



View from the Chair

Hello, Y'all! Greetings with a Texas accent as I start off this first year as the chair of CURPA. I am stepping into some extra big shoes (figuratively, of course), trying to match the steps of some remarkable leaders of this group. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the immediate past chair, Terry Oswalt, for his steadfast leadership and the great example he has set for the division over the past few years. I will do my best to ensure that the momentum of the division coming into my term as chair continues to grow and will rely on his continuing to be a vital member of this group. Plus, I have Terry and Mike Jackson on speed dial if I get stuck.

We gathered this summer in Ohio for the 2019 CUR Annual Business Meeting, with a room full of great ideas, energy, and mission-driven initiatives that gave rise a growing list of activities planned for the coming year. The division remains active and engaged in the national-level CUR mission, as you will note in the summary of councilors later in this newsletter. CURPA councilors are distributed broadly among the many CUR committees. The CUR organization has a robust committee structure, with each committee tending to some part of the overall CUR mission. Most committees include councilors from nearly every division, but the committees are designed to work with the whole CUR membership, not just the division councilors.

As one of the smaller divisions in CUR, CURPA continues to struggle with the challenge of attracting new physicists and astronomers to become involved. One of the

About CUR's Physics & Astronomy Division

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

- **Newsletter Editor**

Richard Thompson
Cabrini University
rt533@cabrini.edu

- **Division Chair**

Toni Sauncy
Texas Lutheran University
tsauncy@tlu.edu

The Council on Undergraduate Research
734 15th Street, NW • Suite 850
Washington, DC 20005-1013
Tel: 202/783-4810 • Email:

CUR@cur.org

WWW: www.cur.org

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Council on

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key discussion items from our 2019 gathering focused on developing a “value statement” that adequately expresses the benefits of being part of the organization that is devoted

continued on next page

View from the Chair*continued from page 1*

to the development and encouragement of those who work to engage undergraduate students in scholarly and creative activity. Those of us involved with CUR know what we have gained from our relationship with the CUR community and have tried to put words to that value in “why I joined” statements. Over the past year, we have stepped up our efforts to be present at a number of professional society meetings, including APS, AAPT, and AAS. We hope to continue to build bridges among and between us all, since many of us are active in many of these communities. This year, we will reserve a small fraction of our budget for purchasing simple marketing materials to have an expanded presence at our society events. We hope to see more of the thousands of colleagues in these associations become engaged with the CUR community as well.

During the CURPA business meeting, the council unanimously voted to take on a new adventure. This new opportunity is a partnership through AAPT in the American Institute of Physics Venture Partnership Fund, working with AAAS on developing a program, coined “SEA Change” aimed at increasing the participation of women and other underrepresented groups in physics through institutional transformation. The program is modeled after the highly successful Athena Swan program in the United Kingdom. For more information about the project, check out this [website](#), or contact CURPA councilor and AAPT CEO Beth Cunningham. For more context and background on the Athena Swan program, view this [site](#).

We note that the majority of the modest CURPA budget goes toward recognition of the good work of our mentors and in support of our student mentees. The bulk of the budget this past year was spent in providing

travel stipends for students. In addition, CURPA is pleased to recognize not one but two outstanding mentors this year. Sanju Gupta (Western Kentucky University) and Cristian Bahrim (Lamar University) were recognized with a glass plaque and letters of commendation sent to their respective university dignitaries. Congrats to both, and keep up the good work!

Please take advantage of all the ways to be involved with the broader undergraduate research community through CUR events. The CUR Posters on the Hill event, although highly competitive, can be an extremely rewarding experience, giving a select group of undergrads the opportunity to stand with their work on Capitol Hill and represent the face of undergraduate research in our country. If you have an outstanding undergraduate researcher, consider nominating them for the Goldwater Scholarship (see the article on the scholarship in this newsletter). Finally, please consider sending your research students to the life-changing National Conference on Undergraduate Research. This year, NCUR will be hosted by Montana State University Bozeman. The abstract deadline is December 6. More information is available [here](#).

Please follow us on Facebook—if you are not in the CURPA special group on Facebook, join it [here](#). Please post photos of your students working with you on undergraduate research. Those photos from so many different settings are inspiring to all of us. If you see CUR at your professional society meetings, drop by, say hello, and tell us about your experiences with your undergrads in research. We are always looking to share those stories in this newsletter, so if you have a great story to share, send it to the *CURPA Diem* editor, Rick Thompson, at rt533@cabrini.edu.

continued on next page

View from the Chair*continued from page 2*

May your labs be buzzing with fully operational equipment, your data terminals be full with fantastic results, and your imaginations be inspired with all that is possible.

