

UVA TODAY



TOP NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

U.Va. News  
 News Releases  
 News by Category  
 U.Va. Profiles  
 Faculty Opinion  
 News Videos  
 U.Va. Blogs  
 UVA Today Radio

<http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/headlines.php>

Inside U.Va.  
 Announcements  
 For Faculty/Staff  
 Accolades  
 Off the Shelf  
 In Memoriam

UVA Today Blog

For Journalists

All Publications

About Us

Subscribe To  
 Daily Report E-News  
 RSS News Feeds  
 Podcasts/Vodcasts

Search U.Va. News

Keyword / Name

2006-11 News

## U.Va. and Partner Schools Help Prepare Future Minority Scientists and Engineers

April 28, 2011 — The University of Virginia recently hosted minority undergraduates from several colleges and universities in Virginia and North Carolina in a symposium that showcased the students' research projects in science, technology, engineering and math.

The [Virginia-North Carolina Alliance for Minority Participation](#), formed four years ago, is funded by the National Science Foundation's Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, dedicated to increasing the number of underrepresented minority students in the so-called STEM fields – science, technology, engineering and math. U.Va. is the lead school and partners with seven other institutions: Bennett College for Women, Elizabeth City State University, George Mason University, Johnson C. Smith University, Saint Augustine's College, Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Tech.

The alliance supports minority students by offering a range of activities, including annual symposia, mentoring, workshops, faculty exchanges and summer research experiences.

Almost 100 students, research advisers and mentors participated in the symposium of panel discussions, speakers and a research competition. More than 30 students gave multimedia presentations and discussed their work.

"As the lead institution of the Virginia-North Carolina Alliance, we were thrilled to host the fourth annual symposium here at the University," said [Dr. Marcus Martin](#), U.Va. vice president and chief officer for diversity and equity, whose office co-sponsors the alliance program with the University's [Center for Diversity in Engineering](#).

"During the symposium, students described how they are seeking solutions to complex global issues, while in many instances collaborating with peers and grappling with challenging problems," Martin said. "It was wonderful to see that the winners of the poster competition represented a true collaboration of students from three of our partner institutions who conducted research at U.Va. last summer."

The winning team also got to meet U.Va. President [Teresa A. Sullivan](#) at her inauguration luncheon. Jasmine Mays and Anthony Speas from Johnson C. Smith University, Arianna Seabrooks-Matthews of Virginia Tech and Jasmine Drake of U.Va. won first place in the poster competition for their project, "Identification of Molecules Through Experimental and Computational Spectroscopy."

"This was the first research competition I've ever been in, so to win is absolutely amazing," Seabrooks-Matthews said. "The VA-NC Alliance has been an excellent support system for me since my freshman year of college. They have encouraged me to reach out to my professors, other students and faculty. Being in this program has incredibly increased my networking skills and potential."

In addition to the poster contest, students competed with oral presentations.

U.Va. student Alan Molina won second place for his presentation on research to develop a synthetic skin graft, made of nanofibers, for wound healing. He worked with Edward Botchwey, associate professor of biomedical engineering and orthopaedic surgery, and Rebekah Neal, a graduate student in Botchwey's lab.

"Conducting research at U.Va. has taught me how to think actively about the material I cover in class by asking probing questions," Molina said. "It has also taught me how to digest and synthesize large quantities of information gathered from published research."

Setting his sights on a medical career, Molina will participate in the U.Va. School of Medicine's Summer Research Internship Program.

School of Engineering and Applied Science professor Carolyn Vallas, who directs the Center for Diversity in Engineering, said, "The faculty judges of varying STEM expertise were impressed with the high level of research that the students had conducted and their ability to articulate what they had done to both technical and non-technical attendees."

Other sessions at the symposium included a panel of U.Va. graduate students who talked about their own graduate school experiences, "to inspire and engage participants into thinking about their future academic journey," Vallas said.

Luncheon speaker Rosalyn S. Hobson, a "triple 'Hoo" with degrees in electrical engineering, also described her academic journey to becoming associate dean for graduate studies and associate professor of electrical engineering at VCU. She urged students to give back, find and be a mentor, and be unafraid to take advantage of new opportunities.

Vallas said the VA-NC alliance is successful due to the devoted mentors and advisers who work "day-in and day-out" with the students.

"These persons motivate, encourage and provide guidance for alliance students, so that they can successfully pursue their dreams of becoming a future STEM professional," Vallas said.

The contest winners were:

- Poster competition  
 First place: Jasmine Mays and Anthony Speas, Johnson C. Smith University; Arianna Seabrooks-Matthews, Virginia Tech; Jasmine Drake, U.Va.  
 Second place: Jamie Wright, U.Va.  
 Third place (tie): Michaila Latore, Virginia Tech; Juliana Cano-Mejia, U.Va.

- Oral Competition  
 First place: Merischia Griffin, Johnson C. Smith University  
 Second place: Alan Molina, U.Va.  
 Third place: Marianna Cruz, George Mason University

Share



From left to right: Jasmine Mays, Johnson C. Smith University; U.Va. President Teresa A. Sullivan; Arianna Seabrooks-Matthews, Virginia Tech; and Anthony Speas, Johnson C. Smith University. Not pictured: Jasmine Drake, U.Va. (click for high-res version)

(Photo: Dan Addison)

[Print this story](#)  
[Email this story](#)

Contact:

Anne E. Bromley  
 Senior Writer, Editor  
 (434) 924-6861  
[anneb@virginia.edu](mailto:anneb@virginia.edu)

Maintained By: Media Relations, Public Affairs  
 If you did not find what you were looking for, email the Media Relations Office  
 Last Modified: Wednesday, 09-Feb-2011 09:16:32 EDT  
 © Copyright 2011 by the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia  
 Text only version

— By Anne Bromley





University of  
Virginia President  
Teresa Sullivan with  
Alliance research  
poster contest  
winners.

left to right: Jasmine Mays, Johnson C. Smith University, Arianna Seabrooks-Matthews, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Anthony Speas, Johnson C. Smith University (not pictured: Jasmine Drake, University of Virginia).

