URConnection
From Your Undergraduate Research Center Peer Advisors
June 2014 • Issue 4

We would like to thank everyone for supporting the URConnection! We are happy to publish issue 4, in which we proudly feature a graduate student, Emerald Nguyen, URC upcoming events, research highlights from various disciplines, and undergraduate Travel Awards recipients. We encourage students of every discipline and of every class level to participate in undergraduate research and get involved with our events! Our hope is to bring accessible information to you about highlights in research on campus and ways you can get involved with research on campus.

- Tran Phan and Isabelle Floyd (Your Peer Advisors)

Upcoming Events
Explorations: The UC Davis Undergraduate Research Journal
Deadline: Thursday, June 12, 5:00 p.m.

Provost's Undergraduate Fellowship
Deadline: Tuesday, November 4, 5:00 p.m.

Research Highlights

New Pattern of Rewarding Lion Hunters
Traditionally young men from some ethnic groups in Tanzania perform the lion dance as they travel through town and are showered with gifts for killing lions. According to the study led by anthropology professor Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, some villagers stop rewarding lion hunters. Researchers work with the community to potentially preserve and save many endanger animals. To read more, click here.

And the Prestigious National Writing Awards Go to...
UC Davis English professor Yiyun Li (left) was awarded the Benjamin H. Danks Award. Professor Li plans to use the fund to start her next project. Her latest book, “Kinder Than Solitude” is well-recognized in media. UC Davis History professor Ari Kelman (right) received the Columbia University’s Bancroft Prize. His work, “A Misplaced Massacre,” is honored for its ability to “grapple with the politics of historical memory and memorializing in Sand Cree, Colo., the site of an 1864 massacre of Cheyennes and Aarpahos.” To read more, click here.

Design of Coffee: Learning the Principles of Chemical Engineering Through Coffee
Students, enrolled in “Design of Coffee,” a general education course open to all students in the winter quarter learn the process of roasting, processing, and brewing of coffee as well the design of a coffeemaker. This course centers around learning through hands-on experience and application in a team setting. The course ends with a friendly tasting competition, in which students try to create the best tasting cup of coffee. To read more, click here.
Congratulations to the Undergraduate Research Center Awardees!

Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research Winners

- **Laurel Carney, English**: Plead the Belly: Stories of Crime, Death, and Pregnancy in Early Modern England and Today
- **Caroline Vissers, Animal Science**: Effects of Pore Size on Mechanical Properties and Human Mesenchymal Stromal Cell Behavior in Bioglass Composite Scaffolds

Travel Awards (5 applicants) Winter 2014

- **Sina Dadafarin, NPB**: National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Lexington, Kentucky
- **Tomas Rodriguez, Genetics**: National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Lexington, Kentucky
- **Anup Sonti**, Cell Biology: National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Lexington, Kentucky
- **Atrin Toussi, NPB**: National Collegiate Research Conference at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- **Prasad Varsha, Genetics**: Society of Student-Run Free Clinics Annual Conference, Nashville, Tennessee

Travel Awards (6 applicants) Winter 2014

- **Shadd Cabalatungan, Sociology**: National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Lexington, Kentucky
- **Yevgeniy Gnedash, Psychology**: Western Psychological Association, Portland, Oregon
- **Elias Rivera, Anthropology**: Ivy Plus Symposium at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- **Chun Su, Psychology**: The Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Conference, Austin, Texas
- **Ryan Taylor, Chemical Physics**: National Society of Black Engineering 40th National Convention, Nashville, Tennessee
- **Tiffany Wall, Psychology**: Association for Psychological Science, San Francisco, California

Travel Awards (3 applicants) Winter 2014

- **Everardo Olide, Chemical Engineering/Materials Science**: 2013 MAES Symposium Houston, Texas
- **Zhimin Xie, Chemical Engineering**: International Symposium of Sustainable & Technologies, Oakland, California
Meet Graduate Student Researcher
Emerald Nguyen!

Emerald is a current 6th year graduate student at UC Davis in the Sociology Department, and graduate student advisor at the URC. She attended UC Davis as an undergraduate, where she was involved with undergraduate research through both the Political Science and Sociology Departments here on campus. In the Political Science Department, she worked with several professors on an omnibus study, which tested individuals’ political attitudes on current events, and in the Sociology Department, and helped a graduate student with tasks associated with her dissertation.

Currently, Emerald is working on writing her dissertation. Her work spans the fields of immigration and family studies, and is a mixed method project (i.e. quantitative and qualitative data analysis). She has four undergraduate research assistants working with her on the qualitative part of her research. As a graduate student advisor at the URC, Emerald works closely and has great advice for many undergrads looking for research positions in any department on campus.

Interview Questions

Did you find that having undergraduate research experience was useful in helping you get into graduate school?
Absolutely. It gave me a glimpse into what graduate student life might be like, helped me think critically about my potential research interests, and more importantly, allowed me to form strong relationships with faculty who guided me, both professionally and personally, during the years that I served as their RA. It gave me skills and experiences that I would not have gotten from taking courses alone, and it made me all the more enthusiastic about the idea of going to graduate school.

From a graduate student’s perspective, what is the best way for an undergrad to approach a professor? Do you think a student would benefit from speaking with a graduate student if they are interested in working with their research?
Yes to both. I think that for many students, it is less intimidating to talk to a graduate student first. Many graduate students are just a few years out of college, and they can more easily empathize with the experiences that undergraduates are going through. If you are taking a class with the professor, you should definitely go to their office hours, but if the professor is someone who you have never had any interaction with, I would recommend sending a short email to introduce yourself and ask for an in-person meeting.

Do you have any other tips for undergraduates who are having a hard time finding a professor to work with?
Networks and word-of-mouth definitely help. If you have a friend or classmate who is currently working with a professor or graduate student, ask if they are willing to introduce you.

About Your Peer Advisors

Isabelle Floyd has been with the URC for two years. She is a fourth year pharmaceutical chemistry major and plans to attend graduate school to become a nurse practitioner. She has been involved with undergraduate research in the chemistry department in the past.

Tran Phan has been with the URC for three years. She is a fourth year, majoring in Neurobiology, Physiology, & Behavior. She has been conducting research in the Early Start lab and the One Minute Video project and she would love to share her experiences with students. She will be attending a post-bac program at San Francisco State University in June.

CONTACT

If you’re interested in scheduling a one-on-one appointment, or you have an interesting story or tip to share about undergraduate research that you would like posted in one of our issues, please contact us:

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