Toni Sauncy

*2019–2020 Chair, CUR Physics & Astronomy Division
Texas Lutheran University
tsauncy@tlu.edu*

Summary of the 2019 CUR Physics and Astronomy Division Meetings

The CUR Physics and Astronomy Division met three times during the 2019 Annual Business Meeting held on the campus of The Ohio State University in Columbus, OH, on June 25–27, 2019. The initial division meeting included a discussion of proposed CUR mission and vision statements presented at the opening plenary. This was followed by discussion of prompts from the CUR Executive Board on how CUR can best support mentors, broadly communicate the value of undergraduate research, improve access to research opportunities, and prioritize and build partnerships beyond academia.

Subsequent conversations focused primarily on divisional business including the following:

- Two mentor awardees were selected from the nomination pool. Congratulations to Sanju Gupta and Cristian Bahrim! Nominations will again be solicited in the spring. We encourage nominations from faculty peers familiar with a candidate's research activities as well as nominations of faculty at two-year colleges.
- Student travel awards remain a priority, and the bulk of the CURPA budget is dedicated

to them. We will also develop a small award for student research support, intended specifically for students who may benefit significantly and not have access to such funds. A Student Support Committee was formed that will include Allyn Smith and Chitra Solomonson.

- Councilors discussed ways to better reach faculty to help support and mentor those starting or engaging in undergraduate research. One way that might be effective is to offer a one-day workshop on mentoring undergraduate research as an optional add-on to the New Faculty Workshop. A subcommittee was formed to be spearheaded by Toni Sauncy and Carol Hood to explore possibilities in terms of feasibility, structure, and funding.

- CURPA will be named a partner for a AIP Venture Partnership Fund to develop a physics and astronomy department-specific version of SEA Change (<https://seachange.aaas.org/>), a AAAS program based on the UK Athena SWAN program to support the number of women and underrepresented groups in physics and astronomy. The councilors voted unanimously to sign on to the proposal.

- We received updates on two projects funded by the NSF IUSE program: the CUR Transformations Project and the Effective Practices for Physics Programs. CUR Transformations is conducting case studies of specific programs to develop insight into designing undergraduate curricula to support research experiences for all students. The Effective Practices project aims to provide a one-stop shop for resources on effective practices for physics programs, focusing on implementation. There will be 25 sections of the guide and several chapters with around a dozen targeted to be available by December.

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- Councilors discussed ways to further increase membership, including developing marketing materials to bring to disciplinary meetings. John Mateja and Derek Buzasi will serve as a marketing subcommittee.

At the conclusion of the final divisional meeting, Chitra Solomonson was elected by unanimous vote to serve as the next CURPA secretary.

*Brian Utter
Past CURPA Secretary
Brian.utter@bucknell.edu*



In keeping with a long-standing CURPA ABM tradition, the councilors enjoyed a dinner together at a local Indian restaurant.

NCUR 2020

The 2020 National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) will be held at Montana State University Bozeman on March 26–28, 2020. This is a major venue for undergraduate students to present their research and the program consists of a variety of plenary speakers as well as oral and poster presentations, visual arts displays, and performances. Abstracts will be accepted through December 6, 2019. For more information about NCUR, including a draft timeline, please visit their website [here](#).

2020 Posters on the Hill

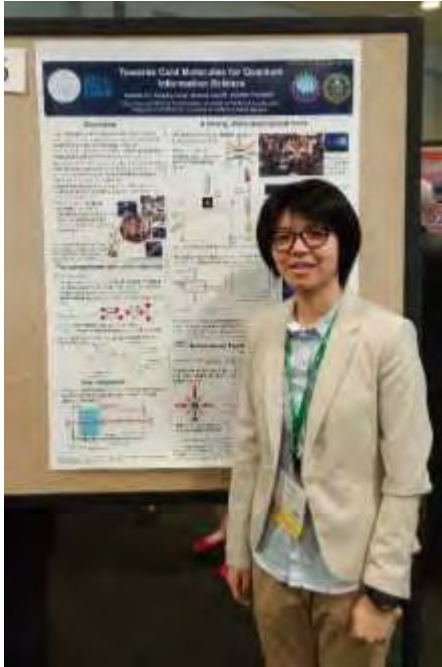
Do you have engaging, personable research students who can explain their research to a nontechnical, educated audience? If so, these students might be great advocates for undergraduate research in Washington, DC! Please encourage them to apply to CUR's 2020 Posters on the Hill event. This program connects undergraduates with their congressional representatives and staff members to discuss the importance and impact of undergraduate research on their educational experience. Nothing more effectively demonstrates the value of undergraduate research than the words and stories of the student participants themselves.

