

Welcome to the Inaugural Issue of SPUR

James LaPlant, *SPUR* Editor-in-Chief

On behalf of the SPUR Editorial Board as well as the Council on Undergraduate Research, we are very excited to share with our readers the inaugural issue of the *Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research*. SPUR, the acronym for the new title of the journal, captures the powerful action of undergraduate research to encourage, stimulate, hasten, and prompt. Our hope is that SPUR will encourage best practices and models of undergraduate research. Another goal for SPUR is to stimulate the rigorous assessment of undergraduate research initiatives and programs. We also hope to hasten the spread of undergraduate research at colleges and universities across the globe. With the rising competition and growing challenges for funding higher education, our wish for SPUR is to prompt important theoretical discussions about undergraduate research and the future of higher education in the twenty-first century.

These goals are reflected in the redesigned table of contents, which reflects the many aspects of undergraduate research—from assessment and international perspectives to practice and theory. A key topic on all of our campuses is how to effectively and accurately assess undergraduate research experiences. Although we have much to trumpet about the positive impact of undergraduate research, our assessment scholarship still lags behind, especially in relation to direct measures of student learning. The popular international section of the journal has been retained with the recognition that undergraduate research is an expanding global force in higher education. The heart of the journal involves the practice of undergraduate research. The journal has always endeavored to highlight the best practices, models, and lessons learned from undergraduate research initiatives that can be emulated on other campuses. The theory section reflects SPUR as a home for those theoretical discussions and perspectives about undergraduate research as part of the broader framework of higher education. The book review section serves to highlight the latest publications on undergraduate research, and the Undergraduate Research Highlights provide recognition for undergraduates who have recently published with their faculty mentors. In addition to the redesigned table of contents, readers will notice a new cover as well as a redesign of articles. There is no longer any organizational news in CUR's flagship journal. SPUR includes peer-reviewed scholarship from start to finish in each issue, and we have expanded the page count for the volume year to deliver more cutting-edge scholarship on undergraduate research.

I am particularly proud of the lineup of articles for this inaugural issue. In relation to assessment, David Lopatto

(Grinnell College) calls for a decreased focus on student dispositions and increased attention to the external validity of undergraduate research programs. He argues that “we can learn more about the nature of undergraduate research by studying groups of programs than by analyzing individual programs.” Furthermore, Lopatto argues our assessment studies should focus less on persistence and identity, and focus more upon student decision-making, judgment, and communication. Continuing the theme of assessment, Christopher Barney (Hope College) provides a detailed and insightful analysis of funding decisions for Biology Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs) from 1987 to 2014 in relation to the number, funding levels, duration, geographic location, and distribution by institution and principal investigator of site awards. The study finds funding location is highly correlated with population. Doctoral institutions have received the highest percentage of awards, with master's institutions receiving more awards but bachelor's institutions receiving fewer awards. After adjusting for inflation, total funding has not increased since 2003–2006. Jake Follmer, Sarah Zappe, Esther Gomez, and Manish Kumar (Pennsylvania State University) compare an NSF-funded REU program with a university-sponsored REU. Their detailed assessment of the programs involves two different scales with a presurvey and postsurvey design. The comparison of gains across the two REU programs helps to inform program design, duration, and collaboration opportunities. Along similar lines, Pamela Brown and Tammie Cumming (New York City College of Technology–CUNY) and Joan Pasley (Horizon Research, Inc.) compare student survey results for two programs: an Emerging Scholars Program and a Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experience. Student responses are compared in terms of the nature, quality, and impacts of the research experience with the goal of improving both programs.

For the international perspective, Elizabeth Marquis (McMaster University) highlights the powerful model of student-staff partnerships in a Canadian teaching and learning institute. The student partners program emphasizes the potential of “students as producers” of scholarship rather than “students as consumers.” In the theory section, Carol Geary Schneider (president emerita of the Association of American Colleges and Universities) issues a clarion call for the development of undergraduate skills in evidence-based inquiry in the wake of recent public policy debates that fly in the face of quantitative data. She notes that too many college seniors graduate with weak critical thinking skills in terms of utilizing evidence and building a strong argument, and one remedy is faculty working together to map inquiry-based learning across the curriculum.

In relation to the practice of undergraduate research, an exciting collection of articles offers diverse institutional and disciplinary approaches that can serve as models for action on any campus. Christopher Kim, Anna Leahy, and Lisa Kendrick (Chapman University) describe a faculty-student research banking (FSRB) program that can be exchanged for a reduced teaching load in a future academic term. The authors outline the rationale, structural components, student and faculty requirements, and faculty usage of banked credits. They also analyze participation rates and cost projections for the FSRB program. Joseph J. Shields and Julio Rivera (Carthage College) and Joseph Wall (Marquette University) describe Velocity Consulting, which is a student-run organization open to Carthage students of any major and class year. The article describes the founding, mission statement, funding, and organizational structure of the consulting group. Velocity Consulting has completed several dozen projects that combine research, scholarship, and creative activities by partnering with companies, government agencies, and nonprofits. Gregory Young, Gary Don, and Alan Rieck provide helpful examples of how to embed undergraduate research and creative activity into the music degree as well as general education courses at Montana State University and the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. The authors describe interdisciplinary research projects for undergraduates from freshman year to senior capstone projects.

As we celebrate this inaugural issue, it is also important to recognize that *The Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly* had a wonderful run from 1980 to summer 2017. For almost four decades, *CUR Quarterly* served to advance the undergraduate research enterprise as one of the most powerful tools to promote student learning and student success. I have been honored to be a part of *CUR Quarterly* over the last 15 years as a division editor, issue editor, and editor-in-chief. I worked with wonderful *CUR Quarterly* editors—from Tom Wenzel and Charlotte Otto to Kelly McConnaughay. Each one advanced the quality and reach of the CUR journal. I am grateful for the work of Herb Childress (chair), Steve Deckelman, Karen Havholm, Jeffrey M. Osborn, and Kathy Payne who served on a 2014 task force that provided incredibly valuable suggestions and recommendations that have come to fruition in this inaugural issue of SPUR. CUR presidents Mary Crowe, Julio Rivera, Ami Ahern-Rindell, Roger Rowlett, and Susan Larson provided critical support over the last several years. This new journal is a reality because of the wonderful vision and support of Elizabeth Ambos (the executive officer of CUR) and Elizabeth Foxwell (the journal's technical editor), as well as the hard work of the CUR Editorial Board. We envision an expanding reach of the journal in the twenty-first century, and the redesign of the flagship journal of the Council on Undergraduate Research is intended to make SPUR an indispensable resource in your personal library.