## Contents

- **Welcome**
  - Letter from our Director
  - History & Mission
  
- **Why Undergraduate Research?**
  
- **Research Spotlight**
  - Student & Mentor Connection
  - Student Researcher Experience
  
- **Making an Impact**
  - An Undergraduate Research Experience
  - Year at a Glance
  
- **Looking Ahead**
A Letter from our Director

I am grateful and proud to present this year in review for the Office of Undergraduate Research at Washington University in St. Louis.

We continue to remain enthusiastically committed to fulfilling our mission on campus—helping students find the intellectual spark that sets them on a research path, connecting them with faculty mentors, and providing funding to support all aspects of the research endeavor.

2017 has been a year of great change and transition for the Office of Undergraduate Research. Our long time Programs Manager, Kristin Sobotka, retired from her position. Also, our office coordinator, Jennifer Kohl, accepted a well-deserved promotion to the Director of Operations for the College of Arts and Sciences.

During this time of transition and onboarding of new team members, we have taken advantage of the opportunity to pause and reflect on the many contributions of our previous team members, as well as discern and refine the “why” of all our work. The Office of Undergraduate Research will continue to improve and refine the ways we promote undergraduate research experiences for our students.

Access to top rate research opportunities enables us to attract the brightest students with the potential to be our leaders of tomorrow. Undergraduate research experiences bring a student’s academic curriculum alive in real-world settings and teach critical skills that are applicable in solving the many global challenges our students will face. I hope that you enjoy reading about the many gains we have made in the last year as we continue to improve and expand our capacity to realize our mission.

Joy Zalis Kiefer, PhD
Director of Undergraduate Research
Associate Dean in the College of Arts & Sciences

OUR History

Founded in 2005 by a forward-thinking donor, the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) serves as a valuable resource for students beginning to explore the concept of undergraduate research. The office provides funding to students to conduct research. We also help student researchers share their work through conference travel, symposia, and publications.

OUR Mission

The mission of Washington University in St. Louis is to discover and disseminate knowledge, and protect the freedom of inquiry through research, teaching, and learning.

The Office of Undergraduate Research supports the larger mission of Washington University in St. Louis to advance and protect the process of inquiry by facilitating and promoting faculty-mentored undergraduate research experiences across the University.

Serving all undergraduates in all disciplines in all schools.
Why Undergraduate Research?

“I was able to learn about the complexities of my research topic, while getting a better understanding of what career options I want to pursue in the future.”

We help students discern their own research paths:

We offer guidance for students in choosing an area of research interest and finding a mentor.

We provide opportunities for students to meet potential mentors and to talk with current student researchers.

We connect students to current research opportunities at WashU and other universities, as well as other funding sources.

We offer a robust resource for students seeking research opportunities through the OUR website, including detailed information about the benefits of research, how to get started, as well as opportunities at WashU and other institutions.

We provide resources for students undertaking research projects:

We provide financial support for undergraduate research pursued on campus or anywhere in the world in the form of competitively awarded Summer Undergraduate Research Awards (SURA) for WashU students performing research under the guidance of a faculty mentor.

We provide funding in the form of Conference Travel Awards for students to present their research findings at conferences in their discipline, helping provide presentation and networking experience.

We developed a committee dedicated to teaching ethics in research, which provides training and ongoing support to both students and mentors.

Our annual Mentor Connections program allows students to explore research topics, practice networking, and meet faculty mentors.

We facilitate workshops and provide tools related to creating posters, writing abstracts, and research ethics.

We offer guidance and poster printing services to students presenting research.

At a glance ...

22 number of students awarded funds to travel to present their research at conferences in 2017

60 number of SURA recipients in 2017, a nearly 300% increase since 2008

68,000 number of visitors to the OUR website during AY2016-17, a nearly 200% increase over the previous year

24 number of disciplines represented among 2017 SURA recipients

38 percent of SURA recipients who said they could not have conducted summer research without OUR funding

“Primarily, by being a mentor, it is preparing a pipeline of future scholars in my discipline. Second, it provides a nice window into getting to know interests of the current generation.”
At a glance ...

419 number of participants in the two AY2016-17 Undergraduate Research Symposia

In 2017, 124 student research abstracts from nearly 30 disciplines were published in the annual Washington University Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts (WUSHTA) publication

In AY2016-17, generous donations from alumni, parents, and friends included more than 30 gifts, 4 annual named awards, and 5 named awards building towards endowment

In 2017, the OUR directly funded or facilitated funding for 166 undergraduate students from more than 20 disciplines

We share and disseminate new knowledge gained through research:

We sponsor the Undergraduate Research Symposium in the fall and spring as a venue for students to present their research to the greater WashU community. OUR symposia provide opportunities for students to share their research, to engage in peer networking and cross-disciplinary conversations, and to develop presentation skills.

