



“HERE AT TRINITY, YOU GET TO TAKE A WHOLE PROJECT AND JUST DO IT.”



NICK LACY

## *Neuroscience major Abigail Garrity '07 presents her research in national forums*

*by Drew Sanborn*

"I decided to come to Trinity because I knew I would be able to start doing research as a first-year student." While some observers might consider this an ambitious plan for a student just beginning college, Abigail Garrity, now a senior neuroscience major, had a good chunk of research under her belt when she arrived here. A veteran of the Authentic Science Research Program at Poughkeepsie High School, she had already conducted a study of adolescent drug use under the guidance of a faculty member at nearby Marist College. "That's when I really became interested in research," says Garrity, "so I stayed on for a fourth year in that class and helped teach new students research methodology."

Her experience has begun to pay off handsomely, as two of her major Trinity projects have recently received national attention. During her junior year, she participated in the College's Health Fellows Program, which is designed for undergraduates who wish to observe and participate in a variety of health-related activities, including research projects, clinical services, educational seminars, and rounds at Hartford Hospital, Institute of Living, and Connecticut Children's Medical Center. The result of her work was a paper entitled, "Quality of Life in the First Year Following Diagnosis of Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Effect of a Positive Family History." The quality of Garrity's investigation was such that she was invited to present the paper at a meeting of the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition in Orlando, Florida, last October. According to Dr. Jeffrey Hyams, who is the director of the Section of Pediatric Gastroenterology at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and who supervised Garrity's work, "Abbie did

“Abbie is a stellar example of an energetic student seizing one of the amazing research opportunities available to Trinity undergraduates.”



a great job. From conception of the project, data gathering, analysis, and then presentation, it turned into a very worthwhile effort. Certainly the highlight was her ability to present the research at the national pediatric gastroenterology meeting.”

### Access to research facilities and faculty collaborators

Ever since her sophomore year, Garrity has worked at the Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, located close to Trinity at Hartford’s Institute of Living (IOL). Students from the College regularly participate in research projects at the Olin Center, in collaboration with IOL researchers, as well as at other facilities at the Institute of Living. One outcome of her work there is an article entitled, “Aberrant ‘Default Mode’ Functional Connectivity in Schizophrenia,” which was published in the March 2007 issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, with Garrity listed as the lead investigator. Other researchers included faculty and staff members at Trinity, Yale University, and the Institute of Living. Professor of Philosophy Dan Lloyd, one of the other authors of the article says, “Abbie is a stellar example of an energetic student seizing one of the amazing research opportunities available to Trinity undergraduates. In most places, you’d need to be an advanced graduate student or post-doc to have access to the facilities and collaborators that Abbie worked with.”

As much as Garrity is interested in continuing her research, she also has a passion for helping young people find their life’s path, so she plans to

postpone medical school or an advanced academic degree for a couple of years. Instead, she will work with the National Student Leadership Conference, where she has already served as program director during her senior year. “We work with high school students who are interested in medicine,” Garrity says. “I’ve become really passionate about empowering young people. I think that that is the best way to make positive change.”

In a similar vein, she began the Young Women’s Leadership Forum at Trinity College, a program that started last year when she was the community service director for Zeta Omega Eta. “We’ve expanded the program this year to include topics about issues affecting women globally, and like last year, we also taught them about planning for college, leadership goals, and feminism. We have all five Hartford middle schools on board this year, including students from the Hartford Magnet Middle School at the Learning Corridor, which is really exciting.”

“Research at a small liberal arts college like Trinity, where you get to work closely with professors, is a lot more valuable than working in a huge lab where there are tons of research assistants. Here, you get to take a whole project and just do it—you are able to look at whatever you are interested in, however you are interested in it, and go wherever you want to go with it. That’s one of the best things about Trinity.”