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Wengryniuk Tapped for Merck "Women in Chemistry" Scholarship

Winthrop University

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Quick Facts

- Sarah Wengryniuk is one of the recipients of The Merck Index "Women in Chemistry" scholarship.
- Wengryniuk, a native of Maryland, will begin the Ph.D. program in chemistry at Duke University.

ROCK HILL, S.C. - **Sarah Wengryniuk**, a double chemistry and biology major at Winthrop University who graduated May 5, has been selected as one of five inaugural recipients of **The Merck Index "Women in Chemistry" scholarship** for 2007.

Her award will be presented at the Women in Industry Breakfast at the **234th American Chemical Society National Meeting & Exposition** in Boston on Aug. 20. Following the breakfast, award winners will each make oral presentations on their undergraduate research as part of a special Award Symposium, "Many Faces of Chemistry: The Merck Index Women in Chemistry Award Symposium."

This is the first year for **The Merck Index "Women in Chemistry" scholarship program**. Merck & Co., Inc. had more than 50 applicants from the U.S. and Canada for the five scholarships which will provide \$5,000 for the recipient to attend a Ph.D. program in synthetic organic chemistry or medicinal chemistry, according to Cherie Koch, associate editor of The Merck Index. The other four winners are from the University of Guelph in Canada, University of Texas at Dallas, University of California, Irvine, and University of California, Berkeley.

In August, **Wengryniuk** will begin the Ph.D. chemistry program at Duke University where she will focus on organic chemistry.

The award ranks as one of the most significant recognitions for a Winthrop chemistry major over the past decade, said Pat Owens, chair of the **Department of Chemistry, Physics and Geology**. **Wengryniuk's** mentor, Aaron Hartel, an assistant professor of chemistry, said she is quite possibly the most motivated, intelligent and dedicated student he's worked with.

"She has an uncommon interest and ability in science and has grown to be truly passionate about organic chemistry," said Hartel. "She has shown time and time again that she embraces a challenge, and I believe she will be an outstanding graduate student and an accomplished chemist."

After taking an organic chemistry class taught by Hartel, **Wengryniuk** expressed interest in conducting more research under his tutelage. She was assigned to work on an organic synthesis project involving silyl-lithium reagents to selectively reduce alpha,beta-Epoxy-carbonyls. Hartel said the research involved improving new organic methodology, providing pharmaceutical researchers novel and more efficient reactions to transform small, simple molecules into more complex, useful compounds.

Wengryniuk presented some of her research at the national American Chemical Society meeting last year in San Francisco. She also was one of the students in the chemical synthesis course involved in the extensive seven-step synthesis of nicotine through a new route that has produced a number of novel intermediates, Hartel said.

A resident of Adamstown, Md., **Wengryniuk** originally planned to become a surgeon but changed her mind after conducting research. "The laboratory is clearly a dynamic learning environment," she said.

“The undergraduate research program really opened up so many opportunities for me. It was one of my best experiences at Winthrop.”

Wengryniuk is a graduate of Urbana High School, where she was valedictorian of her class. A member of Winthrop’s cross country and track teams in her freshman, sophomore and junior years, she was named to the indoor track and field All-Big South Academic Team for 2004-05.

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