SCCUR began in 1993 as an organized interdisciplinary effort by educators in the greater Los Angeles area to improve education for college and university students by encouraging inquiry-based education such as undergraduate research. Recent years have seen five to seven hundred participants presenting their work in the form of oral presentations, posters, creative exhibits and performances. 80 different institutions from Southern California and the rest of the nation, including Occidental College, present at the annual conference. The conference seeks to replicate professional and scholarly meetings, and many undergraduate scholars participate in SCCUR as a “first conference” experience, going on to present their work at national professional meetings.

The URC provided the conference fee for student presenters and faculty mentors that registered for the Early Bird Conference Registration before November 4th. Because of the URC’s efforts, Occidental has placed in the top five contributing schools to SCCUR in the last five years. This year Occidental sent thirty-four presenters and five faculty members. Next year’s conference will take place at Cal State Fullerton. We hope to see you there!

Groups of Oxy students and faculty could be found all over the Whittier campus during the day-long conference.
Occidental maintains a fund for support of small academic projects performed by full-time degree-seeking students during the academic year. These funds may be used for consumables for an independent study project, comps research, or travel to local field research sites or research subjects. Supplies for art, video and performance projects, oral history, and education outreach in the local community may also be funded. Projects must be primarily academic in nature, although not-for-credit activities can receive support. Funds will be awarded to students on a competitive basis. Grants are limited to the range of $50 to $300 per project. The ASP grant is not intended to be the sole support for any project. There will be multiple proposal deadline dates for the 2013 – 2014 academic year. Applications are due by 4:00 pm on each due date. The early decision deadline for the Spring 2014 Semester was December 2 and the regular decision deadline is January 27, 2014. Students can apply for project support by submitting an application to the URC. Here are the stories of some students who received ASP grants, what they did, and how it helped them.

Senior Megan Sumida, a biochemistry major, used funds from ASP to help finance her project into the development of a vaccine for Pigeon fever for horses. The money was used to test blood samples on mouse models, purchasing of cell lines and materials related to the project. She has successfully done long term research under Prof. Roberta Pollock of the Biology department since the spring of 2011 and has received ASP funding every semester since as well as funding from outside sources such as the renowned Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) and has presented at SC-CUR, NCUR and the 2013 Midwinter Conference of Immunologists. She relates how ASP helped her:

Q: How has your project helped you academically in terms of your future career?
Working on this project for four years helped give me an insight into what it would be like to be a PhD student and if a career in research would fit me. It has definitely helped me shape my future goals.

Q: What did you learn from your project?
I learned a ton of immunology since the project was immune based. Though it dealt with Pigeon Fever for horses, it was definitely relevant to human immunology as well, as many of the research and lab techniques are the same for both. I specifically learned a lot about bacteria.

Q: How did the URC help you?
The URC has been funding me every semester that I have been doing research. Without that money I wouldn't have been able to do a lot of the experiments vital to my research. Research has been a significant part of my career at Oxy and the URC definitely helped with that.

Q: What advice would you give to students who want to apply for an ASP?
I would say make sure you are passionate about the project you are working on and get to know your project adviser because they really help you not only in research but with helping you understand basic concepts and even as life coaches. They help you a lot. I worked super closely with Dr. Pollock and Dr. Molinder. They helped with everything from specific questions to more general concepts and immunology questions.
Many scholarly organization offer students the opportunity to present their results at local or regional conferences. Occidental is no exception. A limited amount of funding is available for students to attend conferences for presentation of results of their academic projects. Senior Simran Sangha, a geology major, benefitted from URC’s ASP Conference Travel to attend the Geological Society of America’s Conference. He relates how it helped him and how you too can benefit from the URC’s ASP Conference Travel fund:

**Q: How did the URC help you?**

The URC provided me with the funding to attend three conferences and thus gain invaluable exposure and networking skills. Without the URC--and given limitations in NASA funding--I would have likely had to either go on my own dime or likely not at all. If it were not for the URC, I would not have even come close to presenting at three conferences.

**Q: What advice would you give to students who want to apply for ASP Travel?**

I would suggest that they maintain some sort of a dialogue with the URC so that they know what to expect and know what is expected of them. Also, they should explore other sources of funding as it is not fair to put too much pressure on the URC to provide excess of what is already limited funding.

Senior Mary Morrissey, a CTSJ major received a grant for her project *Transgendered/Queer performance, Race, and Body--Hamburger Mary’s*. Under the mentorship of Prof. Mary Christianakis of the CTSJ department, she planned to explore what it means to “transgender” space by examining drag performance and the appropriation of stereotypes. She talks about how the URC helped her and what she learned from her project so far:

**Q: How has your project helped you academically and in terms of your future career?**

The project has pushed me to explore a new research methodology and develop data collection skills. With the help of my faculty advisor, I have learned how to manage, code, and interpret ethnographic data. I believe my project will help prepare me for graduate school, where I hope to pursue my interest in feminist and queer studies.

**Q: What advice would you give to students who want to apply for an ASP?**

As a financial aid student, the ASP grant was essential to the success and completion of my fieldwork. I would advise students to use the ASP grant as a way to further their academic interests and push beyond their comfort zones. As a senior, I wish I had taken advantage of this opportunity sooner.
The National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) is a research association that holds a conference each spring to present and support undergraduate research nationwide. The URC will provide partial funding to attend the conference. The 2014 conference will be held April 3-5, 2014 at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY. Unfortunately, the URC will not be arranging group travel for this conference. You will have to make your own travel arrangements to and from the conference. The deadline for abstracts is Friday, December 6, 2013 at 11:59pm ET. Visit the NCUR homepage for photographs and other information at www.cur.org/ncur_2014/. Students will be notified by January 14, 2014 if they have been selected to present. At that time, you should register for the early bird conference registration by February 14, 2014. If you have any questions, email urc@oxy.edu.

The Summer Research Program (SRP) is a fantastic opportunity for Occidental students who are interested in conducting independent research. Every year, the college supports over 120 students who live on campus for 10-weeks during the summer working closely with their faculty mentors. The program includes a weekly stipend, subsidized on-campus housing, weekly luncheon seminars, training in research ethics and fun events, but is chiefly designed to allow students time to focus on a research topic that is of personal interest to them. It’s a competitive selection process and applications are reviewed by a faculty committee. Applications (including letters of reference by the sponsoring faculty mentor) are due in the URC office by 4 pm on February 11, 2014. See our webpage for additional program details or to download an application. http://www.oxy.edu/undergraduate-research-center/summer-opportunities/ oxy-summer-research-program Watch your email and our Facebook page for announcements about information sessions!