



COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

2024-2025 Elections At-Large 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.

- [Klodiana Kolomitro](#)
- [Lavanya Seetamraju](#)
- [Meghan Gilbert](#)

Klodiana Kolomitro, Queen's University

At-Large Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

When the new strategic plan at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada was launched, I was soon appointed as Special Advisor to the Principal on Strategic Development (Now Special Advisor, Undergraduate Research), and one of the pillars of the strategy is Teaching and Research Integration and Undergraduate Research (UR). I created a strategic plan on undergraduate research and my portfolio in the last two years have been implementing the strategic plan. My involvement in UR activities has been at all levels of the institution (Micro-Meso-Mega) and particularly they are categorized in the strategic plan around three goals: 1. Programming (Increase awareness, resources, participation, and mobility in Undergraduate Research Programming), 2. Recognition (Enhance recognition and celebration of UG), and 3. Culture (Create a culture of UG)

Initially I focused on increasing the number of UG opportunities at Queen's from 19 internally funded positions (USSRF) to 75 <https://www.queensu.ca/vpr/funding/internal/ussrf>, which combined with our Tri-Council USRA opportunities <https://www.queensu.ca/vpr/funding/external/nserc/usra> resulted in 167 UG positions for this summer. Significant efforts were made to increase diversity in UG which I will expand on the next section. I established the PURL (Principals Undergraduate Research Leaders) program where students developed UG resources for other students. We established two Vice Principal Research Undergraduate Prizes open to all students. (<https://www.queensu.ca/registrar/financial-aid/application-required/current-students/scholarships-awards>) and I co-chaired the Inquiry@Queen's conference and enabled the publication of student abstracts.

Through the help of undergraduate students that I mentor and supervise, we created a typology of UG experiences in the curriculum and used this typology to analyze the curriculum and identify courses that incorporate research at the exposure, immersion, or integration level. We established a professional development program for UG students called Q-SURGE and the inaugural launch was very successful <https://www.queensu.ca/vpr/resources/undergraduate/professional-development>

We partnered with Roche and have tried to secure UG opportunities for our students with industry. At the same time, we partnered with Student Spaceflight Experiment and we will have one experiment who will be launched out of the ISS on Nov 4 at 9:29pm. More information about this exciting opportunity has been published here <https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/out-world-research>

As I have reached my word limit, please review the work I have led while supported by an outstanding and committed team to weave UG at all levels of the institution.

<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/teaching-and-learning-impact>

https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/cultivating-next-generation-research-leaders?utm_source=Gazette+Newsletter&utm_campaign=e6447c99f8-2024-ur-ggt&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-e6447c99f8-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

<https://www.queensjournal.ca/queens-paves-way-for-student-innovation-with-awards-and-iss-launch/>

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

The Tri-Council Agency in Canada most recently created USRA pathways for black scholars and Indigenous students. We reached out to our Indigenous office and the Black Scholars community, and the Indigenous faculty members to use their decolonial approaches in recruiting black and Indigenous students. We were able this year to provide UG opportunities for 8 Indigenous and 12 black students. This number is still quite low but has increased from last year where we had 1 Indigenous and 3 black students. Hence, one way to promote inclusion was to diversify the way we promote and recruit for our UG programming.

At the same time, we have simplified our application process for UG positions. Although there are some universal criteria in an effort to streamline the process, we encourage our schools to consider how a student can show they are qualified in diverse ways beyond marks and academic standing.

We have worked with our work-study program to be able to offer research positions for those students who demonstrate a need for financial support.

One of the initiatives I am most proud of was that in my previous role as the Associate Vice- Principal (Teaching and Learning), I led the revisions of the learning outcomes at Queen's <https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/queen-s-updates-degree-level-expectations-better-reflect-our-mission> with a focus on increasing equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization in our degree level expectations to ensure both undergraduate and graduate students complete their studies with the necessary teaching and research skills needed to contribute to a diverse world in a more inclusive and equitable way.

