2015 SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

A Partnership between the UW Superior Foundation and the Center for Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity
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Introduction

UW-Superior’s Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program, now in its fourth year, provides opportunities for students and faculty/staff to collaborate on in-depth research, scholarly, or creative projects during the summer. Students and mentors work together on all phases of a project, from proposal development to project design, carrying out the project, and presenting the results. The SURF program provides a stipend to both the student and the mentor to support their work for a ten week period. In addition to working on their project, students meet periodically to discuss progress and problems encountered, share ideas, and learn about resources for their work.

The ten student/mentor teams whose work is summarized here were selected from among nineteen proposals submitted in 2015. The scope of the projects reflects both the broad spectrum of academic disciplines at UW-Superior and the campus’s commitment to the liberal arts. In reading over the project summaries, two themes are recurrent – the students’ passion for their area of study, and their desire to make a contribution to the campus or community. UW-Superior is fortunate to have a program that provides students with the opportunity to do both.

An important component of undergraduate research and creative activity is sharing the results of one’s work. SURF recipients presented their projects at a campus symposium in October and over the next 6 months they will be sharing their work with peers, community members, and elected officials at events such as Posters in the Rotunda, the UW-System Symposium for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity, and through disciplinary meetings and publications.

Funding for the SURF program is provided by the UW-Superior Foundation through the generosity of its donors. Thanks are due to the proposal review team of Tim Cleary, Maria Cuzzo, Hilary Fezzey, Lynn Goerdt, Jim Lane, Tracey Ledder, and to Suzanne Griffith, Liz Blue and the all the others who support undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity at UW-Superior.

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Mieszko Brikis became interested in studying college athletes’ eating behavior during a spring 2015 class project which surveyed students about their experiences with the campus dining services. Those findings indicated student athletes had distinct beliefs about how and what to eat. Mieszko’s passion for exercise and nutrition led him to the idea of interviewing athletes from different sports and comparing their food choices and practices. He conducted interviews with members of six teams, created transcriptions and analyzed the data for patterns, paying special attention to gender, sport and team “cultures.” Mieszko hopes his summer’s work of looking at athletes’ understandings of eating habits will contribute to the important field of nutrition research. The skills he obtained in interview and text analysis will serve him well in communicating evidence-based research to diverse audiences.

Mieszko is from Berlin, Germany. A year as a high school exchange student in Wisconsin sparked his curiosity about athletics and nutrition, leading to his eventual return to UW-Superior to study Community Health Promotion. Mieszko is a junior and is working towards a career in the field of Sports Medicine, Exercise Physiology and Nutrition.

“I would like to thank the supporters of the SURF program, the staff of the undergraduate research program, and my mentor Dr. Augsburger for this unforgettable experience in undergraduate research.”
Brooke Collins worked with her mentor, Dr. Eleni Pinnow, researching best practices for student conduct used by educational institutions in residence halls. She reviewed literature about student conduct processes, ways to prevent policy violation recidivism, and student retention practices that rely on student involvement and engagement. Brooke then reviewed data from UW-Superior to identify trends in policy violations in residence life over the last five years. She wants to see the best practices in the literature in use in the student conduct system and hopes this will contribute to student retention.

Brooke is from Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin. Attending UW-Superior is a tradition in her family, beginning with her great grandmother in 1913. Brooke’s job as a Residence Life hall manager, which includes working with students who violate policies, piqued her interest in her research topic. Her project has increased her understanding of the students she works with and how Residence Life can help them. She appreciated the opportunity to contribute to Residence Life in a way that will help both the department and the students housed on campus. Brooke will graduate in May 2016 with a degree in psychology in and intends to pursue a graduate degree.

“This project has made a huge difference for me because I was able to do this level of research as an undergrad. I would have never had the opportunity to learn how to do this kind of study had I not been granted this research project. It is a different type of learning than one does in the classroom. I have learned so much about the process and working with my mentor, Dr. Eleni Pinnow, was one of the best experiences I could ask for as an undergraduate student.”
Will Collins studied the role of three lesser known low brass valve instruments in jazz. His mentor, Dr. Greg Moore, helped him develop a research project which included a month devoted to each instrument. With daily routines that included classical technique studies, focused listening, and eventually playing along with recordings, Will was able to gain proficiency and comfort on each instrument. Artists such as Bob Brookmeyer, Rich Matteson, and Elliot Mason helped open his ear to the sound of these instruments and inspire such a project.

