UURAF Provides Undergrads Opportunities to Showcase Scholarship, Research & Creativity

UURAF provides a unique educational opportunity for aspiring researchers. MSU undergraduates gain experience in presenting their research, answering questions about their work from audience members and guests, and receiving constructive feedback from judges.

EIGHT COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS undergraduate students were presented with Grand Prize awards in the 2013 annual University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF) held Friday, April 12, from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the MSU Union. Seven CAL-URI students won in the 2012 UURAF. There were 545 students from 13 colleges who presented 391 oral and poster sessions in 2013, while 560 students gave 410 oral and poster presentations at the 2012 event. More than 300 MSU faculty members mentored the participating UURAF students. One grand prize was awarded for each program category.

UURAF provides Michigan State undergraduate students with an opportunity to showcase their scholarship and creative activity. Held each spring in the historic MSU Union, UURAF brings together an intellectual community of highly motivated students to share their work with faculty, peers, and external audiences.

CAL-URI SUPPORTS RESEARCH

As part of its charge, the College of Arts & Letters-Undergraduate Research Initiative (CAL-URI) provides workshop support for students who plan to present their research at UURAF.

Since its inception, CAL-URI has provided financial support for more than 125 undergraduate researchers, including UURAF presenters. Most often, though, undergraduates are invited by Arts and Letters faculty to participate in the faculty member’s research or creative endeavor, although, on occasion, students approach faculty with their own research plans.

The goal of CAL-URI is to partner faculty members and undergraduate students to work together to enhance the research strengths of the College of Arts & Letters. This research spans the diverse programs and foci of the College, and much of it is richly interdisciplinary.

CAL-URI also works to more fully integrate undergraduate research into undergraduate teaching, and is working to offer hybrid programming under the auspices of CAITLAH (Center for Applied Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Arts and Humanities). This programming focuses specifically on experiential and active learning made possible through the engagement of students in research on questions of interest and importance not only to students and faculty, but to society at large. These CAL-URI modules focus on the ways in which faculty learning that results from mentoring undergraduate researchers has influenced undergraduate curriculum and pedagogies.

EXAMPLE RESEARCH PROJECTS

In the 2013 event, students Craig Pearson and Truman Silvasi won a first place grand prize award for their presentation, “Neuroscience of Reading: fMRI Shows Heightened Brain Activation in Close Reading of Jane Austen,” tied to MSU Department of English Professor Dr. Natalie Phillips’ research in the field.

Jill Zelenski, ’13, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in studio art with a specialization in graphic design, won a grand prize for her oral presentation, “Interactive Water Cycle,” and graphic design senior Savanna Boutwell, ’13, won for her oral presentation, “Life & Earth Sciences.” Theatre production senior Peter Martino’s poster session entry, “Dollhouse,” which details Martino’s preparatory work as a research assistant for MSU Department of Theatre Chair Kirk Domer for a creative internship with Stages Repertory Theatre in Houston, Texas, won a grand prize, as did Christina Scales’ poster, “Participatory Memory.”

“Participatory Memory” examines the ways in which everyday people memorialize events outside of officially sanctioned observations, adding their own imprint to these spaces. And John Sheets and Kyle Latack won the grand prize award for their poster session entry, “Sleeping-Bag As a Bag for Sleeping or a Bag that Is Sleeping? How Native and Non-native Speakers Use Prosody to Disambiguate Compounds and Phrases.”

As for College of Arts and Letters student presenters at the 2012 UURAF, two examples of Grand Prize winning projects include:

1.) 517*theory Research Project

Area residents have likely noticed the proliferation of graffiti art on Washington Street in downtown Lansing, just south of the capitol building. The 517*theory Project is a group of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty studying the impact of graffiti art, using the recent Deluxe Inn graffiti project as a case for analysis.
The research team met regularly at CAL’s Creativity Exploratory, and produced UURAF presentations, presentations for international conferences, and manuscript publications. Questions the research team addressed included:

- What’s the difference between “civil disobedience” and “civic disobedience”?
- How might we situate and read graffiti as public rhetoric?
- Who gets to label, name, and claim art?
- How does exclusion happen through high theoretical forms or approaches or philosophies toward “art”? How do vernacular practices rupture or enter into this?
- What sort of “driver” is graffiti as a street, city, area, etc., shifts from an industrial to a creative economy?

2.) *The CATA Project*

To better explore the disconnect between the residents of East Lansing and Lansing, then-junior and professional writing major Kathryn Palczewski, then-sophomore and art education major Chelsea Kirksey, and five volunteers, embarked on a mission to create a documentary titled “The CATA Project.”

Palczewski and Kirksey, two of the first five Creativity Exploratory Fellows, and their team interviewed and videotaped about 30 bus riders at the CATA Transportation Center in downtown Lansing, using equipment provided by the College of Arts & Letters Creativity Exploratory (C.E.).

The two then presented the documentary and results of their research at UURAF in April 2012, and, through additional showings of their documentary, hope to help unite area residents by showing CATA riders that they aren’t that different from one another.

**PRESENTATIONS OPEN TO ALL**

The suggested dress for UURAF is business or business casual. When not presenting, UURAF participants are encouraged to attend other oral and poster presentations at the forum. Faculty, mentors, friends, and family are also encouraged to attend.