



COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

## **2023-2024 Elections**

### **At-Large Division: Division Representative Slate**

**Position Purpose:** The work of Divisions is done by Division Representatives who advance undergraduate research by providing networking opportunities, activities, and educational content. Their aim is to create and foster community and value within the organization. Representatives support the members of their division in activities and programs that align with the CUR strategic plan, mission, vision, and values.

#### **Needed Qualifications:**

- Familiar with CUR and it's mission
- Passionate about or had mentor experience in undergraduate research
- Showcases thought leadership in undergraduate research
- CUR Membership (once elected)
- Previous volunteer experience, not required but

*There are 4 individuals running.*

*You may vote for all candidates presented to be elected as representatives for this division.*

*This division will also be accepting write-In candidates for this election cycle.*

Candidate information is presented on the following pages. Click on each candidate name below to be taken to their Information In the document.

- [Jennifer Thorington-Springer](#)
- [Laura Cruz](#)
- [Prajukti Bhattacharyya](#)
- [Susan Lynne Beckwith](#)

## Jennifer Thorington Springer, Indiana University, Indianapolis (IUI)

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### *At-Large Division Nominee*

#### **NOMINEE STATEMENTS**

##### **Please comment on your involvement in undergraduate research activities in the context of your institution and its mission.**

IUPUI (soon to be IUI) is committed to providing students opportunities for engaged and experiential learning. Our RISE to the Challenge Program, now a part of our Institute for Engaged Learning (IEL), affords students an opportunity to engage in HIPs where Undergraduate Research is a huge component. I had the privilege of serving as the inaugural RISE Director for 4 years. As Director, I oversaw and facilitated the creation of the IUPUI HIPs taxonomies designed to guide and sustain the quality of HIPs. These are a valuable resource for instructors as they design, revise, and enhance HIP experiences. The taxonomy for Undergraduate Research has been widely used not only by our own faculty but also by others on a national level:

<https://getengaged.iupui.edu/faculty-and-staff/taxonomies/index.html> In my current role as Associate Dean of Student Affairs, I oversee our HIP experiences. We have been successful at scaling our efforts for undergraduate research with a focus on community engagement. I also recently co-facilitated a professional development workshop for faculty on integrating career competencies in our undergraduate courses, with an emphasis on undergraduate research and how it ultimately prepares students for their various career paths. Faculty spent time thinking about how to assist students with both understanding and articulating the skills they acquire in research focused courses, among others.

##### **In what ways have you helped promote diversity and inclusion in URSCA?**

I have promoted DEI efforts at my campus by working closely with faculty to get more minoritized and underserved students to participate in undergraduate research. For example, I have mentored students enrolled in our Olaniyan Scholars Program “which promotes the development of undergraduate research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (or the School of Liberal Arts) facilitated through the interdisciplinary lens of Africana Studies, or the study of African peoples still living in Africa and those populations scattered around the globe since slavery and colonization.” I served as co-chair of CUR’s DEI Committee. In this capacity, I worked closely with committee members to design and facilitate the DEI Critical Conversation Series for the CUR community among other programming. I was also on the planning committee for the URPD DEI themed conference in 2021.

##### **How do you anticipate your skills will help successfully uphold the Division Representative charge?**

My expertise in DEI training, administrative skills, and as a member of the AAC&U HIPs faculty, I believe that I will continue to be an active CUR representative if re-elected. I can also see my experience as a member of the HIPs in the States and the HIPs core planning group for the Assessment Institute of Indianapolis being valuable in advancing the goals, mission, and vision of CUR.

##### **If you have served a previous term as Division Representative (previously Division Councilor), are there any particular contributions during your previous term(s) that you would like to highlight?**

As a representative in the At Large Division and as Co-Chair/Member of the DEI Committee I co-created and facilitated DEI programming and professional development opportunities for the CUR community.

