

CURQ Vignettes Spring 2013



Introduction to the Web Vignettes of the Student-Themed *CUR Quarterly*

Research can be a valuable tool in an undergraduate's career, but the majority of students do not employ it. For the few who undertake the task, however, it will be an unforgettable experience that may help to shape

their professional futures. This student-themed issue of the *CUR Quarterly* provides a glimpse into some of the questions, challenges, and experiences of undergraduate research from those who have experienced it first-hand.

Marissa Carmello and Kazlin Mason of the State University of New York-Fredonia provide an overview of undergraduate research, with a detailed explanation of the steps involved in research that culminate in an undergraduate research article. This traditional approach to undergraduate research can be taken by any student who has the desire to find answers to the questions their courses are raising. The article also discusses the importance of a mentor and explains the mentor-mentee relationship that develops during the process of undergraduate research.

Adding to this overview, Rita Ally Martin of the University of Alabama provides her ground rules for undergraduate research for a first-generation college student. These rules, in fact, are useful for anyone involved in undergraduate research. Martin's discussion of the assumptions students may make about undergraduate research doesn't only apply to those who are first-generation students; it also applies to any student who hasn't previously been involved in research. Common misconceptions about undergraduate research can deter a student from becoming involved, and this article helps to clear up some of them.

Jaime Antonio Castillo of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh continues the theme of research from the point of view of a first-generation college student. Castillo's experi-

ence of research in a virology laboratory conveys a detailed understanding of how research can affect a student's future and develop into a graduate thesis and perhaps even a career. Castillo also mentions the McNair Scholars program, introducing funding options for undergraduate research.

It is important to note that undergraduate research doesn't simply apply to those students who sport lab coats and protective goggles. Research is a multifaceted experience that can be obtained by any individual with the heart to take on the challenge.

Julie S. Allstrom of George Mason University focuses on undergraduate research opportunities for students who are returning to school as adults. Adults who have the responsibilities of a family and career may feel that they are too busy to become involved in undergraduate research. However, Allstrom outlines the reasons these students should consider research and some steps to ease the process for them.

Amber Gibson of the University of Alabama also discusses some non-traditional areas of undergraduate research. Going beyond what many students assume research is about, she shows that students from any background can accomplish undergraduate research, as long as they have the drive and seek to answer a question. Gibson explains her experience with research in theater, laying out her roadmap to provide an example of how research works in a performing-arts major.

Erin Smith of the University of Alabama explains research from her background in anthropology. This vignette provides an overview of Smith's research and its many satisfying opportunities, encouraging others to involve themselves in such projects.

Amber Anderson and Bradley Celestin of Bethel College expand the research process to include other venues, in particular that of the research conference. Research that is compiled for an article can easily transfer to a poster or conference presentation, and Anderson and Celestin provide several examples. They discuss three different conferences, allowing readers to consider a variety of options. Additionally, Celestin and Anderson show that research creates community because it requires several people to create a successful project.

Nancy Abrego of Molloy College continues this idea of the research conference with a vignette discussing conference posters and tips for preparing them. Her experience at the New England Science Symposium fueled the seven tips, presenting excellent ideas and advice for any conference presenter.

Undergraduate research can also provide students with exciting new experiences in an international setting. John Turiano from Fordham University, whose research took him to Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, provides a list of tips and tricks to excel in such an environment. Turiano distills his advice into several points and applies them to his own research experience to show how these tricks can be used by other students in their own international lines of study. Paula Adler of the University of Ottawa also discusses the experience of international undergraduate research and provides a list of tips. Both of these articles are helpful, because students in an international study-abroad program find themselves in a whole new world, not only in their research and studies, but also in their physical and cultural surroundings.

Melissa Gutworth of the College of New Jersey provides perspective on another helpful research option: summer research. These programs can prove to be an extremely successful avenue of undergraduate research because students are not carrying other academic obligations then, and such programs do not require the financial commitment that may be required for international study. Gutworth draws from her own experience to present several great reasons to become involved with summer research programs.

The experiences of all these authors provide a strong sample of the positive aspects of undergraduate research and why more students should be involved.

Finally, Maria Brun of the University of California- Davis, discusses the psychological and intellectual demands of research. She talks about some of the stress points that young students may face in pursuit of undergraduate research and offers suggestions on how to ease issues that may arise during the research process.

The articles in this themed issue of the *CUR Quarterly* provide glimpses into the world of undergraduate research, addressing some of the misconceptions about research and presenting some examples of programs that students may pursue. It is important to remember that undergraduate research can be conducted by every student in every major and that there are several avenues of research that may fit the needs of an individual student.

Whether seeking a future in the worlds of research, the arts, non-profit organizations, banking, or sports medicine, any student has the ability to become a part of undergraduate research. This issue of the *CUR Quarterly* may be just the thing to help more students get started.

Cat Bradley

*University of Central Florida (undergraduate)
and University of Oregon (graduate school)
Cbradle2@uoregon.edu*