Last year's participants were the following:

- Seejia Scarlett Yu, University of California, Los Angeles (adviser: Wesley Campbell), "A Strong, Stimulated Optical Force for Decelerating Molecular Beams."
- Emily A. Churchman and Sherry Yennello, Texas Lutheran University (advisers: Toni Sauncy, TLU and Sherry Yennello, Texas A&M University), "Characterization of ParTI Phoswiches Using Charged Pion Beams."
- Joseph Dees, Rebecca A. Voss, Jarvis Warren, and Thomas Hodges, Henderson State University (adviser: Shannon Clardy), "Low-Cost Laminar Flow Wind Tunnel Design and Testing."

Applications will be accepted for the 2020 Posters on the Hill event until November 5, 2019, at 11:59 pm EST. Selected participants will be notified in early February 2020. Interested in learning more? Please visit the CUR website using this [link](#).

*Michael Jackson
Millersville University
mjackson@millersville.edu*



Seejia Scarlett Yu

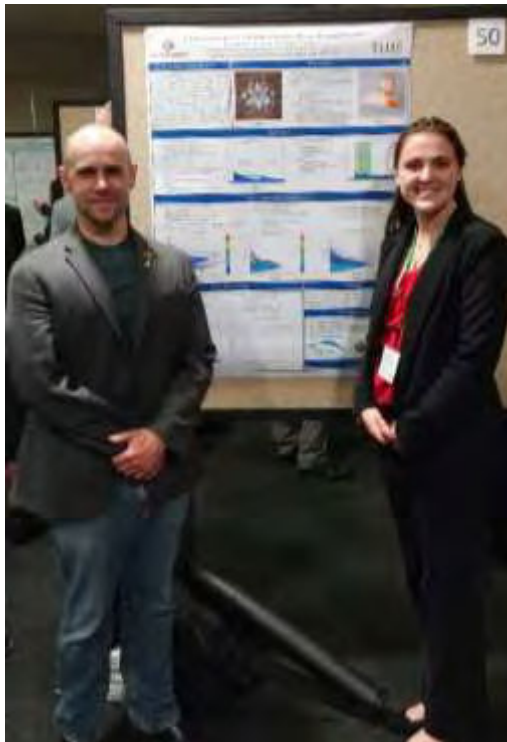


Joseph Dees, Jarvis Warren, Rebecca A. Voss, and Thomas Hodges

Approximately 450 Scholarships to be Awarded for the 2020 Goldwater Competition!

As there will be approximately 450 Goldwater Scholarships awarded in the 2020 Goldwater competition, the time may never be better to nominate your students! Undergraduates who intend to pursue research careers in the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering should be considered for nomination for a Goldwater Scholarship, an award that is considered to be among the most prestigious an undergraduate may receive in a STEM field. Second-year students who are nominated and selected for the award receive up to \$7,500 in each of their third and fourth years. Third-year students who are nominated and selected for the scholarship receive up to \$7,500 in their fourth year.

Competition guidelines can be found on the Goldwater Scholarship Foundation [website](#). Involvement in research is highly desirable in the Goldwater competition. As research experiences are something most undergraduate physics and astronomy majors have, physics and astronomy students make very competitive candidates for a Goldwater Scholarship.



Emily Churchman with SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma Director Brad Conrad

continued on next page

Goldwater Scholarship

continued from page 5

The nomination period closes on the last Friday in January 2020 at 5 pm (CST). Questions concerning the scholarship or nomination process can be directed to John [Mateja](#), president, or to [Judy Zang](#), administrative officer.

I encourage all CURPA members who are mentoring undergraduates to consider making Goldwater scholarship applications part of your students' overall experience. When completing a Goldwater application, your students will have to think deeply about their research experiences, plan the next step in their education, and develop a road map of where they want their careers to take them.

