Established in 2007, the Researchers Initiative, a program within University Housing, introduces undergraduate students residing in the Urbana South Living-Learning Communities to research by pairing them with faculty mentors. Living-Learning Communities are organized around themes and provide curricular and co-curricular programming for a designated group of students living in proximity to each other. Such communities are designed to foster students’ shared sense of purpose related to the themes of their communities, which, in turn, sustains their sense of belonging and academic persistence. The Living-Learning Communities provide an excellent point of contact for first- and second-year students where an invitation to participate in research is integrated into their everyday experience. The Researchers Initiative extends the notion of community to include a community of researchers.

**Goals**

When students are accepted into the Initiative, they work with faculty members on various projects broadly related to the theme of their specific Living-Learning Community or to their majors. Faculty members mentor students, act as role models, prepare them for graduate school, teach them technical skills, and help them develop theoretical frameworks to create research questions and designs and to interpret data. They also acquaint them with the process of research as a whole. The ideal is for students to continue working in the faculty members’ labs beyond the one semester afforded by the Initiative.

The Researchers Initiative is guided by the principle of providing information and access to research opportunities for a diverse student body. In addition to introducing undergraduate students to research, the Initiative facilitates their access to faculty members early in their college career. It is also designed as a retention tool, as sophomores are given priority. Finally, the Initiative can serve to deepen the students’ involvement in their own disciplines or expose them to research topics and practices outside of their disciplines.

**Contact Information**

Lydia Khuri, Psy.D.
Program Director for the Global Crossroads, Health Professions, Intersections, and Women in Math, Science, and Engineering Living-Learning Communities

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Application Links available fall 2015

Students apply at http://go.illinois.edu/ri_student_ap
Faculty members apply at http://go.illinois.edu/ri_faculty_ap

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A Note From The Program Director

It was exciting to see so many students participate in the Researchers Initiative this year. The program began with four students in 2007 who were matched with faculty in the social sciences and humanities. Over the last two years I worked to recruit faculty in the hard sciences and engineering, especially those whose research related to the interests of pre-health professions students. Over the next two years, I will be inviting more faculty from the social sciences and humanities, as well as from applied and fine arts.

The Researchers Initiative Poster Symposium has also developed over the years. We first saw “cut and paste” and handwritten posters. As the University of Illinois has taken measures to integrate undergraduates into research, the level of professionalism in presentation has risen. The campus now offers templates for research posters, the library has been offering workshops on various aspects of research presentation, and large format printing is now available through Technology Services.

As undergraduate research becomes more institutionalized, however, I still focus on the interpersonal aspects that make the idea of doing research for first- and second-year students meaningful and imaginable. This past year I held informal meetings to talk about research opportunities in general, and the Researchers Initiative specifically. This fall will see a new workshop series, What Is Research?, from the perspective of different fields. I will continue to personally invite and encourage students to apply to the RI.

I also take the time to get to know the faculty members whom I recruit. I work to understand their style of mentoring and how they run their labs. As a result, I can appropriately match students and faculty. I look forward to the next year and hope you will join us at the next Poster Symposium on Sunday, April 17, 2016.

2014-2015 Researchers Initiative Students

(From left to right) Back row: Jing Yu, Diamond Kinemon, Shuyan Wang, Adriana Martinez, Chris Wolfe, Jacob Bowers, Kathleen Muñoz, Ryan Hoffman, Quan Trimble, Kevin Zhu, Reuben Tan, Daniel Carballal, Nuochen Lyu, Kevin Wells
Middle Row: Yanzhu Chen, Huiyi Chen, Sarah Kapolneck, Mary Figura, Taylor Cascia, Anna Fischer, Crystal Zhu, Viviana Guaman, Bridget Mueller-Brennan, Nicole Hassamear
Front row: Nikta Athari Anaraki, Iris Hou, Lydia Tanner, Vinisha Doshi, Heena Pithadia, Deeksha Singh, Lydia Khuri
Missing: Juliana Snarski, Ran Zhou
The Living-Learning Communities

