April 23, 2020 — Utah State University biological engineering undergraduate Morgan Bishop received the Undergraduate Researcher of the Year at this year’s Robins Awards. The Peak Prize is awarded to one student each year who shows consistent engagement in independent inquiry through student employment and their independent research grants. Award winners also typically seek out opportunities to share their results in undergraduate research events and professional conferences. She received the award April 10.

Bishop works under the direction of associate professor of biological engineering Elizabeth Vargis and in collaboration with Cindy Hanson and Abigail Benninghoff in the Tissue Engineering Lab. Her research involves extracting fatty acids from mouse fecal samples and analyzing them using spectroscopic techniques. Bishop works with Raman spectroscopy to better identify these samples. Her goal is to develop a method of noninvasive detection of inflammatory bowel disease.

“This recognition feels surreal and is a culmination of years of hard work for me and my team,” she said. “I am humbled to be chosen from the amazing candidates who are doing incredible research. Some fantastic people have supported me the entire way. I’m especially grateful to Dr. Elizabeth Vargis, Dr. Cynthia Hanson, Dr. Abigail Benninghoff and the rest of the team in Dr. Vargis’ Lab.”

Bishop will graduate with a bachelor’s of science degree in biological engineering in May. She plans to continue her passion for research in her future positions as she pursues a career in engineering.

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