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e-Newsletter

Interview with Dr. Leslie Cecil, Social Science Division Representative

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Leslie Cecil is Professor of Anthropology and the Director of the Center for Student Research and Creative Discoveries at Stephen F. Austin University. In addition, Leslie is one of three professors who organizes and produces the university's Undergraduate Research Conference. She has been serving with the Council on Undergraduate Research for 14 years. From 2020-2023, she served as the Social Science Division Chair.



How long have you been mentoring undergraduate research?

I have been mentoring undergraduate research for over 20 years.

What CUR committees or task forces are you currently serving on?

I serve on the CUR Fellows Award Committee.

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

“The annual ConnectUR conference will provide a forum around undergraduate research where on-site and online attendees can draw on knowledge exchange, scholarship of teaching and learning, group discussion, tangible and scalable practices, and community building to expand their efforts.

Years ago, at Stephen F. Austin (SFA) State University, I was selected to rework my Introduction to Archaeology course to enhance its undergraduate research potential (part of our Quality Enhancement Plan to promote High Impact Practices). The rework really helped students to get more involved in what archaeology is, and at the end of the course we made arrowheads from rocks. Some students realized that they would be gatherers rather than hunters! In the fall 2024 semester I am teaching a class called Archaeological Foods and Feasts. We learn how ancient cultures made various drinks and food (beer, wine, Egyptian bread, and the Maya chocolate drink) and make them that way and eat

This year the conference theme is Undergraduate Research: What's Next?"

or drink the end product (except beer and wine which they can make at home, but we cannot make on campus). We all love that class.

What influenced you to join CUR?

My colleague, who is the Director of the School of Honors at SFA forwarded me an email about being a councilor. I thought, "Why not?" This was one of the best decisions that I have made. You all are wonderful and it is nice to collaborate with like-minded individuals.

Upcoming Opportunities & Deadlines

- CUR's Annual Leadership Meeting (CUR's ALM) is June 12-13, 2024, on Zoom. The meeting serves as the annual gathering of CUR's elected volunteer leaders, including Division Representatives, Councilors, and Board Members. Social Science Representatives and other CUR leaders are expected to attend. All volunteer leadership roles run from June 1-May 31 and the ALM is an opportunity to learn about leadership roles and responsibilities in CUR's mission and activities.
- ConnectUR virtual is Thursday June 20-Friday June 21, 2024
- ConnectUR on-site is June 24-26, 2024, in College Park, Maryland.
- NCUR 2025 will take place April 7-9, 2025, in Pittsburgh in partnership with Duquesne University and the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education.

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