

Student researchers take on millions of experiments

More than 40 undergraduate students are poised to participate in a research project that could, someday, have positive consequences for one of every five people in the U.S.

Over the next three years, SCSU Assistant Professor Christopher Kvaal and his biology students will be studying *Toxoplasma gondii*, a single-celled parasitic organism that lives in human beings and animals. The organism, which infects one of every five people, remains inside the body permanently. Although fairly benign in healthy humans, it poses significant threats to the unborn as well as individuals with suppressed immune systems.

Kvaal and his students hope to identify vulnerabilities in the organism. The research team will run the experiment millions of times – Kvaal expects a discovery about 1 out of every 1,000 times. He believes that what his students learn will help lead to development of a drug that kills the *Toxoplasma* infection, though that could be as far off as ten years.

The project is supported by a \$162,500 Academic Research Enhancement Award from the National Institutes of Health.

