The Education Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research provides networking opportunities, activities, and resources to assist education administrators, faculty members, students, practitioners, and others in advancing undergraduate research.

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Message from the Division Chair
Hello friends! Best wishes for continued health and safety in the world of Undergraduate Research! So many exciting things have come this way from the National Office, and as we continue to work together through our reboot, we have certainly learned new ways to keep ourselves and our students involved and engaged in research. We have many new ideas to keep our
membership connected, and please keep your eyes open for the launch of our new blog in January 2022. We are very proud to have the President-Elect from CUR, Dr. Ruth Palmer, be an Education Division member. Check out the award opportunities for sponsorship for students to NCUR, as well as other funding opportunities for faculty. On behalf of myself and your councilors in the Education Division, best wishes for a restful holiday break and revitalized 2022.

Best, Kymberly
kharris@georgiasouthern.edu
Georgia Southern University

Councilor Spotlight

Current Position: Associate Dean of Graduate Studies & Academic Outreach. Held the role of Director of Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity and Director of Research Compliance.

Educational Background: Ph.D. Public Health Education – Southern Illinois University – Carbondale; M.S/B.S. Kinesiology – The University of Texas of the Permian Basin

Research Focus: My research agenda focuses on the following main areas: 1.) School health obesity prevention treatment interventions 2.) Evaluation of health education programs, and 3.) Behavior change determinants of physical activity and nutrition, including psychological, physiological, and social influences.

Important Events and Dates

CUR Dialogues | February 14-18, 2022
National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) 2022 @Home | April 4-8, 2022
Undergraduate Research Week | April 18-22, 2022
Posters on the Hill | Spring 2022

Education Division Awards

Course (Re)Design Award
The Education Division of CUR is offering two $500 grants to faculty members interested in integrating undergraduate research within one of their courses. Faculty can choose to design a new research-infused course or redesign an existing course to include a substantial undergraduate research component that provides students with an opportunity to learn about educational research/scholarship and conduct course-based research. This grant will provide faculty with $500 as well as mentoring and resources from a CUR
councilor in the Education Division. Special consideration will be given to proposals promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Applications are due by March 15, 2022. More details >>

Student-Faculty Collaborative Research Award

The Education Division is pleased to announce its Student-Faculty Collaborative Research in Education Award. Two (2) awards of $250 each will be made available each academic year (dual and double majors in teacher education programs and other related fields). Undergraduates at any stage of their undergraduate programs are encouraged to apply. This collaborative research may be conducted as an independent study, or as part of or an extension of course-embedded research projects, during Fall 2022 through August 2023. Ideally, the financial support would be used to pay for expenses associated with conducting the research or for conference/results dissemination. Special consideration will be given to proposals promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Applications are due by March 15, 2022. More details >>

NCUR 2022 Registration Stipend Award

The Education Division of CUR is offering eight (8) $110 stipends for Student Registration to NCUR 2022. Applicants must be an undergraduate student who is presenting at NCUR 2022 and has indicated that his/her presentation is in the field of EDUCATION. Applicants will be selected by a committee of education councilors.

Applications are due by March 15, 2022. More details >>

Discovering Opportunities in Life's Disruptions: A Conversation with an Avocado Seed

Reflections on Quarantine during the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Ruth J. Palmer
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Faculty Emeritus, The College of New Jersey
Member and Councilor of CUR Education Division
President-Elect of CUR 2021-22

The COVID 19 global pandemic and the subsequent national quarantine mandate interrupted the routines of individuals, institutions, and nations. They triggered volatility, uncertainty, and ambiguity in all aspects of our human functioning, which in turn necessitated recurrent behavioral changes: many people lost trust in the world’s capacity to stop or manage the pandemic and other pending catastrophes. And consequently, thresholds for coping crumbled, generating additional fissures in our psyche – anxieties, inner conflicts, mental and psychological paralysis. . .
And there I was in the middle of it all with a flashback to A-level literature class – “... yet we have gone on living, Living, and partly living.” My brother-in-law was dead, his wife, my sister, was emerging from her very strange COVID 19 experience, and her children took over the management of the house hospital to keep the family including grandchildren safe. And the thought about who across our family households would live and who would die, overwhelmed me.

