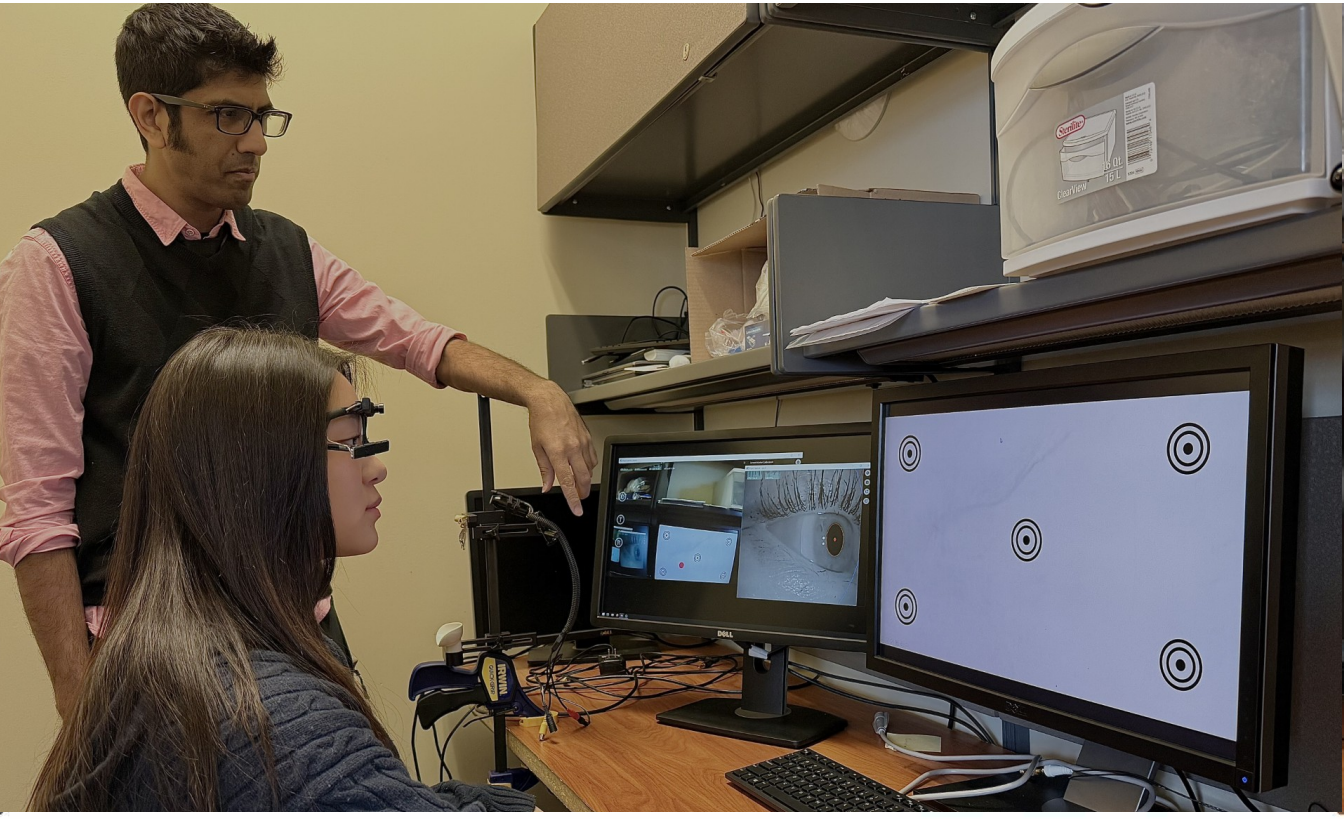
Honors Scholars and Undergraduate Research Poster Symposium

