



NewsBriefs

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The Undergraduate Research Programs Conference Planning Committee is busy putting together the final details for the upcoming conference. As part of any great conference, we need members of the URPD community to help share best practices, innovative programs, and upcoming ideas with the greater undergraduate research community. Thus, the committee is looking for abstracts to help make URPC a great experience for all attendees. Below are the listed themes for this year’s conference.

Abstracts are due February 19, 2019. [More information.](#)

- **Assessment:** Strategies for evaluating undergraduate research projects, using data to improve the experience or providing feedback for funding support.
- **Diversity in Research:** Effective strategies for promoting diversity in undergraduate research, undergraduate research that informs diversity issues, and collaborations that have incorporated divergent perspectives into undergraduate research.
- **High-Impact Learning Strategies:** Methods, approaches, courses, and practices that have proven very effective in achieving learning outcomes that incorporate undergraduate research. This can include the retooling of existing courses, applying research in courses, and imbedding research projects in courses.
- **Internationalization:** Ways to incorporate an international element into undergraduate research, including research-based travel, media-assisted collaboration, data exchange, and the mechanics of organizing an international undergraduate research component.
- **Undergraduate Research Administration and Budgeting—Nuts and Bolts:** Approaches that have proven effective in managing and organizing undergraduate research and/or in funding the means by which the research can be undertaken. Budgeting innovations, successful central strategies, institutional support, and so forth are all applicable. Other topics in this theme could include training programs for faculty in mentoring undergraduates, ways to address faculty compensation issues, and methods for smoothing the transition into the organization.
- **Undergraduate Research Collaborations:** Examples of effective partnerships with undergraduate researchers, involving strategies, team projects, and the ethics of collaboration in undergraduate research.

Session formats vary; they include panels, 75-minute interactive sessions, 10-minute presentations, and poster sessions.



Pictured above:
Students presenting at WiSys

Innovative Programming: Student Research Dissemination Using the “Elevator Pitch” Model

Karen Havholm, University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire

More and more campuses are instituting an additional dissemination pathway for student research, using variations on the entrepreneur’s classic brief “elevator pitch.” The goal is to have a polished, short explanation of the research goals, methods, and outcomes, as well as make clear to a broad audience why the research is significant and relevant.

WiSys

In 2015, WiSys, which is the UW System tech transfer entity, approached UW–Eau Claire about piloting an event called “WiSys Quick Pitch.” In a nutshell, students compete with a three-minute speech describing their research project and its potential or actual benefits for society, in language understandable to people outside the discipline of the research. Here is how it works:

- Students sign up to compete when they submit their abstract for the on-campus research presentation day (early March)
- Students participate in a training session in which a coach helps them hone their speech (early April)
- During research week, students present their polished speech to a panel of alumni and administrator judges, who select a winner in STEM fields and a winner in non-STEM fields (late April/early May)
- WiSys provides cash prizes to the winners and runners-up, and the winners are invited to participate in the statewide competition at the WiSys summer conference, now that many have instituted this event (July)
- The video of the presentations are edited into clips that are shared with student participants and their mentors to use however they wish

Participation on campus has grown each year, and about 20 presentations is the limit for a good event. If applications continue to grow, we will need to find a way to select the 20 who will compete in the campus final.

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Resource Recommendation

Shanahan, Jenny Olin, Elizabeth Ackley-Holbrook, Eric Hall, Kearsley Stewart, and Helen Walkington. 2015. “Ten Salient Practices of Undergraduate Research Mentors: A Review of the Literature.” *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 23, 359–376.

“I find this is a good resource for both new and experienced mentors. It helps outline best practice for undergraduate research mentors.” —Meredith Allison, Elon University

Announcements

David A. Salomon is coauthor of a new monograph, *Refining the Paradigm: Holistic Evaluation of Faculty to Support Faculty and Student Learning*, with Nancy Hensel, Rick Gilman, and Stephen Wilhite, New American Colleges and Universities, 2018. (ISBN: 9780692074404).

Juliane Strauss-Soukup, director of CURAS and professor of chemistry at Creighton University, was awarded a three-year, \$436,000 NIH grant to continue her work on RNA riboswitches. CURAS was also awarded a \$43,200 grant through the Creighton Global Initiative to support undergraduate research abroad, and has funded 14 undergraduate researchers through CURAS Global Grants over the past six months. Finally, a new research program planner, Meghan Freeman, was welcomed in June.

Message from the Chair

Billy Gunnels, Florida Gulf Coast University

For many, this column will serve as an introduction. My name is Billy Gunnels, and I agreed to serve as URPD chair this past summer. So, howdy; it is good to “meet” you.

