



## Social Sciences Division Newsletter • Mentor Edition • Winter 2020

A Publication of a Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research

### Winter 2020: Welcome from the Chair



I am delighted to share with you the Winter 2020 Social Sciences Division (SSD) Newsletter—Mentor Edition. This is my third (and final) year as chair of the division. I have loved every moment

of leading the division!

In this role, I hope to encourage all mentors to take advantage of the many opportunities afforded them by CUR. For those new to the organization: I am an associate professor in political science at the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM), have been a Councilor for the SSD since 2012, and serve on the CUR Advocacy Committee.

In this capacity, I have taken students to meet with their representatives from Arkansas to demonstrate the value of undergraduate research firsthand. I have also mentored students who presented at successive NCUR events, as well as the 2016 World Congress in Doha, Qatar, and the 2019 World Congress in Oldenburg, Germany. I have shared details of these experiences in this issue.

In this issue, the recipients of the 2019 Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award and the Transforming Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award are announced. You'll also find valuable information on opportunities for students and faculty, including a "Research Minute" offered by SSD Councilor James M. Scott, as well as information about a special edition of the *Journal of Transformative Learning* on "Undergraduate Research and

Transformative Learning," coedited by SSD Councilors Jeanetta Sims and Doreen Sams.

I *strongly* encourage you to engage in undergraduate research at all levels of curriculum, if you haven't already. Also be sure to deepen your connection with other CUR members nationally by logging into the CUR Community.

Please reach out if you have news of your own undergraduate research experiences. I'll share them with the division! Or if you have questions, please contact me at [strong@uamont.edu](mailto:strong@uamont.edu). •

*Carol Strong, Division Chair*



The Social Sciences Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research provides networking opportunities, activities, and resources to assist social sciences

administrators, faculty members, students, practitioners, and others in advancing undergraduate research.

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## Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award

### *Call for Nominations*

The CUR Social Sciences Division has opened nominations for the 2020 Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences award.

***Nominations Close:*** March 15, 2020

This award aims to recognize outstanding mentors of undergraduate research in the social sciences for their role in supporting, encouraging, and promoting a positive and inclusive scholarly and teaching environment, and for contributing to professional and personal development of undergraduate students within or outside their research or degree programs.

For details on the nominations process, visit [this webpage](#).

### *Announcing ...*

#### **The 2019 Finalists for the CUR Social Sciences Division's Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award**

The following three finalists were chosen for the 2019 Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award:

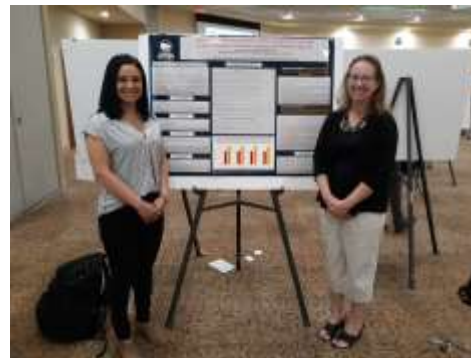


***Dr. Sarah Purcell,***  
Grinnell College

***Dr. Julio Rivera,*** Carthage College  
(currently at Carroll University)



***Dr. Virginia Wickline,*** Georgia Southern University–Armstrong Campus



#### ***CUR's Journal: Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research (SPUR)***

CUR's peer-reviewed journal publishes articles about best practices in undergraduate research.



undergraduate research.

It's a wonderful resource for anyone interested in becoming a master teacher of

#### **SPUR Resources and Calls for Papers**

- [SPUR Author Guidelines](#)
- [Call for Manuscript Reviewers](#)
- Win2020: "[Nontraditional Approaches to Undergraduate Research](#)" (proposal deadline: Feb. 10, 2020)
- Spr2021: "[Undergraduate Research and Climate Change](#)" (proposal deadline: Apr. 7, 2020)

## 2019 Recipient of the Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award

The CUR Social Sciences Division is proud to announce the recipient of the 2019 Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award: **Dr. Sarah Purcell** from Grinnell College.



*“Mentoring student research is one of the most fulfilling opportunities I can think of, because pursuing research allows students to test and develop their skills, develop personal and academic resilience, and deepen their educational experience.”—Sarah J. Purcell*

Sarah J. Purcell is a U.S. historian at Grinnell College, where she has taught since 2000. She writes:

“Mentoring student research is one of the most fulfilling opportunities I can think of, because pursuing research allows students to test and develop their skills, develop personal and academic resilience, and deepen their educational experience. Mentoring undergraduate research in history (sometimes also with an interdisciplinary focus) has been one of the major concerns of my career at Grinnell College. In addition to working hard on the regular history curriculum, which provides multiple research opportunities for every history major, I put a large amount of time into fostering the development of independent student projects. I have directed more than 60

independent projects, and I have been proud of every single student. Grinnell’s Mentored Advanced Project (MAP) structure allows students to define deep areas of research as independent study during the school year or to work on an independent project related to faculty research concerns in the summer. I have directed dozens of students in MAP projects over the past 18 years as I have worked with students on projects that they designed or that we designed together on topics ranging from Civil War monuments to religion and early American education.

“I have worked with dozens on students to hone their research skills, encouraging them to do archival research, to learn how to contextualize scholarship with secondary sources, to find and interpret data, and to present the results in polished writing and other public formats. I also work with students on digital methods of historical inquiry. A few students have gone on to become professional historians or academics in other social science fields (like political science), but the research has been enriching for even more who have become lawyers, prosecutors, data scientists, journalists, educators, policy experts, business consultants, and higher education professionals. I spend a lot of time with my research students: asking them questions, teaching them how to find and interpret information, working on paper drafts, and helping them think about the public audience for their work. Good research mentoring demands high academic standards, the willingness to explain methodologies, and a respect for the student’s personal growth.”•

### New Communities within the Online CUR Community

- **Student Journals** (for those involved in undergraduate research journals)
- **Social Media** (for those involved in social media for CUR divisions or interested in promoting undergraduate research and CUR initiatives via social media)

Join the conversation at <https://community.cur.org>

## Transforming Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award

The CUR Social Sciences Division is proud to announce the recipient of the 2019 Transforming Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences Award: **Dr. Julio Rivera** from Carroll University.



