Summer Research 2013

This summer will mark the 14th year of the Summer Research Program here at Occidental. Students from many different majors, from science to humanities, spend the summer researching their particular interests. For ten weeks from May 27 to August 3 they will collaborate with a faculty mentor to develop skills in leadership, research, public speaking, and ethics. The program concludes with an end of summer conference on July 31, where all participants present their work. The Summer Research Program is an excellent opportunity to pursue career goals, discover new opportunities, learn directly from a faculty advisor, and meet students with varied interests, backgrounds, and ideas. Close collaboration between the research fellow and his or her faculty mentor is an essential feature of the program. Each fellow is expected to have a full-time exclusive commitment to research and must participate in research ethics training, meetings with peers and mentors, special gatherings, and assessments during the research period.

Caroline Bringenberg is a rising senior UEP major; her research project for this summer is titled From Columbine to Sandy Hook: Investigating the Effectiveness of LAUSD Safety Protocol and Policies in the Context of the Growing Prominence of Mass Shootings in U.S. Culture. Bringenberg discussed her inspiration for her summer research project: “I am very passionate about public education and became acquainted with LAUSD during my UEP Community Organizing internship last fall. After the events at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown took place last December, I started to become more interested in the policy surrounding guns and safety within the public school system, and thought LAUSD would be a fascinating network to conduct that research within.” She will be working with her mentor Professor Martha Matsuoka on her project this summer.

Bringenberg hopes her research over the summer will feed into the rest of her time here at Oxy. “I am hoping to continue my research project from this summer and expand it for my senior comprehensive in the UEP department. To do this, I would conduct interviews within LAUSD to add to the extensive policy reviews I’ll be conducting over the summer.”

Sarah Doyel is another rising senior participating in the Summer Research Program this summer. Her project Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Discussion of Human Rights will allow her to more closely examine an area that has always interested her as a DWA major. Doyel wanted a hands-on research experience and is looking forward to learning alongside her faculty mentor Professor Anthony Chase.

“Neither Prof. Chase nor I have participated in the program, so we’re still brainstorming exactly how we’ll structure our research this summer. We do plan to meet weekly, and for me to produce a concept map of human rights literature as part of my research product. I see Prof. Chase as a guide for my research: he is an expert in human rights and is very good at listening to his students and integrating their input. It will be a fun dynamic!”

Like Bringenberg, Doyel expects this project to play a large role in her senior comps. Doyel’s comps will focus on “citizenship’s effect on the implementation of human rights.” She views the Summer Research Program not only “as a jumping-off point for my senior year academic focus at Oxy” but as a key stepping stone to her future plans. “I want to work in the human rights field after I graduate, and I’m hoping that this research will give me some of the experience and knowledge I need to pursue my career aspirations. I’m toying with the idea of going into academics eventually, too, so this will be a good test of how much I’ll enjoy spending a whole summer doing intensive academic research!”
Artistic Comps Use ASP Fund

Senior Raffy Cortina’s short film *Bottled Up*, has been nominated for a Student Academy Award. After submitting his film to a regional competition, he learned that it was selected to advance to the national level. Now there are just 9 films left competing for three awards within his category (alternative). *Bottled Up* is one of the only films submitted by an undergraduate. Raffy reflected, “It’s nice to know that my decision to come to Oxy over a venerable film school or conservatory could still result in a successful thesis film. I wanted a liberal arts education so I could learn how to think and communicate effectively. I feel privileged to have both. Luckily, four years at Oxy was enough to put me in a competition with graduate students in their mid-twenties with discourses exclusively around film. I’m proud of that.”

Winners will be announced the day after Oxy’s graduation. Raffy commented, “The first day out in the real world is either going to be filled with glee or extremely depressing. I’ve already got tubs of ice cream on standby.”

The 40th annual Student Academy Awards presentation will be held on Saturday, June 8th, in Beverly Hills. Winners will receive gold, silver or bronze medals, plus cash prizes and we hope Raffy is among the winners.

Raffy applied for financial support through the ASP program to make the film and to transfer it to a specific exhibition format required by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. URC Administrator Janet Morris noted that “this is exactly the kind of project that the Academic Student Project is designed to support and we’re really happy that we were able to help Raffy achieve this milestone. We wish him a lot of success in his post-Oxy filmmaking career!”

For more information about *Bottled Up*, please see: www.flavorfilms.com/bottledup/index.html

Two music majors received ASP grants this year to pursue their senior comps in composition: Andrew Chang and Michael Ursu. Ursu discussed his experience becoming a student composer. “I had written a few songs during my freshman and sophomore year at Occidental, but it wasn’t until my junior year when I went abroad to Vienna that I started composing music.” The first piece of music that he composed at Occidental is titled ‘Dedalus’ and will be the finale piece for the first half of his recital. The recital will showcase ten to eleven of Ursu’s pieces, “ranging from notated music, film scores, improvisational music, and songs.”

