WMU Engineering Students Win First Place at Conference in Istanbul, Turkey

Two WMU Electrical and Computer Science department students, **Eric A. Pietrowicz** and **Tyler W. Bayne**, who are working with **Dr. Pnina Ari-Gur** on her National Science Foundation grant, traveled to Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey to present a paper on their work at the 21st International Cultural and Academic Meeting of Engineering Students (ICAMES). To be accepted at this competitive conference is an honor and recognition of a high quality project. Ari-Gur who is a professor in the WMU Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering department, sent the pair to the conference to present the NSF and Hewlett-Packard funded 3D virtual laboratory research project. Eric an electrical engineering undergraduate student, delivered the paper while Tyler a masters student in computer engineering, served as a graduate student advisor. Both Eric and Tyler were also winners of the Undergraduate Research Excellence award for their work on this project.

The presentation was very well received by audience and referees alike and led to the team winning first place in the competitive part of the conference. Eric and Tyler presented at the conference a computer-game style 3-D virtual scanning electron microscope that is fully interactive. This simulation and others such as tensile testing of materials and X-ray diffraction, are being phased into the undergraduate engineering curriculum at Western Michigan University.

Over 50 institutions around the globe have requested and received the ‘hands-on’ simulated experiments to use at their sites. Professors in the audience were impressed with the virtual lab and plan to adopt the simulations for use in their classes.

The conference also included a variety of tours and activities with representatives from the other 17 countries in attendance. These activities included Culture Night, a school-wide carnival, Turkish Night, and local concerts at the university. It was a fun and educational experience that created many new friendships, as well as professional contacts.

~ Dr. Pnina Ari-Gur, contributor