is clear by this sampling of projects, these are far from everyday science projects.

The Centralia College Foundation is wise to invest in the minds and ideas of the college’s proactive and intelligent students.

We look forward to seeing the program grow in the years ahead.