February 27, 2026 | 1:30-3:30 p.m. | Howard Performing Arts Center



Andrews University

J. N. Andrews Honors Program
Office of Research & Creative Scholarship

Welcome

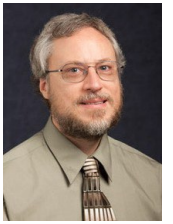
Thank you for joining us for the 2026 Honors Thesis Poster Symposium. We are delighted to gather to celebrate the creativity and curiosity of this year's Honors Thesis researchers. Since its founding sixty years ago, the J. N. Andrews Honors Program at Andrews University has fostered enthusiastically the transformative experiences of undergraduate research. By means of the Honors Thesis, the Honors Program requires its students to engage in substantive primary investigations in which students take an active role in posing research questions, designing and refining methodologies, collecting data and results, and critically analyzing the significance of their conclusions.

The Office of Research and Creative Scholarship, led by Dr. Gary Burdick, serves a vital role across campus in supporting and funding quality undergraduate research. The Undergraduate Research Scholar Award was established in 2002 to facilitate more opportunities for students to engage in research and creative scholarship in greater depth than required by their individual programs of study. The URS Award enables students to work closely with faculty mentors, participate in disciplinary conferences, and develop important professional skills. Many Honors Scholars have benefited from the URS funding and have noted that support on their poster boards.

A team of highly engaged faculty research mentors makes possible a rigorous program of undergraduate research. We thank each mentor for the commitment of time and energy invested in Andrews University's young scholars. The J.N. Andrews Honors Program and Office of Research and Creative Scholarship thank the Andrews University faculty members and Honors Council members who give willingly of their time and energy to support and evaluate undergraduate research. The Honors Council Members include Sonia Badenas, Karl Bailey, Anthony Bosman, Kylene Cave, Ryan Hayes, Katherine Koudele, Audrey Lim, Benjamin Navia, L. Monique Pittman, Davide Sciarabba, Karin Thompson, Rhonda Tomenko, Madison Vath, Ackley Will, and Robert Zdor. We also thank our Honors Program administrative assistant and recruiter, Gabriel Halsey, and the ORCS staff, Carlisle Sutton and Mordekai Ongo, as well as our student assistants, Audrey Lim and Anna Pak, for their hard work in helping to make this event a success.

Many thanks for working together!

L. Monique Pittman, PhD
Director of the J.N. Andrews Honors Program & Professor of English



Gary W. Burdick, PhD Dean of Research & Professor of Physics

Honors Thesis Poster Presentations

P-01 Etien Balorda (Peter Lyons, Biology)
Investigating the Role of Carboxypeptidase O in the KU812 Basophil-like Cell Line
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Carboxypeptidase O (CPO) is an enzyme that cleaves C-terminal acidic amino acids from proteins. Basophils are leukocytes that mediate immune responses, and they express CPO. To study CPO in basophil cells, a cell line, KU812, was artificially differentiated and activated, with CPO expression quantified via Western blotting. Expression was observed for the differentiated, activated, and control populations, but decreased with longer activation time. CPO was found to be located in small cytosolic puncta via immunocytochemistry. This, together with decreasing CPO levels upon activation, suggests that CPO may be found in basophil granules and released upon degranulation.

P-02 Semhar Hailu (Ackley Will, Computing)
Developing a Mobile Application to Support Daily Routines and Independence for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is associated with differences in sensory processing and executive functioning that can make managing daily tasks challenging. Although visual supports can improve independence, many mobile applications tend to lack usability and accessibility considerations tailored to users. This project aims to explore how improving mobile usability can better assist autistic individuals with daily routines. A cross-platform mobile application will be developed using React Native, Expo, and Firebase to support routine management through visual schedules, step-by-step task guidance, and positive reinforcement. The project emphasizes evidence-based design principles to reduce cognitive load and support user autonomy.