*John Mateja
President*

*Goldwater Scholarship Foundation
goldwaterpres@goldwatersholarship.gov*

CURPA Outstanding Research Mentor Awards

The CUR Division of Physics and Astronomy is pleased to award the 2019 CURPA Outstanding Research Mentor award to two outstanding individuals.

Sanju Gupta, associate professor at Western Kentucky University, has established an outstanding record not only in teaching but also in STEM curriculum development and mentor-led nanotechnology research projects at the grand challenges of energy-water-sensing nexus, where her work utilizes diversity and inclusion best practices in undergraduate education and training. Gupta has mentored more than 20 undergraduates in research to date, many of whom are from underrepresented groups and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in science, to jump-start their scientific careers.

Gupta has been an advocate and leader in enhancing the mentoring and undergraduate research experiences for WKU students besides engaging high school students from high-ranked on campus Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, all in cross-disciplinary nanomaterials research. Undergraduate research students are frequent coauthors on her 35 publications since joining WKU in fall 2013. All of Gupta's past research students who have graduated continued their education in scientific fields and/or secured jobs in STEM-H industry. She is a dedicated adviser and mentor, helping her students learn to write technical reports and advising two honors theses that enables research students gain confidence. All of her students have won numerous presentation awards at national and regional conferences as well as fellowships, truly instrumental and transformative mentoring. Gupta's timely and effective advising physics majors provides career guidance as well as feedback on personal statements, resumes, and graduate applications.

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Sanju Gupta, associate professor and nanomaterials laboratory director, Dept of Physics and Astronomy, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY

Mentor Awards

continued from page 6

As the leading female scientist on her campus, she serves as a role model, generously contributing her time and expertise to undergraduate research initiatives and committees. Additionally, Gupta has enhanced the research opportunities for undergraduate students at her institution winning several awards from state and external agencies as a principal investigator or co-principal investigator. Gupta earned a first-class BS (honors) in physics from Delhi University, a first-class MS in physics with solid-state physics specialization from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi; a first-class MTech in laser technology from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur; and a PhD in chemical physics from the University of Puerto Rico and Institute of Functional Nanomaterials, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.

Cristian Bahrim, professor at Lamar University, graduated from University of Bucharest in 1991. Between 1992 and 1997 he pursued PhD studies at the University of Paris-Sud (France) as French Government Scholar, in the field of atomic collisions and interactions, and received his PhD in 1997. After three years as a postdoctoral scholar at Kansas State University, he moved in 2001 to Lamar University in Beaumont, TX, where he received tenure in 2008 and became full professor in 2015. From 2005, he held a joint-appointment position with the Phillip M. Drayer Department of Electrical Engineering.

In 2017, Bahrim became assistant director of the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) after being for five years member of the OUR Advisory Board. Bahrim organized two Texas STEM conferences for undergraduate students in fall 2017 and 2018, and helped with many other OUR activities. In 2016, he was the chair of the Joint Spring Meeting of

Texas Sections of APS, AAPT, and SPS Zone 13, and will chair another similar event in March 2020. He was a member of organizing committees for several national and international conferences, and also invited speaker to conferences in the United States, China, Japan, and Germany. He published research in several high-impact peer-reviewed journals (including *Physical Review Letters*, *Physical Review A*, and *Journal of Physics*), books, and conference proceedings; in many, he coauthored these works with his students.

Bahrim dedicated the last 18 years mainly to mentoring undergraduate students willing to work on research projects. He mentored more than 200 undergraduate students in various projects from quantum mechanics to atomic collisions and interactions, slowing down light, atomic depolarization, formation of excimers with light rare gases, atomic spectroscopy, crystallography, and light-matter interaction, in particular in optoelectronics. Bahrim supervised well over 100 student research presentations to many national, state, and local conferences. In particular, he supervised three Goldwater scholars; directed eight McNair scholars; had the first undergraduate student representing Lamar at the Posters on the Hill event, in Washington, DC, and mentored the only Lamar recipient of the Texas State University System Regents' Student Scholar Award. He also led three Beck fellows (the most prestigious fellowship offered to Lamar undergraduates) and mentored three students selected in the four years of Lamar's participation at the Undergraduate Research Day at the capital in Austin, an event organized every other year by the Council of Public University Presidents & Chancellors in Texas. He also helped to start the Gulf Coast Undergraduate Symposium at Rice University. Bahrim was the recipient of 2015

continued on next page

Mentor Awards

continued from page 7

Mentor of the Year at Lamar and was named outstanding mentor for the McNair program three times.

