



COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

2023-2024 Elections

Education 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 3 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.

- [Sarah Straub](#)
- [Holly Hansen-Thomas](#)
- [Ruth J Palmer](#)

Sarah Straub, Stephen F. Austin State University

Education Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

In my tenure at SFA, I've had the privilege of mentoring over 30 undergraduate research projects, a journey marked by notable achievements. Numerous projects have transcended the classroom, finding expression in conferences at the state, regional, and national levels. Some of these endeavors have even been recognized through publications in peer-reviewed academic journals, contributing to the scholarly discourse at both state and national tiers. My commitment to fostering a culture of research and learning extends beyond individual projects. I proudly serve as the university representative for the Undergraduate Research Conference and assume the role of faculty chair for my department's Undergraduate Research Committee. In these capacities, I play a pivotal role in shaping the undergraduate research landscape at SFA. As a representative for the Undergraduate Research Conference, I actively contribute to the university's mission, which is rooted in a dedication to excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, creative work, and service. Through personalized attention from faculty and staff, we cultivate a learner-centered environment that prepares students for the challenges of a global community. In my capacity as the faculty chair for the Undergraduate Research Committee, I've undertaken the responsibility of providing training and support for faculty engaged in research with students. This includes guiding them through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and offering insights on securing funding for student travel. These initiatives align seamlessly with SFA's mission, fostering an environment where research, scholarship, and creativity thrive, echoing the university's commitment to preparing students for success in a dynamic global landscape.

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

My dedication to promoting diversity and inclusion in undergraduate research activities at SFA is manifested through a multifaceted approach, embracing varied projects that reflect the richness of our student body. One notable initiative involved collaborating with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing student on a travel trunk project aimed at fostering sensitivity among elementary students. This innovative endeavor showcased how students with hearing impairments can actively participate in music, contributing to a more inclusive educational environment. In another impactful project, a student and I delved into the realm of culturally responsive education by incorporating Native/American Indian stories into the classroom. Inspired by training facilitated by the National Museum of the American Indian, we sought to bring authentic representation to the curriculum, fostering an appreciation for diverse narratives. Addressing the importance of racial and ethnic identity, I guided students in conducting a campus racial climate study, with a particular focus on Hispanic/Latino/Latinx identities. This research not only shed light on the experiences of underrepresented groups on campus but also served as a catalyst for fostering an inclusive and supportive campus environment. Further emphasizing inclusivity, I collaborated with a student on the development of an online curriculum for African American history. This project aimed to enhance educational resources and ensure a more comprehensive representation of historical perspectives. Central to my approach is recognizing and supporting students based on their unique interests and identities. This ethos has led to an array of projects that amplify underrepresented voices and experiences, contributing to the overarching goal of cultivating a diverse and inclusive research community at SFA. These efforts align seamlessly with the university's commitment to excellence in teaching and service, creating an environment where all students feel valued and empowered.

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

In taking on the role of CUR Education Division Representative, I bring a wealth of experience and skills that align seamlessly with the charge of advancing undergraduate research within the organization. My extensive background in mentoring over 30 undergraduate research projects, resulting in presentations at various levels and publications in peer-reviewed journals, positions me well to provide valuable insights and support to fellow members. Networking is a cornerstone of my approach, and I have a proven track record of establishing meaningful connections within the academic and research community. As a CUR Division Representative, I would leverage these networking skills to create robust opportunities for collaboration among members. Facilitating connections between researchers, both within and beyond the division, will not only enhance the quality of research but also contribute to a vibrant and interconnected community. My involvement as a university representative for the Undergraduate Research Conference and as the faculty chair for the Undergraduate Research Committee underscores my commitment to creating educational content and activities that resonate with the mission and values of CUR. I have provided training on various aspects of undergraduate research, including navigating the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and securing funding for student travel. This experience equips me to contribute educational content that aligns with CUR's strategic plan, fostering a culture of excellence in research and scholarship. Recognizing the importance of community and value, I have successfully supported faculty in their research endeavors, emphasizing personalized attention and mentorship. As a CUR Division Representative, I would extend this support to members, ensuring that their activities and programs align with the overarching goals of CUR. My dedication to inclusivity, as evidenced by my work on diverse research projects, further contributes to fostering a community that embraces a wide range of perspectives and experiences. In summary, my skills in networking, educational content development, and community building position me to successfully uphold the charge of advancing undergraduate research as a CUR Division Representative. I am eager to contribute to the organization's strategic plan, mission, vision, and values, fostering a dynamic and supportive environment for all members.