Women in Math, Science, and Engineering (1996)
Women in Math, Science, and Engineering (WIMSE) is designed to foster community among women who major in traditionally male-dominated fields of study. Research shows that women benefit from a supportive network of fellow students who share similar academic interests. Academic courses and support, along with social programs, provide 135 women majoring in mathematics, science, and engineering with the resources to build a positive foundation for a future career. Nearly 50 percent of the women are enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, while about 40 percent are from Engineering. WIMSE occupies three floors of Trelease Hall, located in the Florida Avenue Residence Halls.

Global Crossroads (2000)
Global Crossroads, located in the Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls, is designed to challenge and motivate students whose interests, experiences, and aspirations have a strong international component. Both academic and co-curricular programs support the students’ sustained engagement across cultural differences. The community of 120 students has about equal numbers of international and domestic students. Just over 50 percent of the students have majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, followed by 22 percent from Engineering. Another five percent each come from the College of Business, Fine and Applied Arts, and Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences.

Intersections (2004)
Intersections introduces undergraduate students to diversity issues in the United States through the experience of living in a multicultural community and opportunities for academic engagement. Its purpose is to foster interpersonal and intellectual skills, and knowledge to live and work in a multicultural society. Intersections houses approximately 110 students and is located in the Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls. Since its inception, over half of the students have come from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, while about 20 percent come from Engineering. Another seven percent come from the College of Business and five percent from Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences.

Health Professions (2007)
Health Professions brings together undergraduate students who are preparing for careers in the health fields. It provides relevant academic courses and support, career development opportunities, and skill-building programs for students to consider working with underserved populations. Health Professions houses approximately 110 students and is located on two floors of Oglesby Hall in the Florida Avenue Residence Halls. Sixty-seven percent come from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, with biology and chemistry most heavily represented. Ten percent of the students come from Applied Health Sciences. There are also students with majors in the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, as well as Engineering and other colleges.
Program Administration

Who can apply
The Researchers Initiative is administered by the Program Director for the Urbana South Living-Learning Communities. Students residing in the Urbana South Living-Learning Communities are eligible to apply to the Initiative. Any faculty member of the University who can supervise undergraduate students in research endeavors may participate.

How to apply
Both the student application and faculty request forms are available online in the fall. Students rank and provide explanations as to why they wish to work with their chosen faculty members. Faculty members fill out a one-page form indicating their research projects, what types of work they would like the students to do, and any other relevant criteria.

How students & faculty are matched
In mid-fall, the Program Director reviews all applications and matches students with faculty members based on these factors:

- Clarity and cogency of students’ responses
- Students’ ability to meet faculty requirements regarding meeting times, etc.
- Giving as many students as possible their top choices
- Priority to sophomores
- Relative balance of number of students from each of the four Communities
- Faculty preferences for particular students

After students and faculty members are notified of their matches, students are required to meet in person with the faculty member. Faculty members have the final say in whether or not they will accept a particular student in their labs. If accepted, students then must fill out formal payroll paperwork before they can begin work. All paperwork is completed in the fall so students can start work at the beginning of the spring semester.

How many hours students can work
Students can work up to 75 hours for the semester but must work a minimum of 35. How the hours are broken down depends on the faculty member’s needs and the student’s schedule. The hourly pay is the standard University rate for undergraduates.

How the RI is funded
Funds come from the Urbana South Living-Learning Communities Programming Fee.
**Students and Faculty Involvement**

**Student Participation**

Students must:

- Apply and be accepted to participate in the Initiative.
- Rank their preferences for the faculty members with whom they wish to work.
- Confirm with the USLLC Program Director that they have met with their preferred faculty member.
- Provide proper documentation for the I-9 form, which is required for employment.
- Attend an orientation on expectations for participation and how to use library resources.
- Attend 1-hour workshop on creating and presenting research posters.
- Attend two to three check-in meetings with USLLC program staff.
- Participate in the Poster Symposium to present a poster of their work.
- Participate in an exit interview with the USLLC Program Director at the end of the semester.
- Meet faculty members’ expectations for attendance at meetings/events, work hours, and quality of work.
- Provide weekly updates to faculty mentor detailing completed work, work to be done, and questions.
- Work at least 35 but no more than 75 hours.

