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## Faculty Focus: The being behind the buzz

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# The being behind the buzz

*Insect Fusion multimedia project engages students in research*

By Taylor Provine

If you have never seen a bee do the “waggle dance,” Jeremy Marshall can show you.

In fact, he recently performed the dance while wearing a bee costume on the Kansas State University Manhattan campus and students stopped to watch.

The spectacle had a purpose: Marshall, associate professor of entomology in the College of Agriculture, was filming a video and demonstrating how bees communicate the location of the best food source by “dancing” in a figure-eight pattern.

The bee waggle dance video is one of many short, fun videos that are part of Insect Fusion, which is the name of Marshall’s YouTube and Twitter pages. The multimedia project shows how insects intersect with disciplines such as science, art, philosophy and engineering, as well as their roles in society and culture.

Through Insect Fusion, Marshall’s interest in insects meets his passion for education. Plus, he has some fun along the way.

“I started making these videos to better engage students in the first online class I taught in summer 2018, and that’s when the silliness just started emerging,” Marshall said. “As I began to see the influence the videos had on my students, I started thinking about how the videos could positively affect teaching, so I began to incorporate them into my other classes to augment the topics the students were learning.”

The outcome resulted in higher test scores on video-related questions than in previous years for the same questions, he said.

Because Marshall also is passionate about undergraduate research, he has used the videos to recruit students to the entomology department’s undergraduate research program, of which he serves as director.

After observing that many undergraduates were interested in research, he created a new type of program open to all students, regardless of major or academic standing.

During the program, students spend about 10 hours over 10 weeks on a research project in areas of STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering and math, as well as education, business, art and more. Based on their interests, the students are matched with participating faculty members or industry professionals. The students analyze data, present posters at a research symposium and have their work published in K-State’s digital library.

“By the end of the program, the students’ confidence levels go up, and they can do an excellent job of explaining their research,” Marshall said.


The videos have been very successful in recruiting students to the program, which has involved 124 students in the last three years, Marshall said. As the new faculty director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry, Marshall’s goal is to grow the program to potentially serve a few thousand students each year. **k**



## ➤ Seek more

Check out the Insect Fusion multimedia project.

 **Twitter:** @InsectFusion

 **YouTube:** [bit.ly/2mvnsu3](https://bit.ly/2mvnsu3)

[k-state.edu/seek](https://k-state.edu/seek)

*The multimedia project Insect Fusion, created by Jeremy Marshall, associate professor of entomology, engages viewers with insects and how they relate to science, art, philosophy and engineering.*