



COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

## 2024-2025 Elections Arts & Humanities Division: Division Representative Candidates

**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:

- Capable mentor: Experienced guide and supporter of others looking to advance their personal growth and development in areas connected to but not limited to UR.
- Communication: Professional and effective communicators, experienced in difficult conversations and able to hear and disseminate community needs
- Collaborative Spirit: Team players making space for all voices to be heard, furthering the collective understanding of the group, and cultivating outcomes to best serve CUR and its membership

*There are 3 individuals running.*

*You may vote for all of the 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.

- [Emily Rendek](#)
- [Heather Huggins](#)
- [Maria Iacullo-Bird](#)

# Emily Rendek, University of Rochester

## Arts & Humanities Division Nominee

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### **NOMINEE STATEMENTS**

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

From September 2022 – June 2023, I served as Associate Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research at the University of Rochester (UR); I was promoted to Director on July 1, 2023, and I have served in that capacity since. UR prides itself on the importance of undergraduate research, and it's the reason so many students choose our university. UR has made undergrad research one of its five pillars of importance in its new strategic plan. The Office of Undergraduate Research at UR runs a number of programs that help facilitate undergraduates' ability to conduct research with UR faculty/PIs—activities include a competitive grant program, research presentation awards, workshops conducted over the course of the year on how to get involved, Investigating Research Month in the fall, and Celebrating Research Week in the spring (which includes a poster expo, 3-minute oral competition, and symposia). In addition to overseeing all the aforementioned programs, I also serve as a representative and advocate for undergraduate research on the committees, taskforces, and initiatives that I am a part of.

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

In my role as director of undergraduate research, I have worked to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for the undergraduates, faculty, and staff that I interact with. Our office works with offices such as the Office of Minority and Student Affairs and the David T. Kearns Center for Leadership and Diversity to ensure that all students are aware of the opportunities our office offers. We also partner with student organizations, such as MAPS (the Minority Association of Pre-med Students) to promote resources and opportunities. During my time in the office, we have nearly doubled the amount of humanities students who have received our most prestigious grant, and I continue to work to provide more diverse representation in terms of experience, background, and majors for those who participate in that program. Research positions are also posted on a homegrown, student-developed platform to foster more equitable access to research opportunities for students rather than relying solely on cold emailing professors for research experiences.

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

I have approximately eight years of event planning and communications experience in higher education related to both grad students and undergraduates that helps make me an ideal candidate as a Division Representative. I understand that communication skills are incredibly important for a Division Representative, and I want to use my experience in order to promote the value and importance of undergraduate research in the arts and humanities. Throughout my nearly twenty years' time working in higher education I have always viewed myself as a strong advocate for the arts and humanities. I would like to bring my advocacy skills to the national level and have the opportunity to collaborate with other representatives to strategize how to elevate the arts and humanities in undergraduate research. As someone whose expertise is in the humanities, it can often feel like we're forgotten when it comes to undergraduate research. I'd like us to become more than just a passing "oh, and the arts and humanities, too" when we talk about undergraduate research.

#### **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

# Heather Huggins, CUNY-Queensborough Community College

## Arts & Humanities Division Nominee

### NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication, Theatre, and Media Production at Queensborough Community College, City University of New York. QCC has a vibrant research community. QCC students and mentors in STEM and Social Science are eligible for funding through the CUNY Research Scholars Program. You can learn more by reading Petersen et al (2021) in SPUR.

Arts & Humanities (A&H) is supported through grassroots engagement. I joined the undergraduate research as a high-impact practice (UR-HIP) community in 2018, and the Research Committee in 2019. I began serving as the first A&H faculty coordinator for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in 2022. I collaborate with the STEM & Social Sciences coordinator to facilitate professional development. I advocate for flexibility and accessibility in QCC's campus wide research events. Five years ago, posters were the standard at UR Day. Since then, we've increased paths for participation by adding multimedia presentations (2019); live arts showcases featuring acting, dance, music, and technical theatre (2022); panels (2023); and asynchronous video presentations (2024). Through my active recruitment of faculty from all disciplines, acting, dance, film and media production, music, and technical theatre programs are actively participating.

I developed three new course-based research offerings in theatre: a revision to the required Voice & Speech course, a new Movement elective, and an independent study. This ensures that our students participate in at least one research course before they graduate. The independent study has created paths for students to engage in advanced projects in their areas of interest. Last year, a student conducted research in directing, and received one of the A&H Division scholarships. In May 2025, I will support QCC Theatre in sharing a live performance along with technical theatre presentations at CUNY's annual research day.

