

## Students present experiential research project findings at Mayo Clinic

*March 29, 2019*

Four students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University recently concluded their work in the **Mayo Innovation Scholars Program (MISP)**.

CSB senior biochemistry major Ellen Arnold (Kimball, Minnesota), CSB senior global business leadership major Mary Gaytko (Minneapolis, Minnesota), SJU senior biochemistry major Will Gillach (Lindstrom, Minnesota) and CSB senior communication major Madelyn Zinken (Big Lake, Minnesota) presented project research on a biomarker approach to predicting cancer.

The interdisciplinary program provides research opportunities to teams of undergraduates from Minnesota private colleges, under the guidance of select master's-level business students. Students in this collaborative program work at the interface of science, medicine and business. Through teamwork, they learn the practical aspects involved in bringing an idea to the marketplace.

The CSB and SJU students worked as a team on the project on campus throughout the 2018-19 academic year. They presented their findings in March at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and in a written report. On average, each student put in roughly 175 hours of work during the program.

### **Support and praise from advisers**

The students were supported by Kathryn Greiner, a CSB alumna and MBA student at St. Catherine University, St. Paul. CSB/SJU faculty members Lisa Lindgren, associate professor of global business leadership, and Jennifer Schaefer, associate professor of biology, served as project advisers. Lindsey Gunnerson Gutsch, program coordinator in the Student Success Center at CSB and SJU, provided administrative support.

"This program is such a great opportunity for students to work across academic disciplines to work on an actual scientific discovery," Lindgren said. "The growth that the team displays is really inspirational."

"The Mayo Scholars program offers students the unique opportunity to work on a real project with colleagues from different disciplines," Schaefer said. "The interdisciplinarity, along with a high level of ambiguity that requires student teams to think critically and generate evaluation criteria, are extremely impactful. Students grow academically and personally throughout this project. This year's team did a fantastic job of working together to produce a detailed, thoughtful evaluation and recommendation."

The students and faculty were also joined this year at the presentation by CSB President Mary Dana Hinton.

Hinton commented, "Our students clearly demonstrated the power of a CSB/SJU education. Their presentation showed that the liberal arts prepare you to think critically and creatively, and to solve the world's most complex problems. Their presentation was very well researched, exuded confidence and joy, and placed the patient at the center. I am incredibly proud that their project has the potential to impact the common good."

Now in its 13th year, MISP aims to assist high-achieving students from private colleges in Minnesota gain real-life experience of innovation and commercialization under the auspices of Mayo Clinic Ventures. The students help in the assessment of innovative technologies submitted by Mayo researchers.

The program was designed in 2006 by John Meslow, a retired Medtronic executive. Together with Mayo Clinic Ventures and the Minnesota Private College Council (MPCC), Meslow created an innovative model for student experiential learning.

Mayo Clinic staff members and program administrators were impressed by the quality of the students' work.

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From left: Kathryn Greiner, Will Gillach, Madelyn Zinken, Mary Gaytko and Ellen Arnold.

## Student Reflections

**Ellen Arnold:** “The Mayo Innovation Scholars Program is truly a way to bring the classroom to life and requires collaboration between students of multiple disciplines. It showed me how the concepts and technologies that I have learned about in previous biology or chemistry courses are analyzed, evaluated and applied into the ‘real world.’ It taught me how to embrace ambiguity, research diligently and work professionally with a group of intelligent and hard-working peers.”

**Mary Gaytko:** “The Mayo Innovation Scholars Program was an incredible interdisciplinary opportunity that taught me how to be comfortable and confident when working with ambiguity. This program influenced my goals as it opened my eyes to the world of medical innovation and the opportunities that exist, within which you feel like your work truly has an impact.”

**Will Gillach:** “The Mayo Innovation Scholars Program provided me the opportunity to learn about the integration of medical innovation and business that is required to translate a healthcare product/service from the benchtop to the bedside. This hands-on, meaningful project taught me the inner workings of applied innovation — which I hope to utilize in future endeavors to create impactful change throughout health care.”

**Madelyn Zinken:** “I am so thankful I had the opportunity to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Not only was the experience rewarding, it also challenged my critical thinking skills and required me to put my education to the test in a very real-world situation. I couldn’t be more thankful for Jen, Lisa, Kathryn and the entire Mayo Innovation Scholars staff at Mayo Clinic for their constant support and dedication during this process!”