Bahrim was very active in leading honors students in research projects. Thus, in the past nine years, Bahrim mentored several dozen honors students, and many of them presented either posters or talks at the National Collegiate Honors Conference (NCHC), the National Council for Undergraduate Research (NCUR), the Great Plains Honors Conference (GPHC), as well as at the EXPO conference organized by OUR at Lamar.

Bahrim trained four teams of students to participate in the International University Physics Competition and helped to secure one bronze medal, one silver medal, and one accomplished competitor. As joint appointment with the Electrical Engineering program at Lamar, Bahrim mentored many EE students who received awards and recognitions, the most notable being two first places in IEEE Region 5 paper competition. Bahrim was co-principal investigator on a National Science Foundation grant, under the DUE Directorate (from 2009 to 2014) and for the exceptional results obtained on this grant (including the significant increase in the graduation rate in physics at Lamar) he was co-recipient of the 2013 STAR Award from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (one of only two such recognitions received by Lamar). Bahrim secured almost \$250,000 in student stipends and travel support over the last 10 years.

Many of his apprentices in research ended with PhD degrees from prestigious universities such as Arizona State University, Rice University, University of Central Florida, or Louisiana State University. He also mentored and inspired several students

to become physics high school teachers. These results came through a constant enthusiastic engagement in outreach activities, both on-campus and off campus, including many field trips done with his students to middle and high schools, where he offered exciting activities from simple demos to sophisticated lab experiments.

He was involved for several years in the Bernard Harris ExxonMobil Summer Camp and in many events organized by the regional CAST, Workforce Solutions, etc. He is now the president of the Texas Section of the American Association of Physics Teachers and the site leader for PhysTEC. He also is visiting professor for the Summer China Program at Shanghai International Studies University, where he teaches general physics. At Lamar, Bahrim teaches classical and modern physics, and optics/photonics. For Bahrim working with undergraduate students in both teaching and research is the most rewarding experience.



*Cristian Bahrim, Professor of Physics,
Department of Physics, Lamar University,
Beaumont, TX*

Travel Awards

Students: Are you planning to present your research at a conference this year? Do you need funds to cover your travel? CUR's Physics and Astronomy Division is now accepting applications for travel awards up to \$500. Deadlines for applications are December 6, 2019, and February 6, 2020.

To learn more, click [here!](#)

To apply, click [here!](#)

Rae M. Robertson-Anderson
University of San Diego
randerson@san Diego.edu

The CUR Transformations Project: Integrating and Scaffolding Research into Undergraduate STEM Curricula: Probing Faculty, Student, Disciplinary, and Institutional Influences—Pathways to Transformational Change.

The CUR Transformations Project is intended to address an urgent need in the undergraduate science community to connect faculty research activities to the curriculum in ways that will lead to a research-rich curriculum for students. Seen through the lens of undergraduate research, science curricula provide an amazing number of opportunities for enriching student experiences on a larger scale than one-on-one research mentoring experiences can provide.

Consultants on this project work intensively with select institutions and departments over a sustained period to provide guidance on the fundamental research they are conducting regarding student, faculty, departmental, and disciplinary influences on the process of integrating and scaffolding undergraduate research experiences throughout the curriculum.

As consultants on this project, we have thoroughly enjoyed our participation on this

initiative. It has been beneficial to have had the opportunity to reflect on our experiences as faculty and administrators (and for one of us, the additional experience that has come with being an executive officer at a professional society) to provide guidance and feedback on this project as well as to learn about the challenges associated with its implementation. Additionally, we have been extremely fortunate to work with teams in the Department of Physics at Radford University and the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Rice University—two vastly different departments having distinctly different missions and visions for their programs; resources and educational environments; size and student populations; and, to some extent, perspectives on undergraduate education.