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

My position at Queen's has expanded substantially over the last ten years and now entails extensive leadership including: championing university-wide initiatives that create, inform, and renew institutional policies; leading strategic planning and priority-setting; building collaborative and integrated networks across faculties and with students, community and industry partners; providing the necessary infrastructure for faculty development; evaluating all program offering and performance; liaising with other institutions, the government, community and industry. The common thread though remains my ability to create and foster community within and beyond the institution. Below are some other initiatives that exemplify this:

I established the Education Leaders-in-Residence (ELIR) program to support the development of high-impact practices and create communities of practice <https://www.queensu.ca/provost/teaching-and-learning/past-initiatives/2022-education-leaders-residence> Three faculty members were selected in each of the three priority areas: teaching and learning practices that foster interdisciplinarity; mental health and the teaching and learning environment; and anti-racism and intersectional pedagogies, and we worked collaboratively to drive change in these areas.

My experience as the principal investigator for the eCampus Ontario funded collaborative project (\$213,830) Indigenous Healthcare Education and Practice: A Community Led and Community Informed Initiative has prepared me well to draw on notions of cultural humility, decolonization, and equity and translate those into meaningful, culturally appropriate, and relevant competencies and practices. At the same time this has been an opportunity to develop educational content by bringing together Indigenous scholars and allies in order to respond to the calls for Truth and Reconciliation in a meaningful and thoughtful manner.

All these experiences have provided a path for me to be at the forefront of innovative high-impact practices and have strengthened my knowledge of the shifting landscape of post-secondary education. At an institutional

level, my leadership on a number of committees and topic-specific task groups has helped shape new directions for high quality evidence-based programing. I continue to provide mentorship to several undergraduate students each year through my own teaching and research. As my approach is to nurture curiosity and work with people from their starting point to support their development

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

Lavanya Seetamraju, Boise State University

At-Large Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

As the Undergraduate Research Project Manager, I manage and support all of our programming around undergraduate research. This includes managing our undergraduate research scholarships and grants and the Vertically Integrated Projects program, and providing oversight of planning and implementation for our undergraduate research conferences. I also plan and organize workshops to support students in their undergraduate research journey. This year, I created content for a new workshop that invites students to learn more about what undergraduate research is, and why they should get involved. We also diligently collect data around all these activities. I review and analyze the data as it becomes available, using it for reporting and program and process improvement. For our annual undergraduate research conference, I have been constantly working on process improvement, figuring out what are challenges for student attendance and how can the conference cater to a wider audience of students.

Undergraduate research ties in directly with our institution's strategic plan. As a high-impact practice, it relates to 'Student Success' (Goal 1). Students in our VIP program work on ambitious projects tackling a diverse range of problems. These tie in to 'Innovation' (Goal 2), and 'Advancing Research and Creative Activity' (Goal 3). Finally, our undergraduate research conferences are open to the public and we make an effort to celebrate the achievements of both our students, and the faculty who mentor them. This relates to Goal 4, 'Fostering a Thriving Community.'

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

In 2023, I led a research study to understand undergraduate research in the humanities and social sciences departments at Boise State. This study stemmed from the observation that our events and programming saw more participation from the more traditional STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields. The objective was to understand perceptions of undergraduate research in these fields, and the barriers and challenges faced by faculty. I conducted 19 one-on-one interviews and analyzed and coded the data to come up with some areas where we could address challenges and grow. This year, I have been focused on creating structures and programming to address some of these challenges.

Another way in which I have helped promote diversity and inclusion in URSCI is through widespread marketing and promotion of our events. Our events are open to all undergraduate students, in all disciplines. In marketing material, we use the phrase 'undergraduate research and creative activity', in an effort to appeal to fields that may not consider themselves doing undergraduate research.

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

I come from a background in advertising and strategic communication. This has helped me create content that demonstrates the impact of undergraduate research in various forms. I have created content for workshops, marketing material that talks about how we support undergraduate students, and recently submitted two articles to a SPUR special edition as first author. These articles assess and evaluate a specific undergraduate research program, the Vertically Integrated Projects. I also write articles that profile student and faculty

successes, program announcements and other news about undergraduate research. Another area of strength that has helped me in my role is communicating about research. I coach students who participate in a session called Lightning Talks - which are structured like 3 Minute Thesis talks, and require students to present their research using one slide and in 3 minutes. I do these workshops both for the Boise State annual undergraduate research conference, as well as the statewide undergraduate research conference. Recently, I was invited by the Graduate College to also do workshops for graduate students who will participate in the 3 Minute Thesis competition.

I can support CUR goals in similar areas, helping create resources that member institutions can use to create awareness about, and demonstrate the impact of undergraduate research, and that help undergraduate students become more effective at communicating their 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.