My always-ready self-management routine - logic, and discipline - jumped to the fore, but the pandemic had already rendered reason unreliable, weakened my emotional stronghold, marshaled my fears and self-doubt, while overtaking my behavioral responses—the disequilibrium called for “the new and different.” I had no idea about what that looked like.

And there, in the kitchen with the fleshy ripeness of the avocado in the bowl, I was staring at the seed, the object in my hand, and I was stuck in place. Like John Keats’s Naughty Boy, “...I stood in my shoes and wondered, and I wondered, and I stood in my shoes and wondered...” Nothing else seemed to exist but me and this seed. And an unbelievable interrogation began: What is happening here? What do I do with you? What kind of avocado are you? Where were you grown? How did you get to the grocery store? What do I do with you now that I have enjoyed your flavorful deliciousness?

I am not sure how long this exchange lasted, but my racing, chasing brain knew that “something had changed within me, that something was not the same.” Questions, open – and closed-ended, triggered my thoughts, and galvanized a quest: information gathering, a visit to an avocado farm nearby, synthesizing all credible information, and deliberate action. With these, I regained some logic and adjusted my pandemic schedule to continue the engaging conversation with my most unlikely object-companion, the avocado seed.

So, I planted it. I nurtured it. I moved it from its pot to an in-ground spot among my backyard happy place.

Over time, my avocado seed/now plant, became my recurring prompt, tapping into my literary reservoir to keep me safe inside. Poet, Lilian Moore whispered gently her You Never Hear the Garden Grow.

Row on row,
You never hear the garden grow.
Seeds split.
Roots shove and reach.
Earth heaves.
Leaves unfurl.
Stems pierce the ground.
Pea pods fatten.
Vines stretch and curl.
Such growing going on without a sound!

In October 2021, my family celebrated the first-year anniversary of the death of my brother-in-law in a Zoom get-together. We prayed, and told stories of life, death and dying, and of our lives changed by those who left us, and of hope. This event brought me back to the story above, its lessons, and intersecting ideas:

1. The healing power of thinking/reflection plus the gift of “sophisticated” thinking, a balanced combination of well-developed lower-order (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) where LOTS become interiorized and do not hinder the development of HOTS.
2. Learning as experiences of equilibrium and disequilibrium; that imbalance between what is understood, and what is encountered. Its trigger could be anything.
3. The Question Formulation Technique (QFT), developed by the Right Question Institute, is a structured method for generating and improving questions. The avocado seed drew me into questioning. I imagine that it knew as I do that questioning distills sophisticated forms of divergent,
convergent, and metacognitive thinking into a deceptively simple, accessible, and reproducible technique.

4. The Research process, QFT & sophisticated thinking, with –
   a. Photography as a data collection tool.
   b. Photographs or any visuals as prompts

5. Academic Emotions & Future orientation
   a. Hope.
   b. Grief
   c. Poetry
   d. Gardens (children’s gardens, urban gardens, roof-top gardens)

Disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic continue to visit humankind with speed and fury e.g., floods, fires. An avocado seed prompted my adaptation, resilience, and sanity in the aloneness of the quarantine. Now, OrchardDelights (with about twelve dwarf fruit trees) hosts bees, butterflies, birds, and occasional goffers and snakes. It reminds me to catch the moment, to follow the fleeting thought, and to pursue conversation with anything and anyone. I am in awe of this wonder-filled journey of opportunity and discovery with my avocado seed, now plant.

So, silently, and continually, the avocado seed/plant added to the transformation of my backyard into what I now call my OrchardDelights. Simultaneously, it provided a simple outdoor activity and the casual mindlessness that gave me peace and so embellished my quarantine routine. And, all the while, it brought me to reconciliation with my family’s illness and loss, and the loss of more than 900,000 individuals in the US.

5 The Right Question Institute (2021), Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Boston, Mass: Harvard University