Ursu has a deep-seated interest in composition: “Every composition, improvisation, and performance I do leaves me wanting more, wanting to learn more about the intricacies of music. It is like a puzzle you can never solve, but sometimes you get pretty darn close.” He plans to go to graduate school for composition after taking time to stay in the LA area as a musician.

Drawing inspiration from many styles and cultures, Ursu describes his sound as “new music” rather than classical contemporary. His compositions are “a reflection of the music I have heard in my life and the people who have influenced me.”

Ursu’s ASP funding is allowing him the special opportunity to hire professional musicians to play his compositions for his senior recital. Ursu believes that working professional musicians is integral to seeing his comps come to fruition. “Working with professional musicians is always a blessing. With a professional musician it only requires a few rehearsals to get it right, and most of the time it does not even require my presence. I recently had a piece played by the violist Brett Deubner, and all I did was send him the e-mail with the pdf of the score attached. He had never heard the piece before, and played it better than I had ever imagined it!”

Ursu is greatly anticipating presenting his comps. “Of course, I am looking forward to the whole recital, but what really excites me is the chance to conduct my own pieces. It is almost as if the players and I become one when I start conducting. They are an extension of the music I hear in my head, and the music I hear can only be realized through their interpretation of it.”
NCUR 2013 in Wisconsin

According to the NCUR website, “The National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), established in 1987, is dedicated to promoting undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity in all fields of study by sponsoring an annual conference for students. Unlike meetings of academic professional organizations, this gathering of young scholars welcomes presenters from all institutions of higher learning and from all corners of the academic curriculum. Through this annual conference, NCUR creates a unique environment for the celebration and promotion of undergraduate student achievement, provides models of exemplary research and scholarship, and helps to improve the state of undergraduate education.”

NCUR 2013 was held from April 11-13 at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Seven student researchers from Oxy attended the conference this year to present their research to the NCUR community. Seniors Alexander Bogrand, Nona Gronert, Thuy Hua, Anna Kurnizki, Carly Mee, and Madhvi Venkatraman and junior Samuel Gill attended the conference this year. They spent the three days presenting their work, attending other students’ presentations, and taking in the intellectual atmosphere of this national conference.

Hua presented her research on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which is caused by alcohol exposure in utero. Hua said, “NCUR was a great experience to expose our research to a new public and to new questions that makes us think in a deeper and more analytical perspective that we might otherwise neglect.”

Carly Mee and Nona Gronert presented on different facets of sexual assault on college campuses. Mee presented her research on barriers to bystander intervention in sexual assault. “It was a great opportunity to interact with students who had done similar research, compare our findings, and learn more about my own area of research, in addition to learning about other areas which I previously knew little about.” Nona Gronert presented her Sociology Comps, which received distinction from the Sociology department. Gronert researched college students’ ideas about sexual consent using clips from TV shows like Gossip Girl. After a successful presentation, Gronert fielded questions about verbal consent, which she felt resulted in a better understanding of the concept for all the presentation attendees.

Junior Chemistry major Sam Gill has spent much of this year researching Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD). This compound, isolated from baker’s yeast, served as the model system for his research. Overall, NCUR was a success for all participants and offered new perspectives to the students on their work.
Undergraduate Research Center
Newsletter

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Important Dates

Summer Research Program Runs
May 27 through August 3

Summer Research Conference
July 31 all day

Don't forget to email final reports for ASP and ASP Conference
Travel grants by May 10 at 5pm to urc@oxy.edu

Now at the URC

Scott Bogue

Scott Bogue is the director of the URC. He is a professor of Geology and a “practicing paleomagnetist with interests in geomagnetic reversals and the tectonics of western North America.” Scott has been teaching at Oxy since 1985 and he is counting on students not doing the math to guess his age. His hobbies include cycling, making and flying fighter kites, “playing traditional tunes on the Irish whistle,” and appreciating the beauty and majesty of clouds. Scott is happy to be more involved with undergraduate research on this campus and says he is really looking forward to another great Summer Research Program. He is also happy to welcome Janet Morris to the staff as the new Administrator.

Janet Morris

Janet Morris is the Administrator of the URC. She is also the Associate Coordinator of the Institutional Review Board where she reviews applications involving human subjects. Janet, an Oxy grad, likes staying up-to-date with what students are doing and enjoys seeing them go from first years submitting their first applications to seniors presenting their comps. This work ties in well with her job at the URC where she continues to be involved in student research on campus. She is happy to be back in the URC, the place where she got her first job at Oxy 10 years ago. She knows she has big shoes to fill after April Mazzeo’s retirement, but is excited for the opportunity.

Interested in Working at the URC this Summer?

The URC is seeking a student worker for the summer to aid the office in running the Summer Research Program and to create the emailed weekly newsletter. We are looking for someone reliable, flexible, personable, and outgoing who is able to work with minimal supervision on projects. On-campus room and board will be provided for the 11-week period or the student may choose to live off campus.

For more information about the position and how to apply visit oxy.edu/human-resources/working-oxy/oxy-student-positions

Contact Us!

The URC is located in South Trailer C next to Bell-Young.
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