**Faculty Participation**

Faculty members are asked to commit to the following:

- Fill out one-page faculty interest form.
- Review student applications (not required).
- Confirm in fall semester that you and students have met face-to-face and agreed to work together.
- Engage in consistent face-to-face contact with the student, such as one-on-one or research team meetings.
- Respond to students’ weekly updates.
- Give clear expectations regarding type and quality of work.
- Provide verbal feedback to students on quality of students’ work.
- If comfortable, share more personal stories related to own academic and career path.
- Suggest events on campus that would augment the students’ learning.
- Where appropriate, introduce students to others to facilitate students’ academic career.
- Attend Mini-Symposium, Sunday, April 17, 2016, 4-6pm.

**Assessment**

Students met one-on-one with the Program Director throughout the spring to discuss their progress and they participated in an exit interview at the end of the semester.
To date, 140 students have completed the Researchers Initiative. This year, all students indicated that they became familiar with the research process as a whole, noting that research takes a great deal of time, accuracy in work, and commitment. All stated they had learned about topics that were new to them even if they were familiar in a general way with the subject. Several noted that what they learned in actual research was beneficial to their courses. For example, one student was impressed with the need to record data accurately, something she would take to all her lab courses. Several students valued learning how to read research articles and write summaries. One student noted she learned how to deal with failure. Another commented he learned to be more concerned for others. Yet another shared that passion and putting work into whatever you pursue pays off.

Most students shared that they enjoyed getting to know their mentors, whether faculty members, post-docs, or graduate students. It seemed that the graduate students were very kind and conscientious in helping the undergraduates. Many of the RI students also noted how enthusiastic the graduate students were about research.

Twelve of the thirty-two students will continue to work with their faculty member, either during the summer or the next academic year. Eleven said they will pursue other research opportunities. Several were not sure whether they would pursue further opportunities. One said that he will not pursue research but believes his understanding of the research process will benefit his career.

The skills listed below reflect outcomes from 2009 through 2015 (not all student learned all skills listed).

- Literature review and organization
- Navigating University Library website
- Using academic search engines
- Using Refworks
- Writing annotated bibliographies
- Data collection, analysis, and organization
- Conducting ethnographic interviews
- Transcribing interviews
- Coding qualitative data
- Coding quantitative data
- Categorizing thematically
- Critical thinking
- Developing research questions
- Designing experiments
- Differentiating relevant from irrelevant data
- Making meaning of data
- Understanding research process as a whole
- Communicating respectfully with research subjects
- Empathizing with research subjects
- Becoming familiar with purpose of the Institutional Review Board
- Becoming familiar with safety protocols
- Organization
- Managing time better
- Improving typing skills
- Performing more precise work
- Honing technical skills
- Learning new file formats
- Learning software programs
- Learning how to set up experiments
- Administering research protocols

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Mary and Kathleen both reside in the Health Professions Living-Learning Community. Mary was a sophomore and Kathleen a freshman this past year. They worked in the neuroscience lab of Dr. Aron Barbey and helped with his ongoing project, Nutrient Biomarker Patterns, Cognitive Function, and MRI Measures of Brain Aging.

They are both very passionate about learning and their future careers, and have worked hard to make the most of their college experience.

In reflecting on what they had learned about the research process, Kathleen recalled participating in research in high school. This work had been qualitative in nature. She commented, “You can’t attack every research project the same because each one varies in so many different aspects—each requires different skills, especially as it relates to quantitative vs. qualitative.” She also learned about “the power of a number, or of data, and what you can do with it.”

Mary came to the RI with previous research experience. She commented that “our role, regardless how big or small, is still important and still affects the whole outcome. I found myself an integral part of the work.”