As part of a lifelong pursuit in jazz improvisation and finding a suitable double for the trombone, this project enabled Will to intensely study each instrument and the professional musicians who played them. Although similar in sound and range, each instrument possesses unique strengths and weaknesses to learn and overcome. In particular, the bass trumpet and its presence in jazz are topics that have little to no scholarly research or method books.

Will is a senior and UW-Superior's lone Jazz Studies major. Originally from Twin Lakes, Wisconsin, his family now resides in Iron River, Wisconsin. Location and flexibility of course options originally brought him to UW-Superior, but the small class sizes and one-on-one time with the music department faculty convinced him to stay. Will plans to pursue graduate studies in jazz and performance, with an ultimate goal of teaching and performing professionally.
Xuan Chen conducted her creative writing project while living in her hometown of Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan in China. She conducted character studies by observing the traits and qualities of individuals in her community, studied creative writing models pertinent to her project, and wrote throughout the summer. Xuan collected many compelling writing materials and wrote character sketches, monologues, short stories, and segments of a memoir. The SURF project provided Xuan with a valuable opportunity to experience the life of a professional writer and in the process, to consider what she has learned from her studies at UW – Superior and why she determined to be a creative writer in the future.

“Xuan Chen” is written in Chinese as “陈璇” (the family name comes first). Xuan is from Kunming, China and is a senior majoring in writing and minoring in philosophy.

“'Xuan’ means ‘Jade’ in Chinese. For me, writing is the process of concretizing and polishing the jade, because my mind is like a river, and when I am writing, I am searching in the river for stones that might have a jade inside.”
Mikayla Haynes conducted an original research project determining water quality for the Upper St. Croix Lake watershed in Douglas County, Wisconsin. Mikayla monitored aquatic macroinvertebrates, which can provide a more accurate indicator of stream quality than water chemistry; these “water bugs” live in their habitat year round, and each species has an individual tolerance level for water quality. Mikayla used a global positioning unit to determine the locations of the tributaries surrounding Upper St. Croix Lake, and collected bottom samples from each stream. Samples were preserved and aquatic macroinvertebrates were picked out and identified. These data were entered into the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ SWIMS database, which provides a tool to calculate a water quality score for each site. The scores were used to rate each site/stream on a scale from Excellent to Very Poor. Mikayla used geographic information system technology to create an easy-to-read map of the watershed that portrays the water quality rating for each site. She plans to disseminate her findings to the Upper St. Croix Lake Watershed Association.

Mikayla is from Duluth, Minnesota, and is a junior majoring in biology. She has worked for the Lake Superior Research Institute (LSRI) and under her mentor, Dr. Kurt Schmude, for the past two years. Through the LSRI and Dr. Schmude, she has had the opportunity to work on similar projects in which she processed many samples and participated in field research. Mikayla is thankful for the opportunity the SURF program has provided for her to grow as a young scientist, including significantly improving her identification skills and her ability to make educated decisions with regards to unexpected events in the field.
Brian’s interest in the local economy led him to the topic for his project - the 2014 reconstruction of a one-mile stretch of Tower Avenue, which took over six months and $14 million to complete. Brian was interested in the economic impacts of the project, specifically how the businesses were impacted by the road closing and the efficiency of the road design and construction process. After reviewing literature on other road construction projects, he distributed surveys to business owners on Tower Avenue and interviewed the Tower Avenue project designer and the Mayor of Superior. The results of his research suggest that the road reconstruction has had a negative impact on Tower Avenue business sales. The road design and the time it took to complete were other negative aspects of the project; on the positive side, most businesses seem to enjoy the new look of Tower Avenue.

Brian was born and raised in Superior, Wisconsin and is personally invested in improving his community, which is why undertaking this research was so important to him. He is pursuing a triple major in Finance, Economics, and Accounting and will graduate in the fall of 2017.

“This project was a great experience and will give me an advantage when searching for a job in the Economics field. With the SURF stipend, I was able to pay my rent for the year, which is a huge weight off of any college student’s shoulders! SURF is one of the best things to happen to me while at UW-Superior!”
Trevor Laroche-Theune’s project addressed the growing problem of racial discrimination in professional soccer. Trevor is passionate about soccer and spent a lot of time considering the discrimination that occurs in the sport and conversing with his mentor, Haji Dokhanchi, about it before he conducted his research. Trevor’s project is a comparative analysis of the efficiency of the frameworks of the International Association of Federation Football (FIFA) and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) of the United Nations in the fight against racial discrimination. This issue is of particular importance with the next World Cup scheduled to occur in 2018 in Russia, a country that has seen an extremely high level of racially discriminatory incidents in its professional leagues. The research revealed certain areas where FIFA falls short in its governance, while the CERD tends to operate on a deeper level of seeking out the roots of the problems in society. After comparing the FIFA and CERD frameworks, Trevor developed his own framework proposal based on his evaluation. Trevor intends to continue building on and developing specific aspects of this study as a senior capstone project.