P-03 Nahzoni Haycock (Brendan Cross, Physics)
Extending Conventional fMRI Analysis to a Simpler Open-Source Analysis System
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) allows researchers to map brain activity by measuring blood oxygenation changes associated with neural responses. Current existing fMRI analysis methods rely on complex tools that create barriers to accessibility and interpretation. This thesis aims to extend conventional fMRI analysis into a simplified, open- source system that unifies preprocessing and statistical analysis. The project implements modern spatial and spatiotemporal wavelet methods to better preserve signal structure while reducing noise. Results from the proposed system will be compared against results from established fMRI analysis tools to assess the reliability, consistency, and applicability of the proposed system to the field of neuroscience research.

P-04 Daena Holbrook (Jay Johnson, Engineering)
Numerical Survey of EMIC Wave Properties: Heavy Ion Effects on EMIC Wave Propagation
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

This study consists of an in-depth numerical survey of electromagnetic ion cyclotron (EMIC) wave propagation near geosynchronous orbit using the Petra-M full wave simulation code. The survey considers varying concentrations of heavy ions (specifically He+ and O+) within the background plasma, ranging from 0% to 10%. The resulting wave solutions include wave polarization, poynting vector, wave normal angle, and energy absorption. Our findings indicate that (a) H-band EMIC waves are strongly affected by the heavy ions, and (b) even low concentrations of heavy ions, specifically less than 5% can significantly inhibit propagation of EMIC waves.

P-05 Edd Joseph (Ackley Will, Computing)
Automating Arrival Notice Data Entry
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Manual data entry in logistics causes significant delays and financial risks, particularly for high-compliance cargo. This thesis proposes Genba, an AI-driven system designed to automate data extraction from unstructured Carrier Arrival Notices. Utilizing large language models and transformer-based architectures, the project transforms PDF and email data into machine-readable JSON formats. The methodology encompasses a five-phase approach, from system design to quantitative evaluation of labor savings and error mitigation. By bridging the gap between theoretical machine learning and practical logistics workflows, this research demonstrates how AI can eliminate administrative bottlenecks, reduce demurrage fees, and enhance operational efficiency in the global supply chain.

P-06 Karis Lyons (Tamara Watson, Visual Art, Communication & Design)
Reimagining Campus Communication: A Study of Student Information Needs and Channels
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Through an analysis of responses from an online survey and follow-up interviews, this study examines how Andrews University students prefer to receive campus news and information and identifies opportunities to improve communication effectiveness. The research explores patterns in channel preferences and factors that influence how students engage with campus messaging. Findings will inform recommendations aimed at enhancing the clarity, accessibility, and impact of student-centered communication strategies.

P-07 Soren Oster (Ryan Hayes, Chemistry & Biochemistry)
Evaluating Metal Stability and Corrosion in Total Knee Arthroplasty Prosthesis
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Metals used in total knee arthroplasty (TKA) prosthetic components are subject to mechanical wear and cyclic loading during normal joint motion, which causes ion release into the surrounding biological environment. Elevated concentrations of metals such as cobalt, chromium, and nickel have been associated with adverse biological responses in vivo. In this study, a TKA femoral component was subjected to simulated wear and cyclic loading within a biofluid to replicate physiological conditions. Inductively coupled plasma–optical emission spectroscopy (ICP-OES) was used to quantify ion release following mechanical manipulation to determine whether these metals pose a significant problem.

P-08 Anna Pak (Karl Bailey, School of Social & Behavioral Sciences)
Luminance-Based Mentally-Generated Images Indicate Pupillary Transformation in Novel Method of Communication for Non-Verbal Patients
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

This study investigates the physiological reaction of mental imagery on pupil dilation. The primary objective is to utilize an eye tracker to evaluate whether mentally generating images of varying luminosity (ex. light vs dark) can induce measurable changes in pupil size. Research posits that imagining bright or dark scenarios will trigger pupil constriction or dilation, respectively, as a result of external stimuli. Validation of this physiological reaction holds significant clinical implications, as it can be used as a novel, accessible method of communication for non-verbal patients in medical situations.