In addition to gaining a general understanding of the process of research, they both learned specific skills related to Dr. Barbey’s research through scoring the tests that elderly subjects had taken, tests designed to discern cognitive functioning. Even though the work could be tedious, they were adamant that accuracy, detail, and persistence are very important in research.

There is an interpersonal aspect to research that they both appreciated, as well. Mary said she enjoyed working with the graduate students (Marta Zamroziewicz) and post-docs (Drs. Rachael Rubin and Erick Paul). “When we first walked in it was a little overwhelming; eventually we eased into it. The post-docs and grad student were very helpful.”

Kathleen said that because neuroscience is one of her favorite subjects, it drove her to work even harder. “I really put myself into it!” She also commented that balancing it out with everything was a challenge. “Mcb is very intensive with math and other subjects, and I have two other jobs. Once you’re in the lab, you don’t want to leave the lab!”

They also shared that what they learned in the lab can be applied to their courses. Kathleen stated, “Coming to U of I, it was very different from high school. College and research are really about critical thinking, applying what you know, and generating knowledge, not just memorization. It is also about expanding the knowledge and what can you yourself say about it.” Mary appreciated how she “got to see a larger scale application of molecular and brain functioning.”

Mary plans to continue in Dr. Barbey’s lab this summer and to see where it goes from there. Kathleen hopes to work with the lab in the fall and plans on doing a senior thesis in neuroscience.
The Benefits of Ongoing Work: Danqi (Silvia) Fang, Urban and Regional Planning, minoring in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES)

Danqi Fang transferred to the University of Illinois from Shanghai University three years ago, was a member of Global Crossroads, and graduated this May.

She is excited to be on her way to a top graduate school in her field. For the past three years she had been working with Dr. Bethany Cutts, a professor in NRES. Danqi first worked in Dr. Cutts’ lab through the Researchers Initiative and continued to take courses with her and work in the lab.

What was the focus of the research you were involved in?

At first for the RI and summer I was looking at lead contamination and urban gardening. I did newspaper coding – basically looking at people, places, and organizations that addressed lead contamination. I had to determine if the article was relevant. If the article was relevant I organized the info into a spreadsheet and maps. I was looking at hot spots of media attention about this issue.

What changed over the years as you continued the work?

I was focused on data collection at first. While I was doing this fundamental data collection I was also beginning to find meaning. I would see something occur more frequently. Since it was my first time doing research, I was expecting to take orders, but I came to understand the research and to see things and patterns. I talked with Dr. Cutts about what I saw and I was able to incorporate some of my own interpretations.

Why did you stick with Dr. Cutts’ lab?

I minored in ENRS, which was relevant to my research and my academic interests, and I was paid! Plus, I like her. She is nice and values my opinions. She is very knowledgeable with techniques, has interesting projects, and was very helpful if I had problems with software.

I helped with the course that is related to her project Social Vulnerability and Environmental Justice in Milwaukee. We wanted to know how people are perceiving the process of environmental work, how they want to see or have seen changes. We considered how these projects affected people from underrepresented groups.

How did your research experiences affect your getting into graduate school?

These experiences helped me build up my research abilities and to think about issues. The research methods helped me think about how to approach topics and how to look for themes, break them down and work on them step by step. Also, it looks really nice on my resume. Dr. Cutts was generous in taking students to conferences, and in being a reference for me and a great connection.

What are your future plans?

I am going to work after graduate school. I will try to find a job in the States first. If I can’t I am also happy to go back home to get a job. I am looking at public sector, private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). An NGO would be a fascinating experience.
What advice do you have for undergraduates?

Collect experience as you can. You don’t know which one is going to help you in the long run. Look for opportunities on your own. Back in China I had been involved in a variety of student organizations. Here I was more focused on professional and academic things and was involved in only one student organization. Going to college is like going to a restaurant. You would like to try everything. For freshmen year that is good. But then you should focus.

faculty perspective

Aaron Johnson, Speech and Hearing Science

Why should undergraduates participate in research?

