UC Students Speak on Capitol Hill then Win Big at OSGC

By: Desiré Bennett

UC aerospace engineering students met with Ohio legislative government officials to discuss SIERRA research at the Space Grant Directors’ National meeting in Washington, D.C. OSGC awarded nine students more than $54,000 in scholarships to support their research.

A team of three aerospace engineering students met with Ohio’s legislative government officials at the 2013 Space Grant Directors’ National meeting in Washington, D.C. to speak about their research “Surveillance for Intelligent Emergency Response Robotic Aircraft” (SIERRA).

According to associate professor of aerospace engineering & engineering mechanics Kelly Cohen, PhD, who supervises the SIERRA project, the research presented is “about exploiting the developments made in unmanned aerial vehicles towards making fire-fighting operations safer and more effective.”

SIERRA integrates small, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) with global positioning systems, environmental data, video and fire-prediction software to give real-time information about where a fire is burning, and
where it is moving. According to aerospace engineering graduate Kevin Davis, who presented at the meeting in Washington, SIERRA is causing a lot of attention.

“We knew our research for Dr. Kelly Cohen’s SIERRA fire-fighting UAV was generating quite a lot of buzz in the industry media and at UC,” he said. “But we had no idea that we would be invited to something as prestigious as the National Space Grant Directors’ meeting to speak about our research.”

The trio of aerospace students’ day was filled with meetings on Capitol Hill where they spoke to both Senate Offices and all 16 Congressional offices for the state of Ohio.

This event stood as a significant distinction for the UC aerospace program because, according to Dr. Cohen, “There were very few student teams from across the country [at the event] and not only did the UC aerospace team represent the Ohio Space Grant Consortium, but the state of Ohio as well.”

2013-14 OSGC Award

In an effort to encourage advanced education in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) the Ohio Space Grant Consortium (OSGC) offers financial support through competitively awarded scholarship opportunities.

This year, nine aerospace engineering students are selected to receive the OSGC award. Each student award was assessed based on academic standing, research proposal, letters of recommendations, extra-curricular activities and service. This year’s recipients are:

Graduate Awards

Doctoral Fellowship Awards are $20K (plus UC tuition waiver):
1. Robert D. Knapke, PhD, 3rd year of support
2. Nicholas S. Heeb, PhD, 2nd year of support

Undergraduate Awards

Award amount depends on whether research is for one or two semesters, and date of graduation:
1. Nicholas Schwartz, (class of 2014): $4,000 for 2 semesters
2. Sophia Mitchell (class of 2015): $3000 for 2 semesters
3. Owen Macmann (class of 2015): $1500 for 1 semester
4. Brandon Cook (class of 2015): $1500 for 1 semester
5. Andrea Gillis (class of 2015): $1500 for 1 semester
6. Jacob Holden (class of 2015): $1500 for 1 semester
7. Kyle Flenar (class of 2016): $1500 for 1 semester

All scholarship recipients are required to propose and initiate a research project or educational activity under the guidance of a faculty mentor during the academic school year. Recipients must also attend and present the findings of their research/educational activity at the Annual Student Research Symposium, held every April at the Ohio Aerospace Institute in Cleveland, Ohio.

CEAS congratulates each of these exemplary students!