



COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

2024-2025 Elections Health Sciences 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 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.

- [Christine Loyd](#)
- [Cody Wilkerson](#)
- [Deborah Good](#)

Christine Loyd, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Health Sciences Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

My research program was created with two main goals in mind: to develop health-related knowledge that will make a true impact on the underserved population of study and to provide biomedical sciences undergraduate students with an opportunity to learn how to do health sciences research from design to data analysis, interpretation, and ultimately, presentation.

UAB is an R1 institution with the 8th largest hospital in the US and the only Level 1 Trauma Center in Alabama. As a result, UAB provides a unique opportunity for execution of clinical and healthcare-related research. Furthermore, UAB's mission statement encourages transformational educational experiences as well as research that aims to improve health and wellbeing of local and global communities of patients. Thus, I have developed and maintained 2 lines of mentored research, one that focuses on understanding the impacts of hospitalization on health outcomes for older adults, and second that focuses on understanding the impacts of social stress on health outcomes among sexual and gender minorities in the Deep South. Having two active research tracks is particularly helpful for students because it provides options for developing greater knowledge on either or both underserved minoritized populations in terms of health outcomes.

Over the last 5 years in my role as Assistant Professor in the UAB School of Health Professions, I successfully mentored 10 undergraduate students. All students have presented at local, regional, and national conferences, and authored 4 peer-reviewed articles on our studies. Importantly, 2 students received awards for their presentation at national conferences. I am currently mentoring 6 undergraduate students on multiple research projects, with goals of presenting on this work at the UAB winter expo and the Alabama Academy of Sciences Annual Meeting in February 2025. I will finish by saying that my role as research mentor is both challenging and rewarding, and I view everyday as an opportunity to learn and improve in this role as students evolve from year to year.

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

I believe all students can benefit from participating in mentored research, thus I have taken steps to encourage the quieter communities of students to consider it. Specifically, I have recruited to my team sexual and gender minority (SGM) students from queer support groups, who historically, do not want to engage in research. I have also made a concerted effort to create a sustainable line of research focused on LGBTQIA+ health outcomes, which teaches students about the impacts of discrimination on health of their SGM peers and community members. Furthermore, I serve as a member of the DEI-focused committee for the UAB Department of Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences, which has allowed me to promote engagement of all underrepresented minority students in research in the health sciences as well as enhance racial and cultural diversity of my own research team.

The goal of inclusivity as part of my research program is to ensure that my research students feel they have responsibility, respect, support, and safety to take risks. I meet with students individually and as small teams for each project ongoing. All students are expected to come to the meetings prepared and provide clear

communication about their progress on meeting project goals. Students are held accountable to meet this responsibility by their small team leaders. Additionally, I teach students that failure is not something we should fear as researchers because when we fail we are given an opportunity to learn. I give students the opportunity or challenge to make mistakes and then fix them with the support of the small team leader and me.

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

I anticipate that my skills in research mentorship will greatly contribute to my success in achieving the charge of the Health Sciences CUR Division Reps. My experience in mentored research spans more than a decade and includes postdoctoral training from 2016-'19 in the UAB IRACDA-MERIT program designed to teach researchers how to teach and mentor undergraduate students. I was trained in evidence-based research mentorship practices and have been implementing them in my faculty position ever since. One of the key aspects to my research program is that students are expected to practice skills related to research design and data collection, as well as participate in presenting findings at conferences (posters and oral presentations). This gives students the opportunity to learn how to articulate the significance of our study and the results in simple understandable terms as well as experience networking with other investigators and peers. Development of transferable skills is recognized as highly valuable for undergraduate students and is a clear focus of my research program.

Additionally, my current faculty position is teaching-focused, which has provided me with considerable experience in classroom instruction, course design, and educational material creation. I am well equipped to communicate (through writing and oral forms) effective methods of research mentorship and undergraduate student training and education in support of the CUR members in the Health Sciences Division. Along the same lines, I have more than a decade of experience networking and relationship building with other scientists, educators, clinicians, hospital administrators, and biotech industry partners. With my skills in communication, I can assist in knowledge sharing as well as fostering collaboration across fields to promote growth and advancement of undergraduate research experiences across the country.

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.

