# 2024-2025 Elections
## Social 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.

- Aleksandra Snowden
- Alissa Ruth
- Laura Nussbaum-Barberena

# Aleksandra Snowden, Marquette University

*Social Sciences Division Nominee*

## NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

My involvement in undergraduate research aligns with the core of Marquette University's mission as a Catholic Jesuit University to help students put their learning into action and prepare them to work as part of the global community. At times, this included developing learning activities to enhance the educational experience of undergraduate students, through an interdisciplinary workshop focused on spatial data analytics that highlights the utility of spatial data analytics for complex human endeavors. At other times, my involvement in undergraduate research was through bi-directional, community-engaged, course-embedded research activities co-designed with community organizations working at the frontlines of violence prevention in Milwaukee, WI. As my CV will attest, much of my involvement includes mentoring and collaborating with undergraduate students and developing their independence in research.

Increasingly, and across multiple fields in computational and data sciences, engineering, and social sciences, there is a need to learn more about the impact of geography, location, and spatiality on social, economic, and infrastructure systems. For instance, in computational social science and data/computer science, spatio-temporal data analysis is one of the primary ways of analyzing complex, geographical, social phenomena. Similarly, in water and environmental engineering, the analysis of location is important for designing, developing, and implementing engineering solutions. Within Marquette University, data science has been garnering institutional support for several years. For example, the Computer Science department implemented data science programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels and is the focal point for data science related discussion in the College of Arts and Sciences and the university. However, the teaching component in formal spatial data science is very limited and presents an important gap. The workshop provides a natural complement to the current course curriculum by providing practical workshop on spatial data analytics. Indeed, advancing the understanding that space plays in various phenomena is extremely critical in today's research and teaching worlds, while it also enhances undergraduate student learning in important ways.

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

To promote diversity and inclusion in URSCI, I created collaborative environments across disciplinary and college/administrative boundaries to bring together students from different backgrounds to work together to solve problems during their participation in the 3-day workshops. A primary goal of the workshop was to improve student learning of interdisciplinary spatial data analytics topics through experiential or student-centered learning (SCL) methods. That is, our workshop provided an optimal opportunity for students to learn from the peers whose undergraduate training is dissimilar in focus (i.e., social, data/computer, and engineering sciences), yet similar in the applicability of the spatial data analytics for the advancement of knowledge in the three relevant content areas.

By engaging in research, undergraduates can immerse themselves in a transformation of inquiry and discovery. Knowledge then becomes less abstract and more of a tool for changing the world. At its best, engagement in URSCI, especially early on in the academic career, equips students with foundational knowledge, skills and resources necessary to respond to the unmet needs of society and their local community. It also leads to greater retention and graduation rates, satisfaction with the educational experience, and deepening alumni engagement with institution, including philanthropy.

**How do you anticipate your skills will help successfully uphold the Division Representative charge?**
I have experience in directing undergraduate studies as well as in directing graduate studies. I also have experience in delivering training on responsible and ethical conduct of research for faculty and for students. These administrative roles have equipped me with the verbal, written, and relationship-building skills necessary to uphold the charge of the CUR Division Representative. I have knowledge that I can draw upon for networking opportunities, activities and educational content. At the same time, I understand the importance of collaboration with my fellow CUR Division Representatives to work together and offer the activities to the students that align with CUR strategic plan, mission, vision, and values. I have no doubts that I will be able to fruitfully contribute to the work of the CUR.

**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.

# Alissa Ruth, Arizona State University

*Social Sciences Division Nominee*

## NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

My long-time effort and goals have been to increase access to UREs in the social sciences, including online. Starting in 2011, I designed the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP) for my School (School for Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University), which has served over 1600 students to date. I have coordinated the research training of 900 study abroad participants, and have taught course-based research experiences (CUREs) training to over 100 students. I also co-direct a research lab that trains ~20 students per semester and most recently I designed the Social Research Training (SoRT) to expand reach to online students. Over the past 13 years, these efforts have trained over 2,600 students in social science research.

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

My educational program design and research with the School and ASU has been focused on increasing access to UREs for historically underserved students – first generation, immigrants, students of color, and women. The ~2600 undergraduates served through various programming are 70% women and 40 % non-white. I have also published 13 manuscripts (out of 26) with 20 graduate and undergraduate student co-authors. My educational programming and scholarship harness use-inspired research to demonstrate how students gain transferrable research skills to transition out of their bachelor's degrees into the next phase, whether that is graduate school or careers (9 peer-reviewed articles) and inform others of how different types of research experiences can be delivered by others in order to scale UREs and increase access to all students.

