CREATE

ECSU students showcase their research

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WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University Senior Meaghan Rodgers, a psychology major from Portland, researched the use of cell phones and their negative impacts on adolescents and young adults.

Rodgers is only on one social networking site and people always ask her “how do you go through college like that.”

And after looking into this topic, she said she will definitely not be on her phone — or social media sites — any more than she needs to.

Rodgers was just one of about 250 student presenters Friday at Eastern’s second annual Celebrating Research Excellence and Artistic Talent.

ECSU students of all majors, explored important concepts and produced research to display at the all-day conference, sharing their findings through presentations, professional posters, live music, dance performances, art and photography exhibits, documentary films and panel discussions all held in the student center.

“CREATE displays the vitality of Eastern as Connecticut’s premier public liberal arts institution,” stated Dickson Cunningham, an environmental earth science professor and conference co-chairman in a press release. “CREATE will be a superb learning experience for all who participate and a true celebration of our student’s achievements.”

As part of Rodgers research, she found social networking sites can be “very detrimental” to one’s self-esteem since some people may feel others appear to have a “better life” or appear to have more so-called “friends.”

She said kids are getting cell phones younger and younger and...
ECSU students show off research projects

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are not gaining interpersonal skills to hold a conversation. Also, in an age of texting and social media, Rodgers has found students have "less actual friends" with "no social circle for support."

Rodgers said cell phone use directly correlates with depression, which is marked by a lasting loss of interest or pleasure in usual daily activities, worthlessness, and impairments in functioning and can lead to difficulty with sleeping and concentration and may even lead to suicide.

According to her research, in the past decade media use — such as watching TV, computer and internet use, video games and using cell phones has increased by 44 percent. And within her research, she found that 75 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds owned their own cell phone.

She said several professors have said to her that students used to engage in conversation before class, but now they are always on their phones, and as a student she's noted that regardless of what the syllabus says in regards to use of phones in class, she always sees students on them since they are such a "comfort object."

CREATE encourages mentored research, an increased number of students presenting their work in a professional forum, it raises public awareness to the school's liberal arts mission and student accomplishments, and it shows the intellectual richness of the campus community.

In the auditorium, people were exposed to a little bit of culture, with a live demonstration of how to play the Danso — a traditional wind instrument in Korea that is similar to a recorder, as well as original plays that showed the importance of reviving and renovating old theater for modern day.

ECSU students, staff and faculty, as well as members of the community were invited to browse the conference's cultural and academic offerings that ranged from art to zoology, Shakespeare to social media and tax law to terrorism.

Communications major Lisa Lavoie, a sophomore from South Windsor, looked into the topic of banned books and the power of censorship.

She is currently in a communication ethics class at Eastern and has learned a great deal about the First Amendment — which is the freedom of speech.

"Hopefully people are learning as the years go by that it's silly to ban student access to books because they need to learn things eventually," Lavoie said.

She said the most recent case dealing with censorship in the United States involved an Arkansas school district in 2003 since the school was banning Harry Potter books from school, stating they encouraged disobedience, disrespect for authority, as well as presence of witchcraft.

Lavoie said the courts have sided with the students because schools should not ban a book just because of "sexuality, religion or political bias."

Some of the top banned books include "Looking for Alaska" by John Green, "Habibi" by Craig Thompson and "Fifty Shades of Grey" by E. L. James.

Freshman Lauren Atkinson, a biology major at ECSU from Harwinton, researched antibiotic compounds in soil microbes.

She was specifically looking at antibiotic resistant infections, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention around 2 million illnesses were caused by antibiotics in 2013, with at least 23,000 deaths.

Atkinson presumes this will be a growing problem and would like to caution people on the use of antibiotics, if they aren't necessary.

Stephen Horvath, a junior communications major from Fairfield, also displayed some of his independent study work — some black and white photographs he processed in the dark room.

Some of his photographs included a picture of a jelly fish tank at Norwalk Aquarium, part of a gas pump at a gas station in Willimantic, and some action shots where he was "in the right place at the right time."

He said the process is time-consuming and "it's not like the computer where you see everything you're doing" but even putting hours into processing a single photograph was "definitely worth it when the end results look like this."

And Melanie Ravo, an ECSU junior from Bethel majoring in childhood psychology and early childhood education, will be completing a study looking at the affects of television advertisements on children's food preferences with the focus on childhood obesity.

"One out of three children in the United States is obese," said "That's ridiculous."

She plans on conducting a study at Margaret S. Wilson Child and Family Development Resource Center to see what a child's food preference is and how commercials they are already exposed to affect the child. Ravo said obesity coincides with heart disease, hypertension, type II diabetes and various cancers. For a full list of student exhibits and performances, please visit easternct.edu/create.