Trevor is from La Pointe, Wisconsin and is in his senior year at UW-Superior. He is majoring in political science and French and is a member of the men’s soccer team. After graduation, Trevor plans to explore graduate school and employment opportunities with the aspiration to work further in human rights organizations and anti-racism initiatives, possibly overseas.

“I came to UW-Superior in part for the soccer program, but also for the favorable teacher to student ratio, which allowed me the opportunity to work one on one with Haji throughout the summer and to learn from his expertise. The funding for this project helped me to manage my finances as I returned from the 2015 spring semester, which I spent studying in France.”
Rachel Reichert created a collection of oral histories of bluegrass recording artists, documenting the folklore surrounding the music. Rachel focused on two main groups of bluegrass recording artists: those who played in the groups influential in creating the style of bluegrass, and the modern day groups trying to preserve the old ways of playing. To collect these recordings she traveled around the country interviewing musicians of all ages and from many different places to get a sample of professional bluegrass musicians from all walks of life. The collection is accessible as both transcriptions and recordings through the UW-Superior Library’s Special Collections Department and through a publically accessible website.

Context is key in understanding any piece of history. The great folklorists John and Alan Lomax knew this, which is why in the most prolific and arguably most important collection of music folklore, they not only recorded music but anecdotes and folk-tales of the musicians to give those listening a better understanding of the music.¹ It is because of the Lomaxes we today have such a rich knowledge of American folk music of old. In the 21st century anyone and everyone records music, but we are missing a collection of the folklore surrounding much of our American music of more recent times. Rachel plans to continue her research into American music forms, including gathering oral histories to add to the archive.

Rachel came to the Twin Ports from Stevens Point, Wisconsin to play music and decided to attend UW-Superior to study history. As a traditional bluegrass musician herself, she values the chance to preserve these stories and the aspect of American history they represent for posterity. The SURF funding allowed this collection to be made, and will give younger generations the stories of these musicians to look back on.

Donald Simmons worked with Professor Diek Carlson to survey residents of Ashland and Bayfield Counties, Wisconsin on the proposed concentrated animal feeding operation to be located in Eileen, WI (Bayfield County). His project focused on discovering the expectations of the community for the operations’ impact on aspects of the region that can be broadly categorized as socioeconomic or environmental characteristics. Donald mailed more than 500 surveys, and found that the population expects a negative impact on environmental characteristics of the region, but was unable to determine from the survey results what the population expects the impact to be on the economy. This was similar to economic literature reviewed on large-scale hog operations which suggests that the impact on the economy will depend on both the size of the operation and the ability of the region to supply inputs. The survey also measured respondents’ knowledge of the proposed project and whether they support or oppose it. Donald used responses to questions about the proposed farming operation to create a Knowledgeability Index that can be used to measure the knowledge gap.

Donald is a senior completing a double major in Economics and Finance. He has lived in 12 cities in 6 states in 3 different regions of the United States. Donald is an active member of campus organizations and is the president of Stimulus Club. He plans to pursue a law degree and a doctorate after graduation from UW-Superior.

"This project forced me to refine my project management skills and reinforced the notion that acquiring knowledge is expensive."
Charla Stickland’s project was the creation of a historical and inspiring mural for the Webster Elementary School, where she went to school as a child. Charla’s project required her to first gather information from the students at the school to learn about their interests and what might inspire them, and then to research the history of Webster and the surrounding area. After gathering this information, she focused on what content to include in the mural and how to arrange it to achieve the greatest impact in both telling the history of Webster and, more importantly, inspiring the children in the school.

Charla’s mural, which will be a permanent installation at the Webster Elementary School, was unveiled to the community at an open house in August. This project allowed Charla to observe the impact a simple painting can have on a community – she not only touched the children who were the intended audience for the mural, but also the adults in Webster. As a result of her project, Charla now has an interest in setting up a non-profit organization that could serve communities in the United States, and perhaps abroad, by providing inspirational murals.

Charla is from Webster, Wisconsin, just south of Superior, and is majoring in art. As a non-traditional student she came to Superior because it was close to her home and she liked the small campus. Her interest in this project stemmed from her desire to give back to her community and to inspire the youth with a large scale mural.

“This project has been an amazing learning experience and growth opportunity for me as an artist and student. I would like to thank the University, my mentor Gloria Eslinger, and the donors to this program for this great opportunity.”