P-09 Braeden Peterson (Jay Johnson, Engineering)
Correlation Analysis of Ionospheric Scintillations and Their Driver
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Plasma structures in the ionosphere cause disruptions in electromagnetic signals between GPS satellites and ground receivers, occurring with greater intensity and frequency during elevated geomagnetic activity. We conduct a correlation analysis between ionospheric electron content and scintillation events spanning six years with filters for geomagnetic activity. This long term statistical study of scintillations provides insight into regional and temporal trends beyond the scope of single event studies. In addition to enhancements during storms and substorms, our results identify regions of elevated scintillation consistent with enhanced convection, particle precipitation, and variations in ionospheric conductivity, highlighting their relevance to space weather impacts.

P-10

Isaiah Scaffidi (Jay Johnson, Engineering)
Effect of Equatorial Plasma Bubbles on High-Frequency Wave Propagation
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

High-Frequency radio communication involves the reflection of signals off the ionosphere to achieve long distance communication. At times, certain density irregularities may develop causing communication to be degraded or lost due to scattering effects. In this study, we use the PHaRLAP code to model individual rays, observing their path through the ionosphere in order to better understand how these irregularities affect radio wave propagation. We adopt the 2D electron density profile of a complex irregularity structure based on the SAMI3 model. We also investigate the implications of the statistics of phase differences for the scintillation index sigma phi.

P-11

Arianna Torres (Curtis Vanderwaal, School of Social Work)
Mental Health Challenges Across Ethnic Groups in a Small Christian Midwestern University
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Recent studies have shown increasing rates of mental health challenges among college students accross the US. This research project, conducted at Andrews University, examines how rates of depression, anxiety, trauma exposure, and suicidality vary across ethnic groups among enrolled students. Using self-reported survey data, the study compares mental health outcomes among White, Hispanic, Black, and Asian students. Findings aim to highlight disparities in mental health experiences and inform culturally responsive social work practices, campus support services, and targeted interventions to better meet the needs of diverse student populations

P-12

Jaden Wee (Daniel Gonzalez-Socoloske, Biology)
Behavioral Analyses of Reproductive Behaviors of the Freshwater Dolphin Tucuxi (Sotalia Fluviatilis)
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

This research project investigates the reproductive behavior of the freshwater tucuxi dolphin (Sotalia fluvatilis), whose mating strategies are poorly documented. In 2022, over Lake Amanã, Brazil, Dr. Gonzalez captured drone footage of a natural mating event involving multiple tucuxi individuals, which provided us a rare opportunity to study their behavior. Using Behavioral Observation Research Interactive Software (BORIS), behavioral states and point events, such as intromission, proximity, synchrony, periods of non-visibility, and agonistic behavior, were coded and quantified, enabling statistical and graphical analyses that characterize the tucuxi's social and reproductive interaction patterns.

Undergraduate Research Poster Presentations

P-13 Arianna Brieva (Marileda Tome, Communication Sciences & Disorders)
Attendance Rates of Parkinson's Clients Who Attend Group SPEAKOUT!® Therapy at Andrews University
Undergraduate Research Scholar

This study examines attendance rates of individuals with Parkinson's disease who are participating in group SPEAKOUT!® teletherapy at Andrews University Speech Clinic. Demographic data, therapy initiation, session attendance, and no-show rates were analyzed to identify patterns and factors associated with consistent participa- tion. Preliminary data from 122 clients (June–October 2025) showed that 27% attended group sessions, while 73% participated only in individual therapy. This study aims to determine how these client characteristics relate to attendance and therapy improvement, which will provide insight to improve clinical decision-making as well as strengthen long-term engagement with the SPEAKOUT! (R) program.

P-14 Corinna Bevier (Kylene Cave, English & Katharine Van Arsdale
Archiving the Five Day Plan: Creating a Finding Aid for SDA Tobacco Cessation Efforts
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar & Undergraduate Research Scholar

This project creates a comprehensive finding aid of artifacts archived in the Center for Adventist Research (CAR) relating to Seventh-day Adventist tobacco cessation efforts. Utilizing relevant digital databases, I determined which artifacts were housed in the CAR and organized artifacts into a finding aid, divided into series and subseries. The finding aid currently includes 130 artifacts dating from the 1960s to the 1990s, the majority of which relate to the "Five Day Plan," a global tobacco cessation clinic established in 1962. This finding aid will offer information for future researchers studying the impact of Seventh-day Adventism on anti-tobacco reform.