# Laura Cruz, The Pennsylvania State University

## *At-Large Division Nominee*

### **NOMINEE STATEMENTS**

#### **Please comment on your involvement in undergraduate research activities in the context of your institution and its mission.**

My primary role at Penn State is to facilitate the publication of research related to teaching and learning. I strongly encourage instructional faculty to work with student partners in developing pedagogical research studies and have established several programs focused on building capacity for these forms of partnerships. This typically includes mentoring approximately 12-15 undergraduate students in research each semester. From my experience, we have learned that UREs which focus on teaching and learning can often serve as gateways to student engagement in disciplinary-based research (Shank & Cruz, 2021). Building these partnerships has led to an active research agenda on undergraduate research as pedagogy, including the development of a validated instrument (the Penn State undergraduate research survey, or PUR) which we have used as the basis for a multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder study of the culture of URSCA at research universities. These projects have enabled me to play a key partnership role in institutional initiatives related to undergraduate research at Penn State, including serving as a leader of the URSCA task force, an appointed member of the planning committee for the recurring URSCA Summit, and a coordinator of special projects. Selected publications and presentations: Cruz, L. E., Anckle, D\*, LaDage, L., Chan Hilton, A., & Rieck, A. (2021). Undergraduate research as a system: Mapping the institutional landscape of a high-impact practice. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 21(1), 301-319. Cruz, L., Brunow, B., Haynes, E., Hochstedt, K., Jarson, J., & LeDage, L. (2022). The PUR Survey: Assessing attitudes and practices in undergraduate research at the institutional level. Presented at the AAC&U Annual Conference. Shank, M.\*, & Cruz, L. (2023). Driver's seat: A qualitative study of transformational student partnerships in SoTL. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 7(1), 110-127. \*Student co-authors

#### **In what ways have you helped promote diversity and inclusion in URSCA?**

Penn State has a complex organizational structure, inclusive of 26 campuses with a wide range of missions (e.g., two-year technical college, online campus, liberal arts college). Because the institution is also geographically dispersed across the state of Pennsylvania, it serves a similarly wide range of student populations. Given this context, one of my primary emphases is the advancement of a more equitable institutional culture for undergraduate research. Our CTL Scholars program, for example, focused on providing pathways for students from our satellite campuses to engage in URSCA. The program is specifically intended to spark interest in research among non-traditional students, especially those who may not be initially planning to pursue post-graduate studies. The findings from the PUR survey (see above) suggested that the broader implementation of course-based undergraduate research experiences (CUREs) had the potential to address some of the most persistent barriers to student participation in UREs. Based on these findings, we have initiated two ongoing faculty development programs, one for those new to the practice (an academy) and the other for those with more experience (a community of practice). The latter group hails largely from STEM disciplines. My current agenda focuses on expanding the representation of a wider range of disciplines in URSCA. In partnership with our humanities programs, for example, I co-host a recurring, day-long summit focused on increasing cross-disciplinary participation in URSCA. This is not my only partnership project. With our libraries, I am part of a team that is developing humanities-focused research training for students, and (with

another team), we are working with our graduate school to implement training on cross-disciplinary mentorship for faculty and graduate students. Selected publications and presentations: Haynes, E., Cruz, L., Brunow, B., Hochstedt, K., & LaDage, L. (under review). Equity minded: Assessing the institutional culture of undergraduate research at Penn State. Jackson, C. & Cruz, L. (2023). Faculty perspectives on expanding undergraduate research in the humanities. Presentation at CURConnect.

### **How do you anticipate your skills will help successfully uphold the Division Representative charge?**

**Broader Perspectives.** My primary role at Penn State is to facilitate research in teaching and learning; a position that requires considerable dexterity in working across, between, and within a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. Indeed, few disciplines are not represented on my list of publications and presentations. I seek to apply a similar dexterity in fostering the work of CUR both within and across its divisions. **Fostering Community.** Back in 2008, I transitioned from a tenured faculty position to a leadership role in the field of educational development. As the director of two lively centers for teaching and learning, I have considerable experience in building community through the implementation of cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional programs and activities, especially those that focus on professional development for faculty. **Alignment.** My previous experience with CUR is admittedly limited, but I do have experience with aligning with the missions of national organizations. Previously, I served an elected term on the national board of the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network; as well as appointed chair of their research and publications committees. Currently, I serve as the elected chair of the American Educational Research Association (AERA)'s committee on faculty teaching, evaluation, and development. Perhaps most relevant to the work of CUR, I hold an appointed position on an AAC&U-sponsored research team focused on mentoring undergraduate research in a global context (MURGC). Selected publications and presentations: (Forthcoming, contributing author). Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts (MUR-GC): Integrated High Impact Practices for Student Success. AAC&U. Cruz, L. et al. (2023). Mentoring undergraduate research in global contexts (MURGC): An integrated model. New Directions for Teaching and Learning. Wiley.

