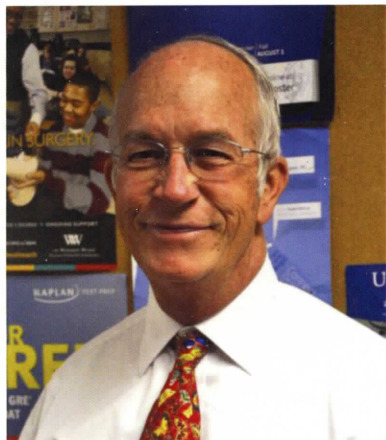


University of Scranton professor and student make national presentation on popcorn

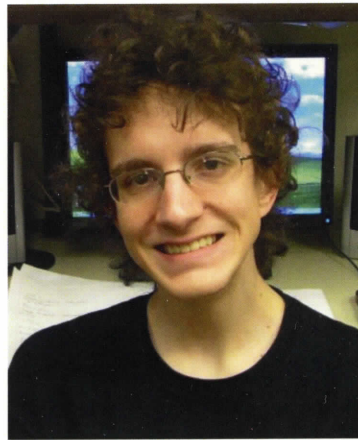
By Rebekah Brown (Staff Writer), Published: March 26, 2012

thetimes-tribune.com

A weekend of firsts for one University of Scranton student was capped off with a presentation to the American Chemical Society in San Diego on Sunday.



Dr. Joe Vinson, Ph.D.



Michael Coco, Jr. Chem Major

Michael Coco, 21, who had never flown on a plane before, accompanied his chemistry professor, **Joe Vinson**, Ph.D., to the West Coast to present their research on the antioxidant content of popcorn at the American Chemical Society National Meeting and Exposition. After their presentation, they took part in a live news conference webcast.

"We have figured out how many antioxidants are in popcorn and what compounds they are," Mr. Coco explained. "Antioxidants - you hear about them all the time. They help out with anti-cancer things. They eliminate free radicals in your body." Popcorn is also 100 percent whole-grain.

"It's the only food that's 100 percent whole-grain, and the fact that it has antioxidants has good health benefits for you," he said. "It's the ideal snack," Dr. Vinson said in the webcast. "It's the king of snacks."

Dr. Vinson, an expert in analyzing healthful components in chocolate, nuts and other common foods, said polyphenols - antioxidant substances - are more concentrated in popcorn than in other food.

Popcorn averages only about 4 percent water, while polyphenols are diluted in the 90 percent water that makes up many fruits and vegetables. In another surprising finding, the researchers discovered that the hulls of the popcorn - the part that everyone hates for its tendency to get caught in the teeth - actually has the highest concentration of polyphenols and fiber.

When Dr. Vinson approached Mr. Coco for the research, he was immediately on board. "I thought it was interesting because I eat a lot of popcorn," he said. "Every Saturday night at my house is popcorn night. It turns out, it's pretty good for you."

Mr. Coco explained that the next step in their research will be to determine how much of the whole grain is absorbed by the body. He said they also plan to compare different brands of popcorn. After several other first-time experiences, he said, he was honored to make his presentation. "There are 20,000 or so people here, so it's a really big thing," he said. "It's a little scary, too. It's a really neat thing to come and present at a national meeting."

After the presentation and news conference, he planned to seek out some California popcorn to sample, just for fun.