

As a recipient of the ACRL Delaware Valley travel grant, I was able to attend the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) Biennial Conference in July 1-3, 2018 at Arlington, VA. This international conference attracts faculty, administrators, and many others who are interested in implementing undergraduate research initiatives at their institutions. The conference theme, “Creating Collaborative Connections in and through Undergraduate Research,” permeated through presentations, panel discussions, workshops, poster sessions, and keynotes.

For instance, I attended the session that featured a partnership between a librarian and a faculty member who worked together on engaging undergraduate students in writing and publishing book reviews. In addition to identifying opportunities and challenges for working with undergraduates on composing, editing, and publishing book reviews, the presenters also discussed the process of guiding students on how to enter scholarly conversations around books they were reviewing. At the end of their presentation, the speakers posed a number of questions for attendees to ponder while adopting the book review project at their own institutions. Some of the questions entailed locating time, resources, and motivated students for the implementation of the project and considering its value for the tenure/promotion process.

Similarly, the session that I co-presented with an English faculty member also highlighted an interdisciplinary collaboration aimed at capturing and showcasing undergraduate research. Particularly, we discussed why and how we developed a conference proceedings student journal with a team of students. Throughout our presentation we focused on addressing two learning aspects that the journal promoted:

- offering student conference presenters a learning experience on how to publish a written summary of their research and creativity for the general public
- providing student editors with hands-on practice on how to work in a multidisciplinary environment

At the end of our presentation, we offered attendees some practical takeaways to consider while launching an undergraduate student journal at their own institutions.

Another successful partnership between Student Affairs, Honors College and Provost Office resulted in establishment of an undergraduate research club at Towson University. By attending this session, I learned about the process of launching a club as a student organization and the logistics of running it. I was inspired by the purpose of the research club that crosses disciplinary boundaries, encourages student development as a scholar, and fosters peer-to-peer support and learning.

As a result of participating at the CUR conference, I am taking away a much broader definition of undergraduate research as an accessible, diverse, and inclusive initiative that can take many forms at different institutions and can be enhanced by interdisciplinary partnerships. I would like to encourage my colleagues to consider attending this conference conducive to fostering new partnerships and new ideas to support undergraduate students’ growth in research and creative inquiry. To learn more about the conference and to view the program, please visit the site at https://www.cur.org/conferences_and_events/cur_biennial_conference_2018/

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