Reflecting on our consulting experience, some of the major takeaways we have either learned, or that have been reinforced, include:

- a. **Initial inventory of research experiences.** An important first step for these departments was to identify what they are already doing, e.g., undergraduate research as well as inquiry-based and active-learning strategies within the curriculum that support research training and research skill development. Included in this may be the broader conversation for how the department defines expectations associated with research experiences for undergraduates. While identifying potential gaps, this inventory promotes existing accomplishments and past successes that can be used to facilitate and advance the conversation of this initiative within and beyond the department.
- b. **Celebrating achievements—regardless of their size.** The overall goal of this initiative is for departments to review and

continued on next page

CUR Transformations*continued from page 9*

- c. revise their curriculum to ensure research experiences are strategically and purposefully embedded throughout the program. While this is a major undertaking, it will likely be accomplished in small, incremental steps. We believe it is immensely important for participants to identify, reflect on, and celebrate the intermediate successes they achieve at each stage of the project and to not become overwhelmed by the size and scope of this initiative (that subsequently adds to and supports the great work already being performed—as initially identified in their inventory).
- d. **Success is locally defined.** Given the range of institutions involved, it has been important for departments to recognize, and for consultants to reinforce, success will be uniquely defined for each institution. Departments have different starting points and face different challenges. Consequently, the goals they set and the timeline for success will be distinct among participants, which we believe is important for departments to reflect on and recognize. What each department learns in the process will help advance this initiative across the national landscape of higher education.
- e. **Regular meetings.** Regular meetings with team leaders of the initiative has worked extremely well. It provides participants with a timeline and regular deadlines to ensure progress continues—even if at the incremental level (while recognizing the uneven workflow associated with the academic calendar—i.e., that things will slow down during the final exam period).
- f. **The role of the department chairperson.** A supportive department chairperson is critical to the success of this initiative. Some chairpersons may be

leading this initiative on their campus while others may play a supporting role. While either model will work, active participation and support from the department chairperson is critical to the success of this initiative. Department chairpersons are important partners who can assist with facilitating the redesign of the curriculum and in sustaining what the department hopes to achieve. They advocate to members of the administration (e.g., resources, space, personnel) and are important influencers who are familiar with the political landscape within and beyond the department. It is important for the department chairperson to either lead or assist with leading this initiative to ensure progress continues. Without their support and active participation, this initiative could easily stall.

- g. **Gaining ownership and buy-in.** Having colleagues within and beyond the department who value and recognize the importance of this project is critical. Smaller departments may be able to accomplish this more readily through consensus (or perhaps even if spearheaded by only a few individuals) whereas larger departments may need multiple meetings to discuss the project's objectives and goals with surveys of their faculty, students, and alumni, through focus group interviews, etc. To facilitate these conversations, we believe it is beneficial to collaborate with individuals who can advocate for and are willing to assist with implementing this initiative (a core group of project “champions”) as well as keeping participants focused on the programmatic learning outcomes and what they want students to achieve through their curriculum. The project champions are critical in assisting with implementing the project since the chairperson cannot do this alone, and they

CUR Transformations

continued from page 9

can serve as allies and help persuade skeptics and/or address concerns. Using the success stories of students and alumni, while drawing on the initial inventory of research activities, can help demonstrate the great work that has already been accomplished, identify how students have utilized these experiences over time, and how these accomplishments can be expanded upon—all of which can be used to advance this initiative to the next level.

Within each of the above areas are topical subsets that can be explored further, such as the strategies one can use to have conversations about the programmatic learning outcomes for the department's curriculum, identifying how that may translate into curricular redesign, how to discuss the balance between content and skill development, what strategies to use for developing buy-in and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to speak and be heard, etc. We have been impressed by what has been accomplished to date and are looking forward to the great work that is still to come, the subsequent dissemination of each department's projects, and how these results will help transform curricula throughout higher education!

We gratefully acknowledge support of the CUR Transformations project, which is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) through an NSF DUE IUSE grant to the Council on Undergraduate Research (#16-25354).

Beth Cunningham
Executive Officer, American Association of
Physics Teachers
bcunningham@aapt.org

Mike Jackson
Dean, College of Science and Technology,
Millersville University of Pennsylvania
mjackson@millersville.edu

Opportunities

If you have a job opening or program that you would like to advertise here, please send the information to rt533@cabrini.edu for inclusion in the next newsletter.

Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor of Physics

The Department of Physics and Biophysics at the University of San Diego invites applications for a **tenure-track Clare Boothe Luce assistant professorship**. This prestigious position, a result of an award from the Henry Luce Foundation, includes exceptional career development support along with a competitive salary and a generous start-up package. The award terms limit the position to female candidates who have a doctorate in physics and are US citizens or permanent residents. The successful candidate should demonstrate the potential for excellence in undergraduate teaching, and the capacity to establish a vigorous research program tailored to undergraduates.

