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TN-SCORE Programs Broadens and Deepens State's Research Base

Tennessee Solar Conversion and Storage using Outreach, Research and Education (TN-SCORE) hosted a workshop facilitated by the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) from April 8-10 at Belmont University. The workshop was designed to promote and assist schools in instituting or enhancing their undergraduate research programs. Over fifty administrators from twelve Tennessee universities (University of Tennessee, Knoxville; University of Tennessee, Chattanooga; University of Tennessee, Martin; Tennessee Tech University; University of Memphis; Tennessee State University; Austin Peay State University; Belmont University; Carson-Newman University; Lincoln Memorial University; Lipscomb University and Fisk University) came together to discuss opportunities for their institutions to create, augment action-based learning opportunities.

The CUR workshop was well-received as demonstrated by 90.9% of the respondents in a survey after the event rated the workshop as excellent or good. In the same survey, 100% of the participants reported the workshop was beneficial and 81.9% of the participants responded that they have implemented or going to implement their plans within the next 6 months.

Working through the CUR participants, TN-SCORE announced the funding of Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) positions which enables undergraduates the opportunities to work on alternative energy solutions in the labs of TN-SCORE researchers at University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Vanderbilt Universities and Tennessee Tech. During the summer, TN-SCORE funded 15 REU positions. 13 of the 15 students hailed from colleges represented at the CUR workshop. Each student was given a competitive stipend, housing, food allowance and lab supplies.

These summer REU students are immersed in a 9-10 week intensive laboratory experience mentored by world-class researchers. The ability to work on pressing alternative energy research issues made and positive impact these students. In a post-REU survey, 100% of students said the REU program has helped them decide on their future. 80% of the students answered that the program gave them a better understanding of how a scientist approach and work on research, while 66.7% of the students plan on continuing their education in graduate school.

The CUR workshop and the REU program are avenues TN-SCORE is using to broaden the state's research capacity and infrastructure. The goal of increased competitiveness in STEM areas will have a significant effect on Tennessee's economic and workforce development.

About TN-SCORE – Tennessee Solar Conversion using Outreach, Research and Education (TN-SCORE) is Tennessee's first NSF RII Track I Research Infrastructure award. It provides a unique opportunity to develop the platform for enhanced research capacity and greater competitiveness within all Tennessee's diverse academic institutions. For more information, please visit www.tnepscor.org.

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TN-SCORE 2011 SUMMER REU STUDENTS