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CONTACT: Elizabeth Foxwell
202-783-4810
emfoxwell@cur.org

Council on Undergraduate Research Announces Mentor Award Winner

Professor Wendy Bohrson, Department of Geological Sciences, Central Washington University
Recognized as the 2016 Geosciences Undergraduate Research Mentor

Washington, DC-The Geosciences division of the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) annually recognizes an individual with the Undergraduate Research Mentor Award. The awardee is an individual who serves as a role model for productive and transformative student-faculty mentoring relationships and for maintaining a sustained and innovative approach to the enterprise of undergraduate research. CUR is pleased to announce Professor Wendy Bohrson, Department of Geological Sciences at Central Washington University, the 2016 recipient. The award will be formally presented at the Geological Society of America Meeting in Denver, CO in September.

Wendy Bohrson has been engaging undergraduates in research since 1999 from working with individuals to transforming university culture. Through Bohrson’s cutting edge research understanding the evolution of magma chambers and young volcanoes, over 25 undergraduates have worked in her group. However, it is not just scientific discoveries that impacts her students. She is described as giving the “most caring, patient, meticulous, and beneficial advising any undergraduate could possible ask for” balancing her approachability and careful guidance with “rigor, scientific integrity, and work ethic.” Though many of her students were funding through NSF grants, students noted that “instead of taking that [faculty] stipend, Dr. Bohrson put the money towards my research…this is just another example illustrating [her] selfless mentoring style.” This commitment and devotion has brought about deep respect from her students as well as their success. Bohrson’s research students regularly win presentations awards at regional and national meeting and have met great success in the graduate school and the professional fields.

At Central Washington University, Bohrson extends undergraduate research beyond her own students as a “leader of undergraduate research at the university level.” She served as the director of both the Office of Undergraduate Research as well as the NSF funded Science Talent Expansion Program (STEP). She initiated a day-long, campus wide undergraduate research symposium and established the Science Honors Research Program for grant funding, together impacting hundreds of students each year. When the NSF STEP granting funding concluded, Bohrson “fought tirelessly to have the program institutionalized” successfully transitioning the STEP mentored research ‘bridging program’ as a permanent part of the university curriculum. Her colleagues note that even while focusing on administrative duties, Bohrson maintained a vibrant research group, where “a student can succeed and experience research at a level suited to their ability.” She is known as a “role model for productive and transformative faculty-student mentoring relationships.”

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Council on Undergraduate Research: The Council on Undergraduate Research (www.cur.org) supports faculty development for high-quality undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research and scholarship. Over 700 institutions and 11000 individuals belong to CUR. CUR believes that the best way to capture student interest and create enthusiasm for a discipline is through research in close collaboration with faculty members.