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?

N/A

Holly Hansen-Thomas, Texas Woman's University (TWU)

Education Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

I am the Vice Provost for Research, Innovation, and Corporate Engagement (VPRICE) at my institution, which is a proud public HSI and the largest and only public university system with a woman focus in the US. As I oversee the Center for Student Research (CSR) at my institution, I support the Center in allocating grants for undergraduate research and also support the director in organizing travel for undergraduates to attend NCUR. We take between 12-20 undergraduate students to NCUR to present annually and have found this to have multiple rewards. Additionally, we organize a hybrid Student Creative Arts and Research Symposium annually that spotlights the research and creative activities of almost 300 students from 3 TWU campuses (most of them undergraduates). This event also hosts an award ceremony for students with funding for winners. Another activity that I support through my leadership and supervision of the CSR is shepherding undergraduate students to the Capitol of our state, Austin, for Undergraduate Research Day, where we select one or two students to present their research at the state capitol.

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

As mentioned, Texas Woman's University is an HSI and woman focused institution. In fact, as of the current academic year, TWU's student demographics reflect that over half are pell eligible. As the VPRICE and chief research officer at the institution, I promote and support the research activities I have highlighted previously for all of our students, and with a focus on students that have not traditionally had research opportunities, such as our students from diverse backgrounds. In fact, I am very proud of a 2.3 million dollar grant funded project I led called PIONERAS, which supported preservice bilingual teachers who needed academic language support to pass their exams for certification. The PIONERAS project built in research experiences in Costa Rica to enhance the undergraduates' learning and helped them to be successful bilingual teachers.

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

As the VPRICE at TWU, I work to provide networking opportunities such as the Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol, the Student Creative Arts and Research Symposium, and other research opportunities in students' particular disciplines. I endeavor to attend and participate in student research fora and activities and I support those that I can.

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 not.

Ruth J Palmer, The College of New Jersey

Education Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

I now serve as the Immediate Past president of CUR 2023-24, the last of my three-year service at the organization executive level. As such I serve all CUR membership institutions through CUR's mission-driven goals and practices. In addition, I engaged members of my institution's School of Education in the exploration of coordinating UR CURE efforts into an integrated program effort. This work is continuing.

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

My promotion of diversity and inclusion in URSCA is continuing. Initially, my concern focused on my students in the educational psychology course/s and has extended to the multicultural and multidisciplinary characteristics of students in Schools of Education. This is continuing work but within it my immediate focus is on building a culture across CUR members that prioritizes equity even in the national environment where these values are challenged.

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

My commitment to undergraduate research in Schools of Education, its teacher education programs, and related fields has intensified over my many years in CUR. Leadership in Undergraduate research is my focus, where the Education Division representatives work together to advance this work, work that must be collaborative, interdisciplinary, and future oriented. In sum, it means re-establishing and -strengthening the power of focused learning communities and partnerships with others who are doing this work.

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?

Yes.

- Co- founding of the CUR Education Division
- Co-Editor of the text " Conducting Undergraduate Research in Education: A Guide for students in Teacher Education Programs (2022)
- Voted to the CUR Board of Directors (multiple terms)
- Member of CUR's Executive Leadership Team
- Research collaboration with national (UW-Stout) and international (UA-Australia) HE institutions re-conference presentation & publications (2020-2024)