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ECU chemist develops polymer for topical treatments

The Daily Reflector

A local chemist is working with a Durham-based firm to produce new kinds of polyurethane coatings suitable for pharmaceutical use on humans.

Timothy Romack just completed the first leg of a year-long contract with Chesson Laboratories this summer.

"We are developing new ways to put polyurethane-based coatings together on a molecular level," said Romack, who has taught at East Carolina University since 2001.

ECU NOTES

"Here the focus is to design and make the right molecules do the job."

Romack is designing and testing polymer structures that, could for example, seal and protect wounds or injuries and repel water, but also have pores that are large enough for water vapor to pass, yet still block bacteria. Two ECU students, James Brooks of Fayetteville and Akarsh Manning of Garner, assisted Romack

this summer on the project.

Including opportunities for student research is an important part of the partnership with Chesson, Romack said. The students are learning not only how to apply their knowledge of chemistry principles, Romack said, but they also get to work on a team and figure out how to create a product that could have a real-world application. It puts their education in context and prepares them for careers, he said.

"Our students have intellectual ownership of these types of projects: they understand

the company and its needs," he said. "ECU is in a unique situation, with excellent research instrumentation and a significant emphasis on our undergraduates doing research, there are more opportunities to be involved in leading-edge projects here than in other schools."

In the past year, Chesson Laboratories has developed a topical application for toe fungus, and three of its products are in the process of being submitted as FDA-listed devices. Romack's polymer chemistry expertise is expect-

ed to advance products for applications to treat dermatitis, as well as wound closure and burns.

The \$30,000 contract, which began in May, will last through 2008 and is expected to lead to additional funding as early as this fall.

Two professors receive award

Two College of Education professors are the co-recipients of the 2007 Howard A.

Dawson Best Research Paper Award.

Mary Beth Corbin, director of the N.C. Teaching Fellows Program, and Vivian Martin Covington, director of Teacher Education won the award for the paper, "Factors Influencing Rural High School Students' Decisions to Teach." They will receive the award during a luncheon at the annual National Rural Education Association Research Symposium Luncheon being held Nov. 10 in Oklahoma City.

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FARMVILLE FAVORITE



Baptists pushing for own