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

As a former community college student and now a faculty member at a similar institution, I know that community colleges are vital to the conversation on whose knowledge counts. QCC is a multilingual, multiethnic community. We are a Hispanic-serving institution. Our students have a range of abilities. It is important to me that I never take this richness for granted; but rather, that I engage with my own identities and cultures as I honor and uplift the intersectional identities of our students and their communities.

I have diverse experiences as a researcher. As a performing artist, I interpret, create, and devise works; I engage with the emerging and interdisciplinary field of awareness-based action research; I share and study performance and mindfulness practices in support of cultural and structural change. I have served on the Office of Academic Affairs' Anti-Racist Curriculum Committee and partnered with QCC's Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Center.

In 2018, I initiated a student and alumni community which practiced Social Presencing Theater, a body-based mindfulness practice which contributes to awareness-based systems change. We co-created performances, presented research, and offered public programming in support of DEI. Locally, we developed the series

'Peacebuilding Through Awareness & Improvisation' in partnership with QCC's Kupferberg Holocaust Center and CUNY's Transformative Learning in the Humanities. We developed an interactive workshop 'Cultivating Communities of Care through Action Research' for the CUNY Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Conference. Regionally, we presented new works at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival's devised theatre initiative. We collaborated internationally with the Presencing Institute (MIT) and ImaginAction. In 2020, I traveled with students for a social arts residency in the Yucatán, collaborating with Mayan youth to co-create performance in partnership with La Vaca Independiente. Nancy Hensel included the project in 'Undergraduate Research at Community Colleges: Equity, Discovery, and Innovation.'

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

I am actively engaged in the goals of the strategic plan. My skills in UR leadership and DEI are described above. I often present nationally about URSCI, including for conferences on UR, humanities, and human rights. I've also presented and published in the international Performance & Mindfulness community.

Regarding advocacy and partnerships (3), I am eager to learn from others who are deep in this work and willing to participate where my knowledge and experience would be of benefit. For example, supporting community college faculty within and beyond A&H. I'm also passionate about uplifting the ways that knowledge is constructed and shared through the distinct methodologies and contributions of each discipline.

I am a strong advocate (3) for URSCI, interested in developing nuanced assessments which accurately measure how UR supports learning, retention, and graduation. At QCC, programs like CRSP attract students who have excelled at 'schooling;' students and alumni who have received scholarships and awards in recognition of their academic achievements and GPAs. I have also mentored students who are struggling to feel seen and heard in our campus community, whose transcripts do not reflect their capacity or promise. This illuminates an exciting potential for URSCI-- a community which uplifts participants who are already excelling at school, as well as those who are still looking for their place within the academy and the workforce.

I aspire to co-create communities (4) which foster reciprocity. Compassionate accountability and sustainability (5) are central to my intention and approach. I have extensive experience developing, facilitating, and producing programming through theatre. I also coordinate free public events in collaboration with QCC's three campus cultural centers and the CUNY LGBTQIA+ Consortium.

I look forward to continuing these endeavors in support of CUR's strategic plan, mission, vision, and values.

**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

# Maria Iacullo-Bird, Pace University

## *Arts & Humanities Division Nominee*

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### **NOMINEE STATEMENTS**

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

As the founding director of the Center for Undergraduate Research Experiences (CURE), I have served as a change agent for the institutionalization of undergraduate research at Pace University. The high-impact pedagogy of undergraduate research directly supports the Pace mission to develop our students' full potential as innovative thinkers and active problem solvers, and aligns with strategic priorities to lead in experiential education and advance student success. I began CURE in Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, and in 2020, the Center's reach became university-wide across the Schools and Colleges of Pace University. CURE provides students and faculty with support for undergraduate research through programming that includes my webinar series for students and faculty, and programs I oversee --the Provost's and Dyson Summer and Academic Year Student-Faculty Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry Awards; the Amelia A. Gould Undergraduate Research Assistantships in the Creative Arts; the Federal Work-Study (FWS) Undergraduate Research Assistantships; and the Student Conference Travel Fund. I oversee internal undergraduate student showcases and have led Pace teams to the World Congress on Undergraduate Research and NCUR. As the result of my advocacy, Pace is an Enhanced Institutional Member of CUR, and I utilize CUR resources and programming throughout my work. Last spring 2023, I worked with the CURE Faculty Advisory Board to inaugurate the Faculty Undergraduate Research Mentor Award. I conduct undergraduate research assessment, advise faculty about undergraduate research pedagogy, models, and innovations, and oversee Course-Based Undergraduate Research Awards to develop new CUREs. I lead and support grant writing that includes undergraduate research opportunities for our students. Most recently, I am the co-PI on a NEH Humanities Initiatives grant titled, "The Ground Beneath Our Feet" to study the suppressed histories of Lower Manhattan and undergraduate research is embedded in the portfolio of courses that are part of this grant.