P-15 Francine Drysdale-Brown (Hyun Kwon, Engineering)
Design and Validation of a Diffusion-Based Headspace Sampling System for Standardized VOC Detection in Colorectal Cancer Screening
Undergraduate Research Scholar

Colorectal cancer (CRC) remains a leading cause of cancer mortality, underscoring the need for accessible, non-invasive screening methods. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) have emerged as promising bio- markers; however, variability in collection and analytical methods limits clinical translation. This project integrates the development of a diffusion-based headspace collection ion and conditioning device with efforts to standardize VOC detection. The system enables controlled VOC capture, humidity filtration, and re- peatable sample delivery to an electronic nose or Raman/SERS platform. By improving sampling con- sistency and data reliability, this work supports the advancement of scalable, VOC-based CRC screening technologies.

P-16 Alan J. Grimm (Anthony Bosman, Mathematics)
Minimal global weight of graphs with bounded weights of subgraphs
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar & Undergraduate Research Scholar

Extremal graph theory is a well-studied area, relating global properties of graphs to restrictions on Their local structure, yet little work has been done in the case of weighted graphs. Recently, Bosman et al. asked what is the minimum weight of a graph with n vertices such that every induced subgraph with k vertices has weight at least w, only answering this in the case of k=4 and w=3. We resolve this problem for a number of infinite classes of cases, and also provide upper and lower bounds for the general solution with any n, k, and w.

P-17 Emily Howell (Marileda Tome, Communication Sciences & Disorders)
Perpetual Evaluation of Vocal Fry Characteristics in Culturally Diverse Adult Voices.
Undergraduate Research Scholar

The lowest vocal register is known as vocal fry, characterized by a creaky, popping, and grating tone; with repeated use, it can become a vocally abusive behavior. This study compares vocal characteristics, specifically vocal fry, across various ethnicities and nationalities among young adults. In our initial analysis, no significant difference was found between regions of the United States and vocal fry usage per the researcher's judgement. In the second phase of this project, we are reanalyzing the data using a revised methodology.

P-18 Alexander Nwanganga (Ackley Will, Computing)
Machine Learning for Cardiac Arrhythmia Detection
Undergraduate Research Scholar

This work investigates machine learning approaches for automated classification of multiple cardiac arrhythmias from limited ECG recordings. Several deep learning models (CNNs) were evaluated across multiple random seeds and compared against a baseline using accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score. The proposed model achieved an average accuracy of 99.84% ± 0.04% and an F1 score of 99.72% ± 0.22%, significantly outperforming the baseline (accuracy 90.05% ± 7.99%, F1 62.17% ± 25.77%). These results demonstrate improved reliability and suitability for early arrhythmia diagnosis.

P-19 Levi Walker (Ackley Will, Computing)
Replication Study on Use of U-Net Architecture in Brain Tumor Segmentation
Undergraduate Research Scholar

U-Net architectures are widely used for brain tumor segmentation in MRI, yet reproducibility and training stability across implementations remain important concerns. This work presents a replication study of a standard 2D U-Net for whole-tumor segmentation using multi-modal brain MRI. Four MRI modalities (T1, T1ce, T2, and FLAIR) were used as input, and performance was evaluated using Dice similarity coefficient. To improve reliability, the model was trained and evaluated across multiple random seeds, and results were reported as mean performance with confidence intervals. The study demonstrates stable and reproducible segmentation performance and highlights the importance of multi-seed evaluation for accurate reporting.