### **If you have served a previous term as Division Representative (previously Division Councilor), are there any particular contributions during your previous term(s) that you would like to highlight?**

Not applicable. This is my first time seeking a position within the organization. I was encouraged to do so by a CUR staff member at the 2023 CURConnects event.

# Prajukti Bhattacharyya, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

## At-Large Division Nominee

### NOMINEE STATEMENTS

#### Please comment on your involvement in undergraduate research activities in the context of your institution and its mission.

Mentored undergraduate research is part of my institutional culture and is strongly embraced as one of the high-impact educational practices or HIPs. I have been actively mentoring undergraduates in my lab since 2004. I regularly co-present results from undergraduate research projects at professional conferences with my students. My current research team includes ten students from eight disciplines working on six different projects addressing issues faced by local communities. My research students regularly present at NCUR and at professional conferences including the Geological Society of America Annual Conference. Their projects have been featured at the Wisconsin State Capitol as part of the "Research in the Rotunda" event. I have developed research-infused courses for both majors and non-majors, and led a community of practitioners on campus for developing research infused courses across disciplines and curricula. I have co-developed and co-taught a transdisciplinary international travel-study course titled "Geology and Physics of Iceland" with a physicist colleague. Undergraduate research is the centerpiece of this course, and students are required to design and conduct open-ended research projects in interdisciplinary teams. This course has been offered in 2018 and 2022, and is scheduled to be offered again in Spring Semester 2024. Student research conducted as part of this course have been presented at NCUR and at professional geological conferences and have been exhibited at the Iceland Embassy in Washington DC. I have served as the Associate Director of the UWW Undergraduate Research Program (URP) during 2014-16, and I still actively serve URP as an associate council member. I am active in the pursuit of the scholarship and pedagogy of undergraduate research. I have published several peer-reviewed manuscripts in SPUR and in other reputed journals with national and international readership, and have presented at multiple NCUR FAN sessions and CUR conferences.

#### In what ways have you helped promote diversity and inclusion in URSCA?

I was the coordinator of the UWW Research Apprenticeship Program (RAP) during 2014-16. During my tenure, this program received the UWW Board of Regents Diversity Award, and the Diversity Program Achievement Award presented by the Wisconsin State Council on Affirmative Action for bridging the equity gap and ensuring early engagement in research for students considered academically at-risk. As the RAP coordinator, I applied and received funding from the Wisconsin Alliance for Minority Participation (WiscAMP) for organizing multi-day workshops during 2017 and 2018 for developing research skills for students underrepresented in STEM disciplines. I have received the 2023 UW Whitewater Fannie Hicklin Faculty Award for Trailblazers in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Outstanding Women of Color in Education Award for my commitment to inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility in STEM through engaging underrepresented students in mentored research. The "Geology and Physics of Iceland" course has successfully managed to attract students from diverse backgrounds. Since the first time it was offered, this course has attracted students from groups traditionally underrepresented in undergraduate research, including but not limited to students with visible and invisible disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, students from lower socioeconomic status, nontraditional returning adult students, and first-generation students. This course is designed to welcomes students at all levels of their undergraduate career from a wide range of STEM and non-STEM disciplines and encourage them to work in multidisciplinary teams for conducting research. I recently received a grant from the

National Science Foundation for creating a culturally appropriate geoscience learning ecosystem by providing interdisciplinary research opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. Students involved in this project interact with indigenous elders and knowledge-keepers and learn about culturally appropriate ways of learning and knowing that are not usually encountered in traditional STEM classrooms.