The biggest thing is the same reason for students as for faculty: opportunity to generate new knowledge. Most of our careers, as students or faculty, have been about learning what others discovered. This is truer of the sciences than the humanities and arts where there is more creative room. Part of my motivation was that I had questions. I wanted to know things. Even just small little discoveries that no one else had thought of were exciting. I was a professional singer for ten years. I didn’t know anything about science. It was my passion for performing and teaching others that led me to develop my interest in the science of the voice.

What helps a student succeed in research?

Being proactive. It’s for self-starters. Also, success is tied to the idea of generating knowledge. It’s not really about what I do but why I do it. Even for the undergraduate who is doing basic things, having a deeper understanding of the purpose is important. Also, having the drive to ask why. The big picture frames the details and makes the details bearable.

Additionally, finding a lab or mentor who has some similar interests, in terms of the big questions and type of work. Finding a lab that is supportive with other students at the same level or master’s level students who can mentor. Ideally, finding a faculty member who can mentor even if grad students are teaching the hands-on stuff.

What kind of work do you do?

I am interested in how vocal training and exercise affect the muscles of the voice. In particular, I am focused on looking at if we can use training as we get older because the voice gets weaker and fatigues. There are changes in muscles of the larynx. We know exercise helps other muscles, but does it help these muscles? We do clinical trials of vocal exercises with adults. We use a rat model to understand the mechanism.

What’s a typical day like for you as a researcher?

Writing. I am responsible for coming up with the studies and finding money to conduct studies. Once the study is done, I then write it up in presentations and manuscripts. The bulk of what I do is higher-level communication. The hands-on stuff is mostly done by graduate and undergraduate students. As I progress in my career, it will continue that way. What I do is much more about management, almost like a small business model. These first few years, I was very hands-on because I was establishing techniques and protocols.
What’s the most unusual thing that you encountered in doing research?

One thing that’s neat is that I am constantly meeting other faculty who are doing very unusual work and they think that about me. For the students, that’s a good thing too—you are constantly learning new things. The more practical part of that is you can discover new ways of asking your questions. It strengthens and broadens your research. This is a great place for collaborative work.

There is a community that goes beyond your office and you meet people that way, like on your kid’s soccer field where you talk with other parents. The university also has a strong infrastructure of supporting interdisciplinary work. I am collaborating with faculty in Bioengineering and the School of Music.

Any final words of advice to undergraduates?

Research is a major endeavor of this University. Take advantage of that. It is an amazing resource.

2015 Students & Faculty Mentors

Aaron Barbey, Speech and Hearing Science and Rachael Rubin, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Beckman Institute

Student Researchers: Mary Figura, Molecular and Cellular Biology and Anthropology; Kathleen Muñoz, Molecular and Cellular Biology

Project: Nutrient Biomarker Patterns, Cognitive Function, and MRI Measures of Brain Aging

Rashid Bashir, Bioengineering

Student Researcher: Reuben Tan, Computer Engineering

Project: Microfluidics for Whole Blood Analysis

Jefferson Chan, Chemistry

Student Researchers: Ryan Hoffman, Chemical Engineering; Iris Hou, Molecular and Cellular Biology

Project: Development of an Efficient Route for Asymmetric Xanthones (Ryan Hoffman) and Development of Fluorescent Molecules for Sensing Parkinson’s Disease (Iris Hou)
Bethany Cutts, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences

**Student Researchers:** Nuochen Lyu, Electrical and Computer Engineering; Kevin Zhu, Division of General Studies

**Project:** Working with the Urbana Environmental Equity Research: Investigating the Social Impacts of Environmental Remediation

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Paul Eubig, Veterinary Medicine

**Student Researcher:** Adriana Martinez, Animal Sciences

**Project:** Impact of Shift Work on Attention: Initial Findings in a Rat Model

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Jennifer Fraterrigo, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences