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

I attended my first CUR conference in 2024 and was very excited to meet other social scientists interested in undergraduate research. Since then, I have been in touch with three members to discuss UREs and have shared resources widely. I am excited to continue growing the social science network and growing research experiences for undergraduates.

### 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

# Laura Nussbaum-Barberena, Roosevelt University
*Social Sciences Division Nominee*

## NOMINEE STATEMENTS

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

A cultural anthropologist, I hold dual-roles at Roosevelt University (Chicago, IL) fostering student exposure and engagement in research activities Roosevelt is a predominantly-undergraduate teaching institutions with a social justice mission, operationalized through the curriculum, as through its commitment to supporting student development and retention as an MSI with a student body that is majority first generation in college.

One role is directing the Office of Student Research, where I am responsible for building a culture of research and inquiry on campus, through open, campus-wide activities training students across levels in key research & inquiry practices, fostering curricular and co-curricular scaffolded research & inquiry engagement opportunities; advising students in graduate school and external fellowship proposal development, and mentoring students in independent research and inquiry projects. Finally, to ensure students have broad access to advice and tools, I lead development of a hub of research and inquiry development resources related to each of these areas. In my role, I collaborate with faculty, co-curricular program staff, students and upper administration to conduct needs assessments, design and align activities across programs and pursue funding and resources to broaden student engagement in programming.

I also direct an applied research center that partners with civic organizations to design and conduct qualitative and quantitative social research activities. In this role, I develop partnerships, projects and funding proposals to support the work. I also train and mentor students in the relevant topic & mixed-methods, as well as practices of conducting community-engaged research. Through our collaborations, we build tools communities can use to inform their policy and program direction and connect further with the communities they serve. Participating in center projects, students not only apply these principals but also learn through experience, how research and creative inquiry may offer indirect or direct contributions to organizations' design of their initiatives to advance social justice.

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

Since 2018, I have developed the Office of Student Research recognizing URSCI engagement is a high impact practice with outsized impact on the research and graduate school trajectories of minoritized students. I collaborate with colleagues to design OSR initiatives with diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) practices at their core. Ensuring URSCI opportunities are broadly accessible is key, as a minority-serving institution; 43% percent of our undergraduates are the first in their family to attend college, 48% receive Pell Grants; most balance employment, family responsibilities and commute to campus. We ensure our outreach and programming is pro-active, inclusive and responsive to students' needs and realities.

Catalyzing student interest requires exposure for students. To socialize research & inquiry engagement, we convene Research & Inquiry Orientation, where departments and programs offer workshops to share faculty and student research and pathways, as well as disciplinary practices in RSCI. Throughout the year, we facilitate talks about mundane and foundational research & inquiry practices, sharing with students the 'unwritten' expectations around URSCI engagement and de-mystify RSCI development, research writing and proposal development.

To cultivate students' visions of SCI pathways for themselves, we convene students, faculty and staff to participate in campus-wide, week-long, annual research symposium. We ensure students are available to participate, encouraging departments organize participation aligned with students' course and co-curricular program schedules.

To broaden and scaffold student engagement in research, we address the common expectation that students dedicate time beyond the classroom to RSCI activities and underwrite them. Work and family responsibilities often limit students' availability and resources to participate in extra- or co-curricular RSCI activities. To broaden exposure within the curriculum, I lead design of an initiative to institutionalize Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience across Roosevelt's colleges. Finally, we offer funding and support for student participation in CUREs and campus-based field courses.

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

I bring skills, experience and perspective from an active social research & inquiry, instructor and administrative perspective. As the first staff member of the Office of Student Research at Roosevelt, networking with and learning from the work of CUR colleagues, has offered key ideas to build programs and initiatives. At the same time, I offer skill and insight around the particular needs of faculty, staff and student needs to URSCI development at an institution serving—and implementing DEIB—a student community underserved in higher education. I have worked within our institution to identify the specific types of connection activities and information that allow colleagues to build collaboration across disciplines and programs, students to connect to URSCI-related activities and inform institutional efforts to provide resources to expand opportunities. Colleagues and students not only participate, but take ownership of these activities and recognizing the unique points of connection, co-learning and further program development they offer.

As a researcher and instructor with an active social science research agenda I have significant experience in training and supporting students in building familiarity with social science topics and building practice utilizing social science research methods. In my role with the Office of Student Research, I regularly collaborate with Roosevelt's social science and humanities departments, and am acquainted with the value of, opportunities for, and challenges around Social Science division-specific visibility and resource needs, in advancing URSCI activities. I draw on the skills and experience of fostering connection and building resources that enable social science researchers and department design programs building student-capacity to take part in social science 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- I have not previously served as Division Representative/Councilor.