



## SYMPOSIUM GIVES VENUE FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ACROSS DISCIPLINES

**T**he germ of an idea formed six years ago culminated in presentations of papers, posters and group projects from more than 70 students on May 3.

Union University's first Scholarship Symposium was coordinated by Dr. Matt Lunsford, associate professor of mathematics, as an opportunity for students in every area of the university to collaborate with faculty mentors and present their research to the campus. Every department in the college of arts and sciences, as well as the schools of business, nursing and Christian studies and the Institute for International and Intercultural Studies, had students who participated.

"I first took some of the math students to a conference to present some scholarly work in 1998," Lunsford said. "What I found was that our students were always at the top as far as awards whenever we took them off-campus to present work. We were not the only department doing this. I thought we needed a day to showcase this here as well as off-campus.

"It was kind of a dream come true to set aside a day for students to share their scholarly works with the Union community," he said.

With the help of Dr. Kina Mallard, professor of communication arts and associate provost for faculty and academic development, Lunsford pursued a grant that would subsidize his dream. The \$50,000 grant was funded by an anonymous private foundation, which supports undergraduate research initiatives across the nation. In addition to funding the symposium, five \$1,000 grants were awarded

to faculty/student teams, and funds were provided for seven students to present at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research.

Recipients of the faculty/student grants and NCUR participants were required to make presentations at the symposium.

"There were a number of students we knew would participate," Lunsford said. "The others were students who, along with faculty mentors, volunteered to participate, and it was a surprise that there were so many."

Union President David S. Dockery said, "The disciplined efforts of our students and faculty diligently working in concert to produce such quality research projects was a high water mark for both the faculty and student body of Union University."

"There was a lot of excitement the day of the event; what faculty and administrators called 'a buzz on campus,'" Lunsford said.

Dr. Charles Baldwin, Hammons professor of pre-medical studies, feels the event speaks volumes about the Union's determination to integrate research into the life of the university. "The Union University Scholarship Symposium represents a significant turning point in the history of Union University. The recognition that scholarship and research are vital aspects of an excellence-driven teaching-learning enterprise moves Union beyond the either/or mindset on teaching and research which mired us in the past.

"I am so thankful for Dr. Dockery's understanding and appreciation of the balance between responsible scholarship and excellent

teaching and his courage to lead Union to a new place in the future," Baldwin said.


The date for next year's symposium has already been set: Monday, May 2, 2005.

"The goal is to change the culture here so every student who wants to collaborate with a faculty member on scholarly projects will have the opportunity to do that," Lunsford said. "Research says that faculty/student engagement is the key to learning. Undergraduate research opportunities obviously put faculty and students together in a meaningful way."