Cody Wilkerson, University of Central Oklahoma

Health Sciences Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

I mentor students and review abstracts for the NCUR conference as well as within our School of Nursing

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

I elevate diverse students and promote their involvement in undergraduate research.

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

I have fostered relationships within the health sciences community to help students build connections.

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 Vice-Chair of the Health Sciences division and contributed to the handbook for undergraduate research.

Deborah Good, Virginia Tech

Health Sciences Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

As a first-generation student in the 1980s, an undergraduate research experience through the American Chemical Society, and then at my institution SUNY-Fredonia, propelled me to enter a Ph.D. program at Northwestern University. Now, 20+ years later, as a professor at Virginia Tech, mentoring students in undergraduate research is my passion. I have developed and found funding for four programs for undergraduate research, serving as the program director for the USDA Scholars (USDA NIFA Funded), Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise (HNFE) Scholars (Internally Funded), Translational Obesity Undergraduate Research (TOUR) Scholars (NIH Funded), and Inclusive Excellence (IE) Scholars (Howard Hughes Funded). Cumulatively, I have mentored 145 students in undergraduate research programs through these programs, and another 60 undergraduate, and 6 high school students in my research laboratory. In addition, I have developed three health-genetics based CUREs, which to date have enrolled another 96 students under my guidance. I have co-published peer-reviewed journal articles with 10 undergraduate students. This year I was approached to serve a one-year term as a Faculty Fellow and co-Director of the Office Undergraduate Research, and to date, have overseen a First-year Undergraduate Research program (FY-FURF) which has placed 25 students in research labs across the university, as well as a faculty grant program which could impact up to 80 additional students in course-based research programs (CUREs). This position has allowed me to take my passion for mentoring undergraduate research to a university-wide level, which has been incredibly fulfilling. Serving as a Division Representative would allow me to reach and potentially impact even more students and programs in the Health Sciences area and this would be both personally and professionally fulfilling to me.

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

I have served as program director for four undergraduate research programs, and two of these had a specific goal of supporting students from diverse areas. Of the 47 students who were TOUR Scholars (NIH funded, 2019-2024), 54.4% were non-Caucasian, with 25.5% belonging to marginalized ethnicities in science. In addition, these 47 students have self-reported that they are first-generation college students (23%), are disabled (3%) and/or are currently socioeconomically disadvantaged or have come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (18%). As a first-generation student myself, I am passionate about removing the difficulties and barriers to experiential learning. This is one of the reasons I developed the Inclusive Excellence Scholars, which was a pilot program of a 4-week summer research experience combined with a spring program and fellowship. This program was funded as part of the Howard Hughes Inclusive Excellence grant, awarded to Virginia Tech (2017-2024), and of which I served as a co-PI. Of the five IE scholars, one was transgender, all reported themselves or their parents at or below the poverty level, 2 were mixed race, 1 had a disability, and 2 had parents who were first gen, with one additional student first gen themselves. Both the TOUR and IE scholars program applications asked students how they would contribute to a diverse and inclusive environment, and this question alone helped us to recruit Scholars who were both diverse and inclusive to the programs. I will continue to help identify students who might not otherwise get opportunities for experiential learning both in formal programs (UR and Summer UR), and in course-based experiences.

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

I currently serve as the Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region for Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Honor Society. In this role, as well as my active role in the Virginia Tech chapter, my focus has been on recruiting students to the organization. The reason is that as a new undergraduate researcher, induction into this scientific research honor society validated me as a young scientist. I have stayed a member since that time and have continued to give back this organization as a board member of the headquarters but also serving to review student posters at our annual meeting (usually about 30 posters per meeting), and in recruiting approximately 25-30 new students to the organization each year. I do this by attending undergraduate and high school poster sessions and awarding membership prizes to the students selecting by myself and another reviewer from our Sigma Xi chapter. I believe that Sigma Xi and CUR could collaborate in recognizing outstanding undergraduate researchers and would like to look into this possibility during my term. I have also benefitted from CUR members serving as external reviewers of our TOUR Scholars program and would like to volunteer my experience in this area. Finally, I have previously served as a reviewer for articles in SPUR and would be interested in continuing this service to the society. I am certain that my passion in identifying and promoting undergraduate research opportunities align with the CUR 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 This would be my first term, if elected.