The candidate will also have the opportunity to play a key role in the burgeoning Physics-Engineering program; and help develop a new Physics-Community Partnership Program (P-CoPP) that will partner undergraduates with female mentors from industry and R1 institutions. These initiatives are strategically designed to promote diversity and inclusion in STEM, and increase retention and success of underrepresented students in STEM graduate programs and careers. Given these initiatives, preference will be given to research expertise in applied experimental physics, though all research areas are welcome.

The Physics and Biophysics Department, within the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of San Diego, is deeply committed to excellence in undergraduate physics education in a liberal arts environment—including small class sizes, personalized mentoring, and independent research opportunities. Our faculty are equally

devoted to leading nationally-recognized research programs that involve undergraduates at every level. Finally, through our award-winning outreach and service initiatives, we aim to promote diversity, inclusion and the holistic education of our students and the broader community.

For additional information about the Physics and Biophysics Department, please visit [here](#), or contact the department chair [Rae M. R. Anderson](#).

How to Apply: Candidates should go to this [site](#), search for “ClareBootheLuce” and Click “Apply Now” to complete the application and upload materials. Applications must include a (1) letter of interest, (2) curriculum vitae, (3) statement of research goals, (4) teaching philosophy, and (5) contact information for three references that can provide letters by the application deadline.

Questions? Contact Rae M.R. [Anderson](#), chair of the Physics and Biophysics Department

Nominations Due Nov 22, CUR-Goldwater Scholars Faculty Mentor Award

CUR and the Goldwater Scholars Program invite nominations for the CUR-Goldwater Scholars Faculty Mentor Award, which recognizes faculty mentors of Goldwater Scholars who conduct their research in a STEM discipline. The nomination deadline is November 22, 2019. For details, visit the CUR-Goldwater Scholars Faculty Mentor Award [nomination webpage](#).



Want to review manuscripts for SPUR?
Email SPUR@cur.org with a list of interests/specialties (e.g., assessment).

Your CURPA Councilors

Rae Anderson, University of San Diego,
 CUR Fellows
randerson@sandiego.edu

Maria Bautista, Kapi`olani Community College. Diversity and Inclusion Task Force
mariab@hawaii.edu

Matthew Beaky, Juniata College
beaky@juniata.edu

Mark Biermann, Valparaiso University
 Constitution and Bylaws
mark.biermann@valpo.edu

Derek Buzasi, Florida Gulf Coast University
dbuzasi@fgcu.edu

Saida Caballero-Nieves, FIT
scaballero@fit.edu

Beth Cunningham, AAPT Finance; Executive Board
bcunningham@aapt.org

Jason Deibel, Wright State University
Jason.deibel@wright.edu

Chris Fuse, Rollins College
 Nominations Chair
cfuse@rollins.edu

Taviare Hawkins, UW La Crosse
thawkins@uwlax.edu

Carol Hood, Cal State San Bernardino
chood@csusb.edu

Chris Hughes, James Madison University
hugheswc@jmu.edu

Michael Jackson, Millersville University
 CUR Posters on the Hill
Michael.Jackson@millersville.edu

Lakshmi Krishna, Colorado School of Mines, lkrishna@mines.edu

Hasitha Mahabaduge, Georgia College State University
 SPUR Divisional Editor
Hasitha.mahabaduge@gcsu.edu

John Mateja, Goldwater Foundation
 CUR/Barry Goldwater Scholar Faculty Mentor Award Committee and NCUR Oversight Committee
johnmateja2@gmail.com

Duncan McBride, formerly at the National Science Foundation. Finance
demcbride@verizon.net

Brian Murphy, Butler University
bmurphy@butler.edu

Terry Oswalt, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical
University. Advocacy Advisory
Terry.Oswalt@ERAU.edu

Toni Sauncy, Texas Lutheran University,
Student Programs; CURPA Chair
tsauncy@tlu.edu

Allyn Smith, Austin Peay State University.
CUR Posters on the Hill
smithj@apsu.edu

Chitra Solomonson, Green River College
csolomonson@greenriver.edu
Diversity and Inclusion

Richard Thompson, Cabrini University.
CURPA Diem Editor
rt533@cabrini.edu

Brian Utter, Bucknell University,
Program Review
Brian.utter@bucknell.edu

Karthik Vishwanath, Miami University
vishwak@miamioh.edu

CURPA News Deadline

CURPA News comes out three times per year and we welcome your contributions! Please send your submissions, comments, achievements, opportunities, etc. to Rick Thompson (rt533@cabrini.edu). Deadline for the Winter 2020 issue is **January 17, 2020**.