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

My efforts to create an inclusive educational environment at Pace are pervasive throughout my grant initiatives, administrative responsibilities, pedagogical practices, and professional service. I have advanced URSCI by establishing the Pace Federal Work Study Undergraduate Research Assistantship program to provide more students with access to research experiences. As a history faculty member, I have developed CUREs that include HIS196H "COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter: Comparative, Crisis-based Oral History in the American Experience" which provides both Civic Engagement and Anti-Racism Education designations. To better inform student research course enrollment and provide greater access to undergraduate research throughout the college curriculum, this fall at Pace I proposed the creation of a Faculty Undergraduate Research Working Group to define CUREs for curriculum development and to clarify first-year, intermediate, and capstone CURE definitions. This information will inform the creation of developmental or scaffolded undergraduate research designations to provide greater access to research experiences for more students and will help identify course research opportunities earlier in the college years. As an elected leader, I have helped promote diversity and inclusion in URSCI in my service to CUR. For example, as Arts & Humanities Chair, I emphasized DEI in the recruitment of new representatives, and as a Board member, I was part of the working group that created a more inclusive definition of undergraduate research. As CUR President, I have prioritized CUR's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, for example, in my work as Board Chair, and in developing my President's Charges to CUR Committees, Working Groups, and Task Forces.

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

As a CUR Representative since 2013, and most recently as CUR President-Elect, 2023-2024, and as President, 2024-2025, my skills, experience, expertise, and values have been fulfilling the CUR Division Representative charge in building community, and advancing CUR as the leading organizational voice for undergraduate research. As an advocate for undergraduate research, I have collaborated for years with CUR's lobbyist Bose Public Affairs Group in speaking with congressional legislators and staff to advocate for the importance of undergraduate research and funded research programs with special emphasis on the arts and humanities. In 2023 at the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) Annual Meeting, I was an invited panelist for the session "Advocating for Humanities Research." I joined Arts & Humanities Division members in presenting "Emerging Best Practices for Undergraduate Research in the Arts and Humanities" at ConnectUR 2022, and the session "Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Arts and Humanities through CUREs and Community Collaborations," at ConnectUR 2023. At ConnectUR 2024, I organized and co-facilitated a workshop on federal, state, and local approaches to advocacy for undergraduate research and delivered the plenary welcome for the session "Humanities Disciplines and Undergraduate Research." I also authored the Chapter "Undergraduate Research in the USA," in Part IV, International Perspectives, Cambridge Handbook of Undergraduate Research, eds., Harald A. Mieg, et al., (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2023), 445-455. In supporting internationalism in undergraduate research, I have been a member of the Alliance on Global Undergraduate Research (AGUR) and served as the Special Issue, Guest Co-Editor, for "Global Perspectives and Practices of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Inquiry," Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research (SPUR, Spring 2024). Most recently, in Fall 2024, I represented CUR at the American Folklore Annual Society Meeting and at the NHA Conference.

### **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?**

My leadership within CUR began in 2013 when I first became an Arts and Humanities (A&H) Representative (formerly Councilor) and joined the Advocacy Committee. Since then, I have actively supported CUR's advocacy efforts at the federal level. I became a seasoned advocate for undergraduate research and for several years I served as an advocacy panelist and plenary presenter at CUR Dialogues and at the Annual Leadership Meeting. I co-led the effort with the National Office to obtain National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) support for undergraduate education and research that led to the NEH "Humanities Connections" Program. From 2016-2019 I served as Chair of the A & H Division and oversaw the establishment of both the Arts and Humanities Mentor Award and the Trimmer Travel Award. In 2019, I received the CUR Volunteer of the Year Award and was elected to the CUR Board of Directors. I brought an arts and humanities perspective to the Board while developing the CUR-wide leadership perspective necessary for Board leadership. I participated in the development of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, and served on the Undergraduate Research Definition Task Force and the Foresight Working Group. Re-elected to the Board in 2022, I continued with the Foresight Working Group, and served as Board Liaison both to the Arts and Humanities Division, and to SPUR. As a member of the Alliance for Global Undergraduate Research (AGUR) Steering Committee, we advised the Third World Congress on Undergraduate Research held in Coventry, England and I attended as the U.S. CUR Ambassador to WorldCUR. Interested in service to CUR through executive leadership, and receiving encouragement from CUR mentors, I self-nominated for the CUR presidency and was elected CUR President-Elect for 2023-2024. Currently as CUR President, I am the third humanist to serve in this role and the first historian.