

Students, legislatures to join at Capitol Hill

For the 10th year in a row, Weber State University alumni, undergraduate students and members of Utah's legislature will converge at Capitol Hill on Thursday. Outfitted in purple attire in true WSU spirit, alumni have been going up to the capitol since 2003 to talk to legislature and show support for WSU and its programs.



(Photo by Eric Jensen) Students presenting undergraduate research are joined by Weber State University alumni and faculty at the WSU Day at the Capitol in 2012. This year, 19 posters will be presented before the Utah legislature.

This year, 19 students will show off posters and give presentations about their undergraduate research. A few of these students will go on to the 27th Annual National Conference of Undergraduate Research, which is held in Wisconsin in April.

"Weber State Day at the Capitol is a great way to show off all of the good things that go on at the university and for our legislatures, and . . . the alumni who attended the institution and went on to the work force and saw the value that it had in life," said Brad Mortensen, vice president of WSU University Advancement.

According to Mortensen, the WSU Day at the Capitol started due to Utah State University and the University of Utah combining to hold a day for undergraduates to present research at the Capitol. These universities wanted "Undergraduate Research Day" to be exclusive and not include other universities. Since WSU alumni were already going up to the Capitol, they decided to invite undergrads doing research to present. This is the fourth year that undergraduates have been invited up to the Capitol to present projects.

The presentations featured this year will cover everything from dental hygiene to dance. The day provides alumni and students with an opportunity to speak to Utah lawmakers directly and make an impression.

"They are a lot more compelling at telling the Weber State story to lawmakers than I am," Mortensen said. "So it's just a great day to show off all that is great about Weber."

With the help of her team, Brogan Van Patten, a family studies junior, surveyed more than 200 students on campus for the team's "Technology: For Better, for Worse" study. Her survey results suggested that cell phone usage in college classrooms isn't distracting, and the surveyed students had a positive attitude toward cell phone usage. She and her team will present a poster on Thursday. This is Van Patten's first undergraduate presentation.

"This will be mine and my group's first time to present," Van Patten said. "I don't really know what to expect, since this is my first time going down there for presenting research, but I'm hoping that they take the time to come out and talk to us and that they find that we all spent a lot of time and effort on our projects and that we've actually done well on what we've researched."

Some of the projects to be presented are community involvement projects and community-based learning projects. Chad Saunders, a senior Spanish major, will present his community-based learning poster at the Capitol, and then later in April at the annual Service Symposium.

"I've found that it's just a great opportunity to empower youth to set goals and achieve those goals," Saunders said. "And so my way to give back is by my participation . . ."

Saunders will present a poster featuring the different responsibilities he's held with youth leadership organizations.

"I'm excited to at least be down there and be given an idea of a day with the legislatures and see what they're trying to promote and what other students are also presenting in their research with community-based learning," he said.

Participating students, alumni and faculty are encouraged to wear purple and grab the attention of their representatives.

"I hope that we will be able to talk to them a little bit about maybe funding for the university and maybe other little things that have to do with higher education," Van Patten said.

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