**Student Researchers:** Taylor Cascia, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences; Crystal Zhu, Community Health

**Project:** Effects of Tree Mortality on Below Ground Carbon Storage

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Alma Gottlieb, Anthropology

**Student Researchers:** Juliana Snarski, Mechanical Engineering and Global Studies; Huiyi Chen, History and Economics

**Project:** Beng Community Fund (Juliana Snarski) and Mapping Cape Verdeans’ Genealogies (Huiyi Chen)

---

Robin Jarrett, Human & Community Development

**Student Researchers:** Nikta Athari Anaraki, Division of General Studies; Jacob Bowers, Health Planning and Administration; Vinisha Doshi, Molecular and Cellular Biology; Christine Wolfe, Community Health

**Project:** Building Strong Communities and Families: Insights from Studies of School Readiness and Adolescent Development and Parenting in the Inner City

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Aaron Johnson, Speech and Hearing Science

**Student Researcher:** Anna Fischer, Speech and Hearing Science

**Project:** The Effects of Vocal Use and Disuse on Neuromuscular Junctions in the Aging Voice

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Yi Lu, Chemistry

**Student Researcher:** Shuyan Wang, Chemistry

**Project:** Role of Copper Towards Oxygen Reduction Reactivity of Myoglobin Based-Cytochrome C Oxidase Mimics
Deana McDonagh, Art & Design

Student Researchers: Lydia Tanner, Engineering; Jing Yu, General Engineering; Ran Zhou, Mathematics

Project: Disability and Relevant Design: A Case Study on Experiential and Collaborative Design

James Miller, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences

Student Researcher: Yanzhu Chen, Division of General Studies

Project: Documenting Selection of Territorial Habitat by Breeding Dickcissels over Fine Spatial and Temporal Scales

Raksha Mudar, Speech and Hearing Science

Student Researchers: Nicole Hasamear, Chemical Engineering; Kevin Wells, Molecular and Cellular Biology

Project: Using EEGs to Describe Dementia

Helen Neville, Educational Psychology

Student Researchers: Heena Pithadia, Psychology; Quan Trimble, Political Science

Project: Policing in a Multiracial Society Project (Heena Pithadia) and Youth and Emerging Adults Civic Engagement Activities in the US and in Tanzania (Quan Trimble)

Zoi Rapti, Mathematics

Student Researchers: Daniel Carballal, Computer Science; Bridget Mueller-Brennan, Mathematics

Project: Understanding the Spread of Ebola through Stochastic Modeling (Daniel Carballal) and A Model of Sea Star Associated Densovirus Epidemiology (Bridget Mueller-Brennan)

Laura Rice, Kinesiology and Community Health

Student Researchers: Sarah Kapolnek, Material Science and Engineering; Diamond Kinemon, Community Health

Project: Impact of Transfer Training on Fall Frequency and Concerns About Falling Among Non-Ambulatory Adults with Multiple Sclerosis

Ashlynn Stillwell, Civil and Environmental Engineering

Student Researcher: Viviana Guaman, Civil Engineering

Project: Data Analysis of Green Roof Modeling Inputs
**Past Participating Faculty**

- **Nancy Abelmann, Anthropology**
  *Project:* Chinese and South Korean Students in Changing University of Illinois Demographics

- **Mark Aber, Psychology**
  *Project:* Students' Understanding of Race As It Changes in Public School Settings

- **Angela R. Black, Kinesiology and Community Health**
  *Project:* Pregnancy, Asthma, and Daily Life Management for African American Women

- **Tony Clark, American Indian Studies**
  *Project:* Settler Micro-aggressions: Dismissing, Marginalizing, and Trivializing the Allegations of Federally-Recognized Indian Tribes that Fraud Accompanied Transfers of Land from Indians to Non-Native Americans

- **Antonia Darder, Education**
  *Project:* The Role of Grass-Roots Initiatives in Reducing Disparities and Inequities in Education Related to Immigration, Identity, Language, Race, and Social Class