*“Serving as an educator, a mentor, and a supporter to countless students throughout his years at Carthage College, Dr. Rivera is the epitome of what it means for an educator to go above and beyond the call of duty for their students.”—Katelyn Switzer, Ashleigh Aybar, and Mario Salerno*

Julio Rivera teaches courses in marketing, statistics, and location intelligence. He helps students understand research and big-data problems by applying different methodologies to help make data-driven business decisions. He and his students work through the Carroll University Applied Business Intelligence Consortium to find research clients.

Currently they are working on projects that focus on the variation of real estate values in suburban communities, working with a company that develops models for saving fuel for trucking companies, and understanding the spatial demographics of a major nonprofit organization in Milwaukee. Rivera believes that engaging students in the scholarship of application helps

students understand the research process and think about how they will use research in their careers.

## Undergraduate Research Minute

*James M. Scott*

*Herman Brown Chair and Professor of Political Science, Texas Christian University*

### The Student Summer Research Program, Department of Political Science, TCU



All students benefit from faculty-mentored research experiences as an active/experiential learning opportunity. For those students interested in continuing to

graduate school, policy research, and law school, few learning opportunities provide better preparation.

Undergraduate research experiences come in a wide variety of flavors, but several key characteristics enhance their value and contribution to student learning regardless of their particular format. Among them are (a) independent student experiences; (b) structure that facilitates preparation, training, project development, and project accountability/progress; (c) engaged and steady faculty mentoring; and (d) peer mentoring.

In 2014–2015, we in TCU’s Department of Political Science at TCU developed a new Student Summer Research Program (SSRP) integrating these essential features. The program, which I have directed since its inception, is modelled after my successful 2005–2013 NSF-supported Research Experience for Undergraduates REU program.

This competitive program, which runs from mid-May to mid-August, has two tracks. The first targets second-year political science students for an intensive summer experience developing and



completing a research project with intensive faculty mentoring and a structured series of project development workshops. The second is a “thesis completion” track that supports fourth-year political science students to advance their work on their honors/distinction theses, for which they must have an approved thesis proposal prior to acceptance in the SSRP. The combination of the two tracks thus includes both faculty research mentoring and peer mentoring, as the fourth-year students contribute to the project development of the second-year students.



Students receive a \$1,500 stipend and travel funds to present their papers at a suitable conference during the next year, which have included the National Conference for Undergraduate Research, the International Studies Association-Midwest annual conference, and the Midwest Political Science Association annual conference. The inaugural SSRP (2016) involved five students (three second-year students, two fourth-year students). In 2017, six students participated (three second-year students, three fourth-year students). In 2018, seven participated (four second-year students, three fourth-year students). This summer, the program will again expand, with nine students (five second-year students, four fourth-year students) participating. •

## Engage Your Students and Enhance Your Own Experience

### *Note from SSD Chair Carol Strong*

There are many ways to engage your students. And while it requires organization and time, it is well worth the effort! Watching my students succeed in undergraduate research and experiential learning makes me want to get up every day and come to work.

Since coming to CUR, I infuse my entire curriculum with undergraduate research techniques of different levels. I have my first-year students engage in a poverty project that requires them to read a general article (of my choosing) on poverty, then find statistics and services that relate to poverty in their home state. This then culminates in a group project where they create a flyer to alert people about how their community addresses poverty. In my upper-division classes, in addition to research essays, I have oral finals, where the students role play and become engaged in the research from a different perspective.

Specifically related to CUR, I have taken students to NCUR; to CUR World Congresses; and to Washington, DC, to meet their congressional representatives. These have been fantastic experiences, and I’d like to share photos of these experiential learning excursions here to encourage you to also utilize what CUR has to offer to students!

Two years in a row, I have taken students to meet with their congressional representatives to



discuss the value of undergraduate research. They also have been able to access free tours of the Capitol (see photo).



Several students have also presented research at NCUR events. Each time, they have met with potential graduate school advisers, two of which actually secured graduate school admission as a result of these meetings.



I *highly* encourage you to take students to these events. They are well worth the effort. •

Additionally, I have taken delegations of three to both CUR World Congresses, where they discussed their research with other students from around the world.

## Resources for Mentors in the Social Sciences

### Coedited Journal Issue on Undergraduate Research and Transformative Learning



CUR SSD Divisional Councilors Jeanetta Sims and Doreen Sams coedited a special issue on “[Undergraduate Research and Transformative Learning](#)” of the *Journal of Transformative Learning* (vol. 5, no. 2, 2018).

Included within this issue are the following articles:

- Undergraduate Research as Generative Metaphor: A Provocation by John Tagg

- Transformative Pre-Research Mentorship Design: Jump-Starting Undergraduate Research Experience in Molecular Biology by Y. Ellen France
- Innovation in Preservice Teacher Preparation: Undergraduate Research in Special Education by Kymberly Harris, Meca Williams-Johnson, and Dana Sparkman
- Barriers to Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Research: Helping Student Researchers to Embrace the Hurdles by Sarah B. Lovern
- Transformative Learning in Client-Based Research Projects by Karl Robert, Bruce Schmitt, Lissa Yogan, and Adali Johnson
- The Role of Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences in Extending Transformative Learning to All Students by Amy B. Henderson and Emek Kose

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