



# News Release

Missouri Western State University • 4525 Downs Drive • St. Joseph, MO 64507 • 816-271-5649

**Contact:** Kristy Hill

**Phone:** (816)-271-5649

**Title:** Public Relations/Marketing Director

**Email:** [hillk@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:hillk@missouriwestern.edu)

## WESTERN STUDENTS CONDUCT RESEARCH THIS SUMMER

**St. Joseph, Mo.** —June 27, 2006—Nanostructures, video game creation, domestic violence and a film documentary are some of the research projects conducted by teams in Missouri Western State University's Summer Research Institute.

The Institute, in its sixth year, offers both Western students and high school students an opportunity to work on small research teams with professors in several disciplines. This year, eight teams will conduct research for eight weeks, and present their results at a public symposium July 28.

Dr. Catherine Lawson, professor of economics, is leading a team of two current Western economics majors, Kevin Fontleroy, Kansas City, Mo.; and Stacia Stallman, St. Joseph; and a student who will be a freshman at Western this fall, Ben Kacirek from West Platte High School. They are designing a video game that teaches fundamental concepts of economics. Dr. Lawson became interested in creating a game to supplement a Principles of Microeconomics course, and figured her students would be interested in working on it.

"They know what is fun, or what is boring, and what doesn't work," she said. "But additionally, they have to think about economic concepts and fully understand them as they try to integrate economic concepts into a story."

Two teams, led by Dr. Jeff Poet, assistant professor of mathematics, and Dr. Todd Eckdahl, professor of biology, are collaborating and conducting synthetic biology research. They have entered an MIT-sponsored international competition and will present their research findings in November at MIT.

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Along with Dr. Lawson's economics team, the 2006 SRI teams include:

- Flippin' Pancakes: A Synthetic Biology Endeavor. Dr. Eckdahl and Dr. Poet, Western students Marian Broderick, Wichita, Kan., Adam Douglas Brown, St. Joseph; Trevor Butner, Savannah, Mo., Eric Jessen, Brookfield, Mo., Brad Ogden, St. Joseph; Kelly Malloy, Brookfield; and high school student Lane Heard, Central High School, St. Joseph.
- Examination of Protein Interactions in Pituitary Hormone Production. Dr. Ben Caldwell, associate professor of chemistry; Western students Darcie Elder, Gallatin, Mo.; and Janessa Hovey, St. Joseph; and Amanda Debey, Chillicothe High School.
- Solvent Induced Order in Alkyl Imidazolium Ionic Liquids. Dr. Michael Ducey, assistant professor of chemistry; Western student Debbie Wright, Cameron, Mo.; and high school students Jonathan Morrison and Joseph Noynert, both from Central High School in St. Joseph; and Tara Hill, Excelsior Springs High School.
- A New Generation of Construction Engineering – on the Moon. Dr. Zhili Gao, assistant professor of construction engineering technology; Western student Taryn Gibson, New Hampton, Mo.; and high school students Robin Jago, Mid-Buchanan High School; and Wil Tushaus, Savannah High School.
- Design and Simulation of Nanostructure Devices. Dr. Jinwen Zhu, assistant professor of electronics engineering technology; Western student David Generaux, Dekalb, Mo.; and high school student Tianyi Tim Wang, Central High School.
- Domestic Violence and Order Protection: What Will the Courts Provide? David Tushaus, associate professor of legal studies; and Western students Rebecca Wilson, Smithville, Mo. and Lyn Rossi, Lathrop, Mo.
- Pre-Production of RISK: At-Risk Youth-Girls Behind the Camera. Deny Staggs, assistant professor of theatre; Brandon Hylton, Smithville, Mo.; high school students Alexy Clark, Savannah High School; Derek Bascue and Sara Polachek, both from Lafayette High School, St. Joseph; Natalie Covault, Park Hill South; and Revson Goulry, Central High School.

More information about SRI and each project is available online at [www.missouriwestern.edu/appliedlearning](http://www.missouriwestern.edu/appliedlearning) , click on 2006 Summer Research Institute. The SRI director is Dr. Caldwell.

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