We offer guidance for students in preparing their research for presentation, either as a poster or as an oral presentation.

We publish articles and abstracts written by undergraduates in the Washington University Undergraduate Research Digest (WUURD).

We publish senior honors theses abstracts within the Washington University Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts (WUSHTA).

We pursue partnerships and seek collaborations with departments through the university to promote excellence, enrich the research experience, and publicize the many resources available to students on campus:

We actively work to broaden undergraduate participation with faculty in research areas across all disciplines by working with all campus departments, acting as an overarching resource and effective campus partner.

We facilitate information sessions and open houses for prospective students, current students, and parents to learn more about research.

We host conferences and talks about research for students and mentors.

We provide funding, as well as facilitate funding for research opportunities.

“"I spoke with someone who was doing research on a similar topic to mine. She asked questions which really forced me to think analytically about my project and its implications in other disciplines.”
Student: Jorge Puentes
Graduation Year: 2020
Majors: Latin American Studies and Global Health
Minor: Biology

Research Funding:
Summer Undergraduate Research Award from the Office of Undergraduate Research

How did your interactions with Professor Sanchez Prado impact your research interests and goals?
When I entered college here at WashU, my workload was very STEM heavy, and the idea of research wasn’t as much of a passion as it was more like, “I need to do this.” However, after I met Professor Sanchez Prado at Mentor Connections in Fall 2016, I realized the potential of research in other areas. So the change in my areas of interest and academic path, while it still includes some STEM, is now more focused on the people than just the science of it.

How do you feel your research experiences will help prepare you for life after graduation?
My end goal is still medical school, so even with the shift in majors, I am still pre-med track. But now, given my experiences, I would like to embark on an experience similar to Doctors without Borders, and most likely within a Latin American country that has a high-need of health professionals. And eventually, I’d love to open a clinic in my hometown within Mexico that will treat low-income families, tying in my Latin American Studies and Global Health majors with my Biology, pre-med studies.

“Professor Sanchez Prado said, ‘I can help you, and you can help me.’ And from that interaction, I already knew that I wanted to do research with him, but I just needed to find a project for myself to work with him on.”

Research Spotlight
Student & Mentor Connection

What do you feel is important for undergraduates interested in research to learn and understand?
Participating in research in any of the disciplines in Arts & Sciences has to do with teaching students how to value knowledge in and of itself, and why it is important for us as a society to have a memory, to have a sense of itself, to know about other societies, to understand the ideology, politics, and beauty, and in a way that is not always transactional or pragmatic.

What types of relationships have you built with your student researchers?
Of the students whom I’ve worked with, they’ve been very self-driven. In the case of Jorge, I don’t know where his learning will take him, but being a Mexican-American student, I think it is important for him to have a role model. The Humanities, such as Latin American Studies, helps provide him a way to research his heritage. We have similar cultural experiences; and I feel working with him helps him to think about his cultural roots more.

How do you feel the Office of Undergraduate Research impacts your interactions with student researchers?
The Office of Undergraduate Research helps create opportunities for students in all disciplines, like the Humanities, to participate in research. It is one venue in particular here at the University that teaches students that they can participate in research in many disciplines, and highlights the value of research in many areas and majors.

Mentor: Ignacio Sanchez Prado, PhD
Professor of Spanish, Latin American Studies, and Film and Media Studies
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Latin American Studies

“The role of a University is to produce impressive knowledge in all disciplines, and I am the type of researcher who takes that very seriously.”
Research Spotlight

Student Researcher Experience

Jacob Finke
Graduation Year: 2020
Major: International and Area Studies with concentration in International Affairs
Minor: Chinese

Research Funding:
Summer Undergraduate Research Award from the Office of Undergraduate Research, and a travel grant from the WashU McDonnell International Scholars Academy

What initially sparked your interest to begin research at WashU?
My research was sparked by a course I took in the spring of 2017 called The Meaning of National Security in the Twenty-First Century, taught by my now faculty mentor, James Wertsch. That class investigated international relations theory, security studies, and national narrative from the perspectives of the United States, China, and India. That was where I first learned of the Century of Humiliation; however, because of the time constraints of the course, we were only able to focus on the Century of Humiliation briefly. I wanted to learn more about what I thought was a watershed series of events in Chinese history.

What type of research did you do with your OUR funding?
I conducted research in China into the Chinese Century of Humiliation, the collective memory of that time period, and the national narrative surrounding it. This took place over the course of two weeks; I visited seven cultural and historical heritage sites in four cities and interviewed two students during this time period. This research was primarily anthropological and historical in nature.