The previous chair, Bethany Usher, needed to step down because of increased responsibility at her home institution. While disappointing (Bethany was awesome, and URPD would have benefited from her continued work and dedication), this departure reflected a reality that confronts so many people who facilitate student research and creative opportunities.

Your work makes you among the most desirable people in higher education. By fostering undergraduate research that allows students to translate their classroom experiences into transferable skills, you help students harness their university education when these graduates venture into the “real world.” We should, therefore, not be surprised when people like Bethany get tapped to serve as presidents, provosts, and deans. In your work with student scholars and faculty mentors, you come to understand the university culture, you create impactful innovations, and you assess programming to ensure effectiveness. Keep up the great work, even when your superior efforts may require us to part company from time to time.

These job promotions highlight a second reality about the state of URPD and undergraduate research. For the past 40-plus years, we have participated in a revolution that has altered the face of higher education. The traditional borders of an academic experience, which were once limited to the classroom, lectures, and textbooks, have expanded to include the lab, studio, and field. This educational enhancement—dare I say, diversification—has produced such profound positive effects that undergraduate research experiences have been institutionalized in universities and classrooms across the country. In some ways, we could consider this Phase I of URPD and CUR. If creating and facilitating undergraduate research opportunities was the first goal of our organization, then well done. You have supported a dramatic expansion of scholarly opportunities across institution and disciplinary types.

So, where does that leave us? What is the role of URPD if Phase I is complete? Well, first, Phase I is not done, and it will never be “complete.” We will always support the development of new programs and offices that support student research through workshops, conferences, and publications. However, we are at a transition point, which will require us to expand our efforts. It is one thing to start a program, but it is an entirely different thing to maximize the impact and effectiveness of the associated initiatives. Let’s call this Phase II (cute, creative title, eh?). During Phase II, I encourage us to think about what this transition will become when realized. What are the different ways that we can enhance student learning, faculty mentorship, institutional performance, and community engagement? We will also need to consider our focus. For example, we all support student learning and performance directly at our home institutions. What, if any, role do we have developing a similar focus at the national level?



Billy Gunnels, URPD Chair

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Upcoming Events

**CUR Dialogues 2019—
Advancing Future Research:
Strategies for Long-Term
Sustainability**
February 14–17, 2019
Crystal Gateway Marriott
Arlington, VA
<https://bit.ly/2019CURDialogues>

**Broadening Participation
Institute**
March 22–24, 2019
Whitworth University
Spokane, WA
<https://bit.ly/2019BPI-gen>

NCUR 2019 Conference
April 10–13, 2019
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, GA
<https://bit.ly/NCUR2019Gen>

**World Congress on
Undergraduate Research**
May 23–25, 2019
Carl von Ossietzky
University
Oldenburg, Germany
<https://bit.ly/WorldCUR19main>

Innovative Programming *continued*

Christopher Newport University's Thesis Throwdown

David Salomon, Christopher Newport University

Christopher Newport University's Thesis Throwdown invites undergraduate and graduate students to explain the basics of their project to an interdisciplinary audience in an informative and entertaining way, highlighting the thesis/overarching argument, results, or *raison d'être*. Students are given three minutes and allowed three images or PowerPoint slides. A panel of faculty, administrators, and community constituents choose first (\$250) and second place (\$125) in each category with an overall audience favorite (\$125); the audience favorite is polled using a phone application. Although the traditional "elevator speech" is also important, having three minutes to discuss the thesis of the project can be insightful for both speaker and audience.



Photo of recent Thesis Throwdown, Christopher Newport University

Message from the Chair *continued*

I love periods of transition, which tend to be some of the most exciting and creative periods in any effort. However, these periods can be isolating and intimidating unless you have the opportunity to engage people who share similar questions and ideas. Fortunately, we will all have the chance to interact at the upcoming 2019 URPD Conference: Building and Enhancing Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry Programs. Please plan to join us in Columbus, OH, this summer. I, selfishly, want to hear about your programs, your initiatives, your successes, and your failures. The people involved in URPD are brilliant, and I am eager to learn from your experiences. Abstracts are due on February 19, 2019. Please make a point to present. In addition, we are excited to offer the "first-ever" preconference session for new undergraduate research program directors. I so wish that this session would have been available when I started. Directors of undergraduate research are charged with significant responsibilities. This preconference session will help new partners reach these lofty expectations. Visit the [link](#) to find additional information.

Keep up the great work as you help our students and faculty become the best versions of themselves.

—Billy Gunnels