Meghan Gilbert, Yakima Valley College

At-Large Division Nominee

NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

Throughout my career, I have been deeply involved in undergraduate research, contributing to my institutions' missions to foster student success and engagement through experiential learning. As project manager at the CWU Office of Undergraduate Research, I led initiatives that expanded research opportunities for underrepresented students, ensuring equitable access to academic and professional growth. I developed new programs that encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration and provided students with the tools and mentorship to thrive in research. These efforts were designed to amplify research opportunities for all students, aligning with our institution's commitment to inclusive academic excellence.

Currently, as an advisor/mentor for Students With A Purpose (SWAP), I continue to guide students in translating their research ideas into impactful projects presented at international and national conferences. This mentorship not only supports their academic development but also encourages a sense of community engagement and empowerment, furthering the mission of SWAP to cultivate well-rounded, globally conscious graduates.

In my current role as a Data Analyst in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) at Yakima Valley College (YVC), I apply data-driven research to evaluate student outcomes, particularly in relation to instructional practices and support services. By gathering and analyzing data, I contribute to evidence-based decision-making that directly informs improvements in our institution's approach to student engagement and academic success, especially in conjunction with undergraduate research.

Through these experiences, I have consistently worked to advance the values of equity, collaboration, and research-driven decision-making, which are central to my institution's mission. I am dedicated to supporting students in their academic journeys, fostering an environment where all have the opportunity to engage in meaningful, transformative research.

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

In my professional journey, I have consistently sought out opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion in URSCI by fostering environments where all students, regardless of background, feel valued and supported in their academic pursuits. While working at the CWU Office of Undergraduate Research, I helped create access to research opportunities for underrepresented student groups, ensuring they received mentorship and resources necessary to participate in and succeed in research. I also facilitated workshops that emphasized the importance of inclusive research practices and the value of diverse perspectives in scholarly work.

At YVC, my focus has been on utilizing data to assess student outcomes and ensure equitable access to academic resources. By analyzing student engagement and performance data, I assist in refining strategies that promote inclusivity and support for a diverse student body. I also collaborate with faculty to identify and implement best practices that encourage participation in research, particularly for marginalized groups.

Additionally, in my advisory role with SWAP, I have guided students in identifying and pursuing research that is socially relevant and inclusive. I am committed to nurturing a culture of collaboration where every student's voice and contribution are recognized, creating pathways for them to succeed in both research and creative endeavors.

Last, as a mentor for Unite 2030, I also work with a global community of young leaders who are passionate about addressing social issues through innovative research and creative projects. By helping these students refine their research ideas, connect with resources, and navigate complex social challenges, I contribute to the development of diverse perspectives that reflect global experiences and values.

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

As a long-time attendee and presenter at CUR conferences and events, I have long admired the organization's mission to advance undergraduate research and its commitment to building a vibrant, supportive community of professionals. My participation in these events has provided me with valuable insights into the work of CUR and has deepened my respect for the collaborative spirit that drives the organization.

As a CUR Division Representative, I look forward to further integrating into this community and contributing to its continued growth. I am excited to leverage my experiences in data analysis and mentorship to support networking opportunities, share educational content, and help cultivate a dynamic environment where members can connect and learn from each other. I understand the importance of collective effort in advancing the mission, and I am committed to being a reliable and active member of the team, working alongside others to foster the shared vision of advancing undergraduate research.

My experience in mentoring and collaborating within various academic and professional settings has underscored the value of consistent engagement. Whether through initiatives like Unite 2030 or my work with SWAP, I have always sought to create environments where professional growth is supported, and diverse perspectives are valued. In my role as a Division Representative, I aim to contribute to this spirit of inclusivity by working with my colleagues to create programs that align with CUR's strategic goals and values, ensuring that all members feel empowered and supported in their work.

I am eager to continue to grow within the CUR community, contributing to its mission while learning from others and helping drive forward initiatives that support undergraduate research at every level.

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?

Although I have not previously served as a Division Representative, I have been actively engaged with CUR by attending conferences, presenting at events, and supporting initiatives that promote inclusive undergraduate research. I am eager to contribute to CUR's mission by fostering networking opportunities and educational content that supports the professional growth of those involved in undergraduate research.