P-20 Hayley Rawls & Owen Gregory (Jenica Joseph & Marileda Tome, Communication Sciences & Disorders)
Characteristics of Electronic Clinical Communication with Parkinson's Clients Participating in a SPEAK OUT
Undergraduate Research Scholar

This study briefly displays the findings on how effective online clinical documentation and communication for SPEAK OUT! ® (SO!)Parkinson's clients impacts treatment and/or quality of care. The demographic data of 123 patients show 59.7% of them are above 70 years, 76.5% are caucasian. Regarding the self-reported primary concern, voice volume (31.9%), voice quality (22.3%) and dysphagia (9.6%) were the most prevalent. The same concerns were referred as secondary concern, followed by "poor speech" with 11.8%. Data also showed PD patients seems to be more motivated to return student-initiated communications (R2 0.19).

P-21 Shane Whidden, Alex Pofelski, Yongjin Shin, Felipe Torres, Giulia Galli*, Yimei Zhu*, & Ivan K. Schuller* (Henry Navaro & Brendan Cross, Physics)
Interfacial Engineering of Light-Driven Transport in Oxide Heterostructures
Undergraduate Research Scholar

Complex oxide interfaces can modify the behavior of correlated heterostructures. Here we study a CdS/ La0.7Sr0.3MnO3 (CdS/LSMO) system using atomic-resolution electron microscopy with energy-loss analysis, electrical transport measurements, and first-principles calculations. The microscopy shows oxygen diffusion and manganese intermixing at the interface, causing partial oxidation of CdS and band bending. Transport measurements reveal a sharp light-induced drop in resistivity that is not present in bare LSMO. Calculations indicate hole injection into LSMO, changing the Mn3+/Mn4+ ratio and enhancing metallic transport. A simple transport model reproduces the response and links the effect to interface-driven photodoping for light-controlled oxide–semiconductor devices.

* External Collaborators

P-22 Claire Yang (Marileda Tome, Communication Sciences & Disorders)
Sleep Quality and Breathing Mode Among College-Aged Students
Undergraduate Research Scholar

Sleep quality is a vital aspect to one's life as it impacts health, specifically influencing cognitive abilities and mental well being. The breathing mode one utilizes while sleeping can directly affect optimality of one's sleep. Mouth breathing has been proven to increase the chances of disturbances during sleep. Sleep deprivation is prevalent especially amongst college students, and the effects of mouth breathing might add to their lack of quality sleep. This study will employ a questionnaire distributed to college students aged 18-35, intending to gather information on students' breathing patterns, sleep hours, and perceived rest levels. Discovering how mouth breathing negatively impacts sleep quality yields valuable information that can heighten aware- ness for the adequate adjustments necessary for improving sleep quality which consequently enhances overall health.

December 2025 Honors Thesis Poster Presentations

D-01 Andrew Francis (Daniel Weber,Visual Art, Communication & Design, Karl Bailey, School of Social & Behavioral Sciences)
Running from the Headlines: Evaluating Levels of News Consumption and Attitudes Across Generations
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

What behavioral trends exist across various generations and other demographics when it comes to how people consume and interact with news coverage? With newspapers and other traditional mediums for news consumption being largely phased out of our increasingly digital society, it is important for communicators and journalists to have a comprehensive understanding of how to best reach members of their desired audience. I will be studying the data collected and analyzing what trends are apparent in the survey's sample size, which can hopefully be applied to the larger population. To measure outcomes and conclusions, I will identify various percentages and correlations between the consistent demographics and their answers. I hypothesize that younger groups of people will tend to be less engaged with longer forms of news content but will be heavily reliant on shorter-form content for only a few specific topics when compared to older demographics.