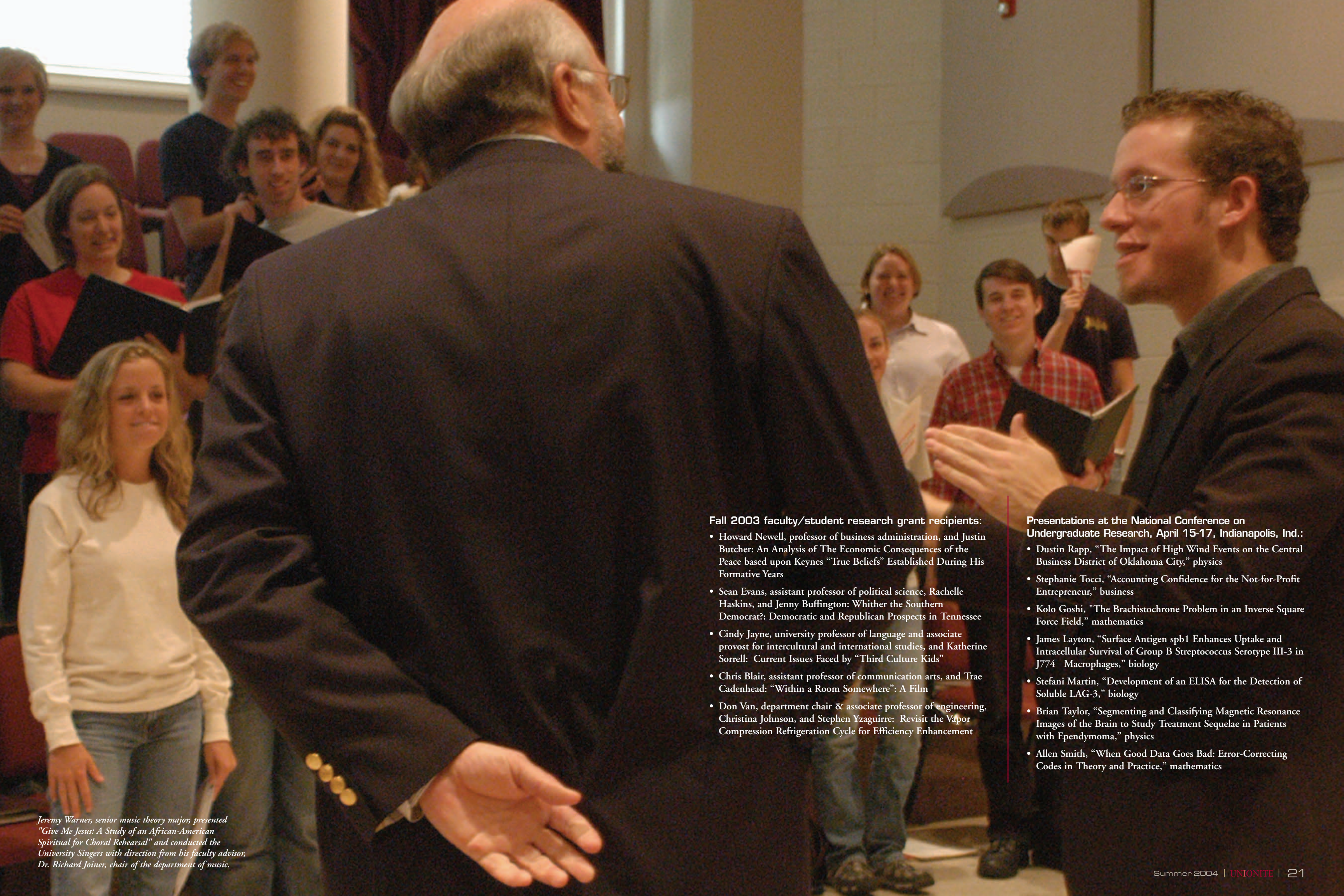
Jenny Buffington, a sophomore political science major, said, "What we've learned from this project will carry over not only into our political science careers but also into other classes. I've never done any research this extensive."

Buffington, along with Rachelle Haskins, also a sophomore majoring in political science, received a grant to conduct research alongside Dr. Sean Evans, assistant professor of political science. The project involved a survey of 315 registered voters in Tennessee, with the help of Evans' research methods course.

"Looking at the survey program," Haskins said, "not every student in the class got to sit with Dr. Evans analyzing data. I gained a greater understanding of the survey process and overall research methods."

Lunsford said, "The undergraduate research symposium says that Union is serious about undergraduates doing scholarly work before they graduate, and we are willing to disseminate that in a public venue." 





*Jeremy Warner, senior music theory major, presented "Give Me Jesus: A Study of an African-American Spiritual for Choral Rehearsal" and conducted the University Singers with direction from his faculty advisor, Dr. Richard Joiner, chair of the department of music.*

**Fall 2003 faculty/student research grant recipients:**

- Howard Newell, professor of business administration, and Justin Butcher: An Analysis of The Economic Consequences of the Peace based upon Keynes "True Beliefs" Established During His Formative Years
- Sean Evans, assistant professor of political science, Rachelle Haskins, and Jenny Buffington: Whither the Southern Democrat?: Democratic and Republican Prospects in Tennessee
- Cindy Jayne, university professor of language and associate provost for intercultural and international studies, and Katherine Sorrell: Current Issues Faced by "Third Culture Kids"
- Chris Blair, assistant professor of communication arts, and Trae Cadenhead: "Within a Room Somewhere": A Film
- Don Van, department chair & associate professor of engineering, Christina Johnson, and Stephen Yzaguirre: Revisit the Vapor Compression Refrigeration Cycle for Efficiency Enhancement

**Presentations at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, April 15-17, Indianapolis, Ind.:**

- Dustin Rapp, "The Impact of High Wind Events on the Central Business District of Oklahoma City," physics
- Stephanie Tocci, "Accounting Confidence for the Not-for-Profit Entrepreneur," business
- Kolo Goshi, "The Brachistochrone Problem in an Inverse Square Force Field," mathematics
- James Layton, "Surface Antigen spb1 Enhances Uptake and Intracellular Survival of Group B Streptococcus Serotype III-3 in J774 Macrophages," biology
- Stefani Martin, "Development of an ELISA for the Detection of Soluble LAG-3," biology
- Brian Taylor, "Segmenting and Classifying Magnetic Resonance Images of the Brain to Study Treatment Sequelae in Patients with Ependymoma," physics
- Allen Smith, "When Good Data Goes Bad: Error-Correcting Codes in Theory and Practice," mathematics