What did you learn from this research experience?
This experience was a growing experience for me. As an American who spoke no Chinese, navigating some of China’s largest cities on my own was... difficult. Furthermore, the “fish out of water” experience of being in a completely foreign setting forced me to reflect on my actions and mannerisms—as well as how I judge others’ actions and mannerisms. Academically, I learned a lot about what I do not know; my research was a great start, but I have much more to learn about the Century of Humiliation and China until I can truly say that I understand China and the complex China-U.S. relationship.

How do you feel your research experiences will help prepare you for life after graduation?
I think that the skills I learned while applying for and conducting this research are transferrable nearly anywhere. Writing a grant, creating detailed budgets and itineraries, and navigating bureaucracies (in this case, of WUIRB) were all tasks of applying for my SURA. During my actual research, I had to constantly self-motivate to stay on schedule, adapt in the moment to myriad unexpected obstacles, and navigate barriers—in this case, the language barrier. In the follow-up of my research, writing my paper and preparing my poster presentation also strengthened my analytical writing, editing, and design skills. I was also forced to adapt my findings into a more “listener-friendly” way for the Undergraduate Research Symposium. I think that these are all skills that have prepared me for life after graduation.

“Without the Summer Undergraduate Research Award, I would not have gotten the funding from the University that I needed to be able to undertake this project.”
An Undergraduate Research Experience.

The benefits of undergraduate research for students are well documented. In 2008, a report from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) identified undergraduate research as a “high-impact practice” that fosters deep learning, emphasizing both acquiring information and understanding its underlying meaning.

An undergraduate research experience gives students a competitive advantage when applying for graduate and professional schools. It also opens the door to publishing, conference experience, and travel opportunities.

Students engaged in faculty-mentored research experiences are making a significant impact on their fields of study before they even graduate, contributing to the knowledge base of their disciplines, and in many cases, using this knowledge for the betterment of society at large.

According to the Senior Survey, the percentage of undergraduate students participating in faculty-mentored research at WashU has increased steadily since 2002. In the last four years, research participation of Arts & Sciences undergraduates has grown by nearly 10% (Source: WashU Senior Survey, 2015).

Making an Impact

“For me, there was no single best moment of my research experience. Grinding away at a project every day and enjoying the process of learning how to do research was my favorite part of the experience.”

Year at a Glance.

The Office of Undergraduate Research has accomplished much over the last year:

A 2017 anonymous survey of undergraduate researchers found that more than 38% of students conducting summer research would not have been able to without OUR funding, while another 35% could have pursued research only part-time while working, illustrating that OUR funding is critical to providing students with the opportunity to conduct research.

Through our funding and facilitation of more than 160 summer research experiences from more than 20 disciplines, students reported gains in the following areas:

- Draw on knowledge or skills from a class or other previous experience
- Adapt research plan or objectives in response to new information or constraints
- Plan and execute tasks independently to pursue research objectives

In AY2016-17, generous donations from alumni, parents, and friends included more than 30 gifts, 4 annual named awards, and 5 named awards building towards endowment, helping students embark on their unique and valuable research experiences.

In addition to funding and awards, the OUR has implemented changes to programming based on the strategic assessments and reporting completed throughout the academic year to ensure we continuously meet the ever-changing research needs of our students.

Among these changes, the OUR has grown the objectives for the Committee for Undergraduate Research Ethics Training, enabling our team to continually enhance the tools and resources we provide students as they embark on their undergraduate research experiences.

We continue to provide students with opportunities to present their research via our biannual symposia, which have significantly grown since 2005 (see chart below), as well as publish student research within WashU Undergraduate Research Digest and WashU Senior Honors’ Thesis Abstracts publications.

Washington University undergraduate researchers continue to make an impact across the globe. In the last year alone, SURA recipients traveled to nearly 10 countries, from Mexico to Russia and England to China.
Looking Ahead
Assessing what we do

“I find it rewarding to transfer skills to a new generation of students. It also facilitates faculty and mentor research by helping tasks and analyses be completed.”

OUR has kept pace with students’ burgeoning interests by constantly assessing student needs, seeking feedback from students and mentors, and adjusting and adding programs to keep up with the changing landscape of undergraduate research.

As we focus on the year ahead, we will continue to strive to:

- find new and innovative ways to foster faculty and student connections.
- plan and execute opportunities for students to promote their research through our many programs.
- partner with Alumni & Development to seek new sources of funding and help enhance giving opportunities to meet the increased demand for undergraduate research experiences.
- keep ourselves informed of changes to the research needs of our students.
- build relationships and engage more effectively with faculty mentors across the University.
- act as an effective campus partner and leader to promote research opportunities to all undergraduates, in all disciplines, in all schools.

“Undergraduate research is one of the most powerful learning strategies for undergraduate students. Undergraduate research is also a significant contributor to American innovation and economic development. The skills students can develop through engagement in research will serve them well in their future careers.”

Council on Undergraduate Research