



Guest Editorial—“Celebrating a Decade of UO Undergraduate Research”

Kevin D. Hatfield, Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Research

In 2010 student leaders began advocating for three initiatives to support undergraduate research and creative work— an annual conference, a student-edited journal, and a dedicated office. They approached Karen Sprague, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, who shared their excitement about undergraduate research. First, Vice Provost Sprague wanted to find out how other universities were developing these areas, so I was asked to investigate the undergraduate research programs of the 62 universities that belong to the Association of American Universities (AAU). I found that 49 institutions hosted an annual undergraduate research conference, 31 sponsored a university-wide undergraduate research journal, and 59 had a dedicated undergraduate research office.

These results catalyzed efforts to develop similar programs at the UO. Vice Provost Sprague and the Division of Undergraduate Studies championed the effort and quickly gathered support from a broad coalition, including Undergraduate Council, UO Libraries, Robert D. Clark Honors College, University Housing, Division of Equity & Inclusion, and Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. Throughout the process, the early student leaders’ indefatigable energy and creative vision were integral to the development of these programs.¹

In 2011 the Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal (OURJ) published its inaugural issue, and the Undergraduate Research Symposium also debuted with 69 presenters and 40 faculty mentors (spanning 20 majors and four colleges). With a student editorial board and executive editor OURJ established a strong model for a peer-reviewed, student-led journal. Similarly, students assumed central roles on the Symposium Steering Committee to help plan and execute the event. They also formed the Associated Students of Undergraduate Research and Engagement (ASURE)—originally known as NEXUS—to create a place for peer-facilitated outreach and workshops on abstract writing, poster design, and oral presentations.

By 2019 the Symposium had vastly increased in size to 513 presenters and 290 faculty mentors (spanning 75 majors, 21 minor programs, 33 minors, and 8 colleges). Between 2011 and 2019 the Symposium has hosted nearly 2,100 students showcasing their research and creative work through formats ranging from poster and oral presentations to art installations, science demonstrations, film screenings, poetry slams, music, dance, and theater performances.

The 10th Anniversary of the Symposium in May 2020 promises to achieve several new and exciting benchmarks, including over \$7,000 in awards for student presenters; increased participation of Lane Community College; McNair Scholar presenters from colleges throughout the Northwest; and the attendance of several hundred local high school students.²

The final objective of the original student leaders—a dedicated office for undergraduate research—was realized in 2014 with the founding of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the creation of the Center for Undergraduate Research and Engagement (CURE) in 2017. These allied offices award over \$300,000 annually to support undergraduate research experiences and conference travel. They also serve as central hubs for exploring opportunities in undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative work.

A new generation of students now leads OURJ and ASURE, and student voices actively invigorate the Undergraduate Research Symposium, CURE, and UROP programs. As we begin a new decade, I reflect on the singular privilege it has been for me to gain inspiration and wisdom from our students as they helped transform the undergraduate research landscape at the UO.

Please join us for our exciting 10th Anniversary on May 21, 2020.

¹ Early student advocates for undergraduate research included: Lucy Gubbins, Drew Serres, Alexandra Fus, Eva Wong, Jeff Tan, Matt Villeneuve, Erin Howe, Samantha Nesbitt, Vishesh Khanna, Emily Balloun, Alani Estrella.

² Organized in collaboration with UO's Summer Academy to Inspire Learning (SAIL) program.