**How do you anticipate your skills will help successfully uphold the Division Representative charge?**

I bring a balanced mix of creativity and practicality to my division. My strengths include being able to find a common ground for diverse groups of stakeholders and being able to work collaboratively towards a common goal. I can breach disciplinary silos to foster collaboration and communication. I also have extensive experience in designing research-infused courses and other educational materials related to undergraduate research. My passion and experience in promoting inclusivity, equity, accessibility, and belonging in undergraduate research will be an asset to my division.

**If you have served a previous term as Division Representative (previously Division Councilor), are there any particular contributions during your previous term(s) that you would like to highlight?**

I have served as a representative of the CUR At-Large Division since 2015, and I currently represent my division in the CUR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. I was the co-chair of the CUR DEI Committee during 2019-21, and in that role, I organized and co-facilitated the CUR Town Hall meeting during 2020 virtual CUR ABM and organized a panel discussion on creating spaces for visible and invisible disabilities in URSCA during the 2020 Virtual CUR Conference. I was involved in initiating the critical conversation discussions on DEI for CUR. I was deeply involved in planning for the 2021 Virtual CUR Conference titled “Centering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity.” More recently I organized a panel discussion session titled “Creative Ways of Broadening Participation in Undergraduate Research” for 2023 NCUR. I am currently part of the “Workforce Development” subgroup in my division, and involved in planning for a virtual workshop/discussion on this topic scheduled for Thursday, January 18, 2024.

## Susan Lynne Beckwith, Oakland University

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### *At-Large Division Nominee*

#### **NOMINEE STATEMENTS**

##### **Please comment on your involvement in undergraduate research activities in the context of your institution and its mission.**

I serve as both a direct faculty mentor for individual students in their undergraduate research projects (from inception to completion) and also oversee the development of 100+ Honors 3rd-year students' research project proposals for their Honors Thesis each semester. The latter students represent all of the schools and disciplines at my institution and the proposal process involves both project design and planning as well grant writing. I facilitate the connection between these students and the individual professors who will serve as their faculty mentor from project design to completion. This also involves the awarding of grant monies each semester. In addition, I am involved in various talks and seminars that inform students about research opportunities and what research can look like in various disciplines (and forms, from lab work to archival research to creative projects) and maintain websites and other forms of information dissemination to make transparent research opportunities and processes. Each semester I also plan and coordinate an event to celebrate undergraduate research: these events are attended by students from all years of study (freshman to senior) and faculty.

##### **In what ways have you helped promote diversity and inclusion in URSCA?**

I facilitate the initiation of 100+ URSCA projects per semester and around 30 in the summer, overseeing the initial design and communication of URSCA by the students and their relationship-building with Faculty Mentors in their discipline. In these efforts, I have developed non-traditional and alternate paths to these connections for students to promote diversity and inclusion. I also frame the communications for these opportunities to be as inclusive and accessible as possible. I also oversee the planning of events which celebrate URSCA and do so with the specific aim that these also showcase the diversity of students and faculty participating in URSCA and that the path to these endeavors is not fixed and that there are multiple people to support each student on their individual journey to success in URSCA. I hold this mission to be incredibly important for the success and support of individual students, and also to the success of all institutions and disciplines as it is essential that representation within specializations and professions become diverse and inclusive of all voices and perspectives – which of course leads to a more successful and sustainable society...

##### **How do you anticipate your skills will help successfully uphold the Division Representative charge?**

My experience with the events and networking opportunities for students at my institution will allow me to uphold the charge for CUR Division Representatives. I have served for three years at CUR already, helping to create and foster community and value within my Division and then also between my Division and the organization as whole. I expect to continue to hone my ability and increase my skills further to not only continue but to more successfully accomplish the full charge.

##### **If you have served a previous term as Division Representative (previously Division Councilor), are there any particular contributions during your previous term(s) that you would like to highlight?**

Along with participation and contribution on a number of sub-committee projects, I have served as the Secretary of At-Large for a little more than two years: initially volunteering, and then as an elected position.