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Four University of Dayton seniors presented their research at the 21st National Conference on Undergraduate Research April 12-14 at the Dominican University of California in San Francisco. The conferences aim to promote undergraduate research, scholarship and creative activity done in partnership with faculty as a vital component of higher education.

Joe Beumer, a mathematics and theater major and Berry Scholar, wrote “Applying Shakespearean Staging Techniques to the Work of Francis Warner” with thesis adviser Kay Bosse. Beumer has tried to revive Shakespeare in modern times. Although there has been little interest in producing modern plays using Shakespearean staging concepts, Beumer has successfully done so using the work of contemporary English poet and playwright Francis Warner. Under Beumer’s direction as actor and manager, Warner’s “Moving Reflections” was produced in UD’s Immaculate Conception Chapel using a company of 12 actors, universal lighting, live music and a three-entrance thrust stage. Beumer believes the project demonstrates the validity of Shakespearean staging concepts, which do not depend on flashy scene changes, lighting effects and million-dollar sets.

Annie Pecoraro, a communication major and honors student, researched “Gender Analysis of Marketing Effectiveness in TV Commercials” with communication professor Teri Thompson, her thesis adviser. While most people prefer to channel surf during commercials on television, Pecoraro asked college students to watch them so she could determine how men and women respond to various gender representations. Students viewed three sets of commercials – one was female-oriented, one was male-oriented and one was gender-neutral. Through questionnaires and interviews, Pecoraro hoped to determine how well people recognize the deliberate intentions and decisions that go into the formation of commercials. She examined participants’ responses about the spokesperson or narrator, the number and gender of people in the commercial, the type of appeal used and the attitudes about the product the commercial evoked.

Hilary Ross, an English major and honors student, worked on her thesis, “The Presentation of Transgender and Transsexual Characters in Contemporary Film,” with thesis advisers Leslie Picca, assistant professor of sociology, and Dan Miller, professor of sociology. Ross wanted to take existing literature regarding transsexual and transgender individuals one step further. She analyzed transgender characters in two films, “Boys Don’t Cry” and “Transamerica” and two documentaries, “The Brandon Teena Story” and “Southern Comfort.” Examining each film frame by frame, Ross studied features such as setting, language, tone and character interaction to dissect the portrayal of transgender characters. She discovered that while these media productions seem sympathetic to the plight of the transsexual character, they also reinforce stereotypes and gender boundaries, thereby portraying these individuals as deviants and largely impacting the public’s opinion of transsexual individuals.

Tony Storti, a physics major and Berry Scholar, wrote “Characterization of Carbon Nanotubes Using Raman Spectroscopy” with thesis adviser Todd Smith, professor of physics. Storti studied the effectiveness of Raman Spectroscopy — a technique used to characterize condensed matter structures — in characterizing carbon nanotubes. His research attempted to characterize carbon nanotubes fabricated at both the University of Dayton and the Air Force Research Labs at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, providing insight into the fabrication process by analyzing the vibrational modes of the nanotube samples. Storti’s paper was accepted to be published as part of the Conference Proceedings, edited and produced annually by the University of North Carolina at Asheville and distributed to institutions across the nation.