D-02 Elise M. Inae (Melissa Poua, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Ryan Hayes, Chemistry and Biochemistry)
Effects of PAMAM Dendrimer Size on Antimicrobial Activity for Acne Treatment
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

This study investigated the antimicrobial activity of G1, G2, and G3-Hex-NH 2 polyamidoamine (PAMAM) dendrimers with an emphasis on how dendrimer size influenced their efficacy against C. acnes and S. epidermidis. Dendrimers are nano-sized, radially symmetric polymers composed of highly branched units that extend out from a central core. Dendrimers are known to exhibit antimicrobial activity against Gram-negative bacteria by disrupting the lipid bilayer and causing membrane damage. This study explored their effect on a different group of microorganisms–Gram-positive skin flora. Kirby-Bauer disk diffusion tests were performed to evaluate minimum inhibitory concentrations for each dendrimer solution. All generations of PAMAM dendrimers demonstrated antimicrobial activity against the two organisms.

D-03 Prudence Mange (Melissa Poua and Cristy Moss, Medical Laboratory Sciences)
Synthesis and Evaluation of Amidoximes for Activity Against Common Bacterial Pathogens
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

The rise of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria (AMR) has had devastating effects in healthcare, claiming approximately 4.71 million lives in 2019. Due to the devastating impact that AMR has on patient care, novel ways of combating AMR are paramount. This project aimed to synthesize amidoximes known to have antibacterial properties due to their susceptibility to bioisosterism, a feature useful in producing effective drugs. The Kirby Bauer method was used to evaluate the efficacy of the compounds against known pathogens: Pseudomonas aeruginosa,Staphylococcus aureus, and Escherichia coli. A significant result from this project was that P. aeruginosa was susceptible to one of the amidoximes synthesized in this project, 3-4- dihydroxybenzonitrile, as this bacteria is known for its resistance to most antibiotics.

D-04 Beaula Mangundah (Melissa Poua, Medical Laboratory Sciences)
Design, Synthesis and Biological Properties of Novel N-Substituted Phthalimide Derivative
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Phthalimides are a group of compounds among bicyclic non-aromatic nitrogen heterocycles that have gained recognition for their bioactivity across various fields, notably anticancer, antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory. This study discusses the synthesis of a novel phthalimide derivative and provides an analysis of its biological activity. It was conducted through a Boric acid Imide synthesis and yielded a successful derivative using hexylamine. The product was evaluated in vitro for antimicrobial, anticoagulant, and anti-inflammatory propertie using Kirby-Bauer disk diffusion, clotting time, hemolysis inhibition, and protein denaturation assays. It showed mild anticoagulant and anti-inflammatory activity.

D-05 Melissa Moore (Kristin Denslow and Kylene Cave, English)
Wild Robots: Technology, Wilderness, and Humanity in Becky Chambers' Monk and Robot Series
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

As technology advances and the environment deteriorates, the way people view the relationships between technology, wilderness, and humanity becomes crucially important for society to move forward. To investigate perceptions about technology's place in an environmentally conscious society, this project examines manifestations of wilderness/wildness and technology in Becky Chambers' Monk and Robot series through the lens of ecocriticism. Using Timothy Morton's concept of the ecological thought as a framework for analysis, the circumstances present in the novel suggest that the triangle separating humanity, technology, and wilderness has actually collapsed, replaced by an enmeshment of technology, wilderness, and humanity.

D-06 Rod Albert C. Olofernes (Melissa Poua, Medical Laboratory Sciences)
Green Synthesis of and Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing of (2Z)-2-[(4-fluorophenyl)methylidene]-1-benzofuran-3-one
J.N. Andrews Honors Scholar

Antimicrobial resistance is a global health challenge, rendering once-effective antibiotics less potent or entirely ineffective. In response, there is increasing interest in developing antimicrobial agents through environmentally sustainable methods. In this study, a fluorinated aurone derivative, (2Z)-2-[(4-fluorophenyl)methylidene]-1- benzofuran-3-one, was synthesized using a green Knoevenagel condensation approach. Eco-friendly catalysts were employed to minimize environmental impact and avoid hazardous byproducts. Product formation was confirmed to avoid wasting resources. The compound was evaluated for antimicrobial properties using a Kirby-Bauer plate, but did not demonstrate consistent or significant antimicrobial activity, therefore lacking promise as a standalone antibiotic.

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