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Social Science Division e-Newsletter

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August is an exciting month with students returning to campus, some eager to share experiences from mentored undergraduate research experiences or study abroad programs that took place over the summer. This newsletter provides information on professional development workshops in September as well as upcoming opportunities and deadlines and a member spotlight.

[Social Science Division Proposal for SPUR](#)

Several of our social science division members are working on a proposal for a paper for SPUR's special edition on Career Readiness. Doreen Sams is the contact author and wrote the first draft. Anne Price has contributed to it and passed it back. It will be passed to the next co-author soon. It is not too late to join. If you would like to participate as a co-author, please [email Doreen Sams](#).

[Interview with Dr. James LaPlant, Social Science Division Vice-Chair](#)

"Among the many activities and networking opportunities that CUR provides, the organization also offers support for the professional growth of faculty and administrators through expert-designed institutes, conferences, and a wide range of volunteer positions."



This month features an interview with James LaPlant, Vice-Chair of the CUR Social Sciences Division. James is Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Valdosta State University, and a familiar face at CUR with extensive involvement and leadership in a diversity of roles. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Oklahoma.

[What CUR committees or task forces are you currently serving on?](#)

I just served on the Annual Conference Knowledge and Community Building Advisory Group which evaluated and selected proposals for presentation at the 2023 ConnectUR Conference held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (June 2023). I served on the editorial board of the *CUR Quarterly* which became *SPUR* (Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research) for 15 years as a division editor, issue editor, and six years as the editor-in-chief (EIC). I am most proud of my service as the EIC of *SPUR* where we rebranded and reorganized the journal to highlight the best practices in undergraduate research across the country and the globe. I also served on the Executive Board of CUR for several years when I was chair of the Social Science Division.

[How long have you been mentoring undergraduate research?](#)

“CUR’s advocacy efforts are also a large portion of its work as we strive to strengthen support for undergraduate research. Its continued growth in connections with representatives, private foundations, government agencies, and campuses worldwide provides value to its members and gives voice to undergraduate research.”

I mentored my very first undergraduate research student for our campus symposium in 1999. Even in my position as the dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, I still teach the required research methods course in political science every fall semester. Mentoring undergraduate students on their research projects which result in conference presentations and publications is still the best part of my job!

Have you had any other involvement in leading experiential learning activities for undergraduates that you would like to share?

I was the co-director of Valdosta State’s inaugural study abroad program to Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, in 2002. I co-directed the study abroad program three more times after that inaugural year. We celebrated 20 years of the study abroad program last year.

What influenced you to join CUR?

Dr. Dennis Marks (who was the chair of Physics, Astronomy and Geosciences at Valdosta State University and very active in CUR) encouraged me to join in 2000 when the Social Science Division was first created. It is one of the best professional decisions of my career in terms of the wonderful colleagues and university administrators who I have had the pleasure to work with for more than two decades. I feel like I have been mentored by some of the very best people in the field. During my time as the Editor in Chief of SPUR, I had the opportunity to learn about the excellent work of our colleagues in the assessment, practices, models, and funding of undergraduate research initiatives.

CUR September Professional Development Opportunities

Creating Accessible Activities: Making Your Work Accessible for Individuals with Disabilities—Interactive Expert Seminar. [Link](#)

Wednesday, September 20th | Facilitator: Julee Farley, PhD, Director of the Science Outreach Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania.

Learn to Leverage Research and Creative Inquiry as a Career-Readiness Tool-Online Intensive. [Link](#)

Friday, September 22nd | Facilitators: Jeanne Mekolichik, PhD, Associate Provost of Research, Faculty Success & Strategic Initiatives; Joe Wirgau, PhD, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research & Scholarship; and Leah Ellis, Undergraduate Researcher and Work-Study Assistant, Radford University.

Reminder on Social Science Division Representative Roles

Social Science Division Representatives serve as ambassadors of CUR and CUR’s mission at their home institution and professional conferences and meetings. CUR relies on member skills for the success of the organization, including: promoting, mentoring, and involving undergraduates in research, scholarship and creative activity; working with other division representatives to create collaborative solutions to issues faced by the undergraduate research community, as part of the approved annual action plan; providing service to their division and assigned

committees and task forces; serving three years in the position; attending any CUR leadership meetings as required; maintaining CUR membership.

Upcoming Opportunities & Deadlines

STR Application Deadline- September 7, 2023

CUR Conversation: SPUR Office Hours with the Editor in Chief- September 11, 2023

Submission Window Opens for NCUR- September 15, 2023

Georgia Undergraduate Research Conference (GURC) at Valdosta State University --
Abstract submissions due by September 15th & Conference November 10th and 11th

First Social Science Division Meeting – October 2023

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