- **Chris Grindrod, Speech and Hearing Science**
  *Project:* Language and Communication in Stroke Survivors

- **Julie Hengst, Speech and Hearing Science**
  *Project:* Nature and Functioning of Repetition in Stuttering

- **Princess Imoukhuede, Bioengineering**
  *Project:* Statistical Analysis of Endothelial Heterogeneity
Ellen Moody, Anthropology  
*Project:* Damascus Encounters? Transnational Affect and Global Transformation through Short-Term Christian Mission or Service Trips

Safiya Noble, Media and Cinema Studies  
*Project:* Race and Digital Media

Lissette Piedra, School of Social Work  
*Project:* The Effects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on Depression and Parental Self-Efficacy in Latino Immigrant Mothers

Ramona Oswald, Human and Community Development  
*Project:* LGBT Families and Communities in Non-Metropolitan Areas

Kathy A. Perkins, Theatre  
*Project:* Africans and Diaspora Theatre Artists

Carin Vanderpool, Microbiology  
*Project:* Genetic Regulation in Bacteria

Edna A. Viruell-Fuentes, Latina/Latino Studies  
*Project:* Dr. Viruell-Fuentes examines the disparities found in health services for immigrants. Her recent research projects have included examining the impact that migration has upon health in immigrant-sending communities.

Robert Warrior, American Indian Studies  
*Project:* Dr. Warrior is the Director of the American Indian Studies Program and the Native American House. His research and past publications have focused on Native American literature, poetry, intellectual history, and religion.
The Researchers Initiative Poster Symposium is now part of University of Illinois’ Undergraduate Research Week. At the end of April, students present posters on their work, which address the nature and goals of the project, their specific tasks, and any results and conclusions that they can draw. They are also asked to reflect upon what they learned and what value such research has for wider society. The Symposium also includes brief presentations by students who previously completed the RI and have continued with research as a way to encourage current students to pursue on-going research.

Faculty members are invited to attend the Symposium; their presence is deeply encouraging and meaningful to the students as they introduce their work in a public forum, perhaps for the first time. It also helps students develop a sense of a “researchers’ community.” A catered dinner occurs during the Symposium to celebrate the students’ accomplishments and informally continue the conversation. Students also receive a certificate of completion for the Researchers Initiative.

“I was really cool being able to work with Zoi [Rapti]! It was amazing I got to pick my own project. It opened a lot of doors—the biomass program especially.”

Bridget Mueller-Brennan, Mathematics | WIMSE

“[This experience affirmed] that I like working with data. My director was very interested in this topic and this influenced me a lot. Enthusiasm is important”

Yanzhu Chen, Mathematics | WIMSE
“Research is not as easy as I thought. You have to follow protocol and rules. You have to do things step by step and it takes a very long time.”

Kevin Zhu, Division of General Studies | Global Crossroads

“I realized that [research] is not just one thing. It has different components. You get it wrong here and you try again. Also, it’s not an independent thing; each part depends on the others.”

Diamond Kinemon, Community Health | Health Professions

“[Research] is way more complicated and in-depth than when you read a research article. People put years and years into that 20 page [article.] Any fact that is stated, it is backed up with analyzed data.”

Nikta Athari Anaraki, Undecided | Health Professions

“Because I am an engineering student, I thought research was being in a lab or doing a simulation on software but this research program gave me a new perspective, especially the empathic modeling. Me, I can be a part of the data!”

Jing Yu, General Engineering | Intersections

“It was interesting to be a part of a study looking at something that had never been done before.”

Quan Trimble, Political Science | Intersections

“I loved [the research], so I am going to stick with it!”

Adriana Martinez, Animal Sciences | WIMSE

apply to the Researchers Initiative

The Researchers Initiative is open to students residing in Global Crossroads, Health Professions, Intersections, and Women in Math, Science, and Engineering Living-Learning Communities.

Application Links available fall 2015
Students apply at http://go.illinois.edu/ri_student_ap
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