

# URCA

## Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities

Volume 6, Issue 1

Fall 2014



*URCA Assistants Joseph Gackstetter and Maudie Knicley hard at work in Dr. Holt's Lab*



*URCA Assistant Joseph Gackstetter*



*URCA Assistant Maudie Knicley*

### **For More Information:**

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## WHAT IS URCA?

URCA is a program designed to get undergraduate students more involved in research and creative activities. There are two ways in which students can participate in URCA: as Associates and as Assistants.

**Associates:** These are year-long positions in which a student designs his or her own research or creative activity project and then works with a mentor to see it through. Associates are required to attend monthly meetings and to present their scholarly work at the Spring Symposium. Associates earn a stipend and can also receive money for project-related equipment and travel. Only a maximum of 10 students are accepted into this program each year.

**Assistants:** These are semester-long positions in which students assist faculty with their research or creative activities. Up to 80 students each semester receive a stipend for being Assistants; however, each semester several students also participate as unpaid Assistants. It is also possible for Assistants to earn course credit for their participation.

### **Featured Assistants: Joseph Gackstetter & Maudie Knicley**

**Mentor:** Dr. Julie Zimmerman Holt, Department of Anthropology

Since January of 2013, senior Anthropology major Joseph Gackstetter has been acting as an URCA Research Assistant analyzing artifacts under the mentorship of Dr. Julie Holt. The first several semesters of Joseph's research experience were spent analyzing lithic artifacts collected by the Archaeology Field School from the Gerhing site on campus. Since joining the team this semester, sophomore Anthropology major Maudie Knicley has been training to analyze similar lithic artifacts. Although most of these artifacts are impossible to date, the contexts from which they were recovered mostly date to the Middle Woodland and Mississippian periods, which respectively are about 1,000 - 2,000 years ago.

Dr. Holt had this to say about her Assistants and the URCA Program: "The lab experience Joseph and Maudie are gaining will be invaluable to them as they continue forward in archaeology, whether that be to pursue a career in museum work, which is Joseph's goal, or to pursue a career in cultural resource management, which is Maudie's goal. Regardless of what career avenues they ultimately choose, thanks to the support of the URCA program, Joseph and Maudie are gaining research experience rarely available to undergraduate students in anthropology."

### **Program Assessment Data:**

97% of students and faculty rated their URCA experiences as Outstanding or Good  
98% of student participants said they would recommend URCA to another student



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### **Featured Associate:** Nasir Almasri

*Mentor:* Dr. Denise DeGarmo, Department of Political Science



*URCA Associate  
Nasir Almasri*

For his URCA project, Nasir is concentrating on the United States' level of global power compared to other countries. The project is focused around what exactly impacts the United States' ability to remain one of the most powerful nations in the world and which other nations, if any, might challenge the United States' status. Not only is Nasir an active and promising URCA Associate, he also serves as SIUE's Student Body President. Nasir offered this metaphor when asked about how his duties as Student Body President relate to his research interest: "I have to see exactly how the student body (one country) can balance its power with the faculty, staff, and administration (other countries). I suppose the campus could serve as a version of the International System and each of the constituencies are strong countries! It helps me understand how groups within a system act, react, and interact." Upon graduation, Nasir plans on applying to doctoral programs in International Politics. He says he is open to working in government and policy but has every intention of returning to academia and teaching at some point in his career. Nasir had this to say about his URCA experience: "I am unbelievably grateful for the opportunities URCA has provided me. URCA has allowed me to gain experience in the fields that I hope to participate in sometime in the future and it has allowed me to showcase my skills to premier graduate programs around the country."

### **Historical first for the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature!**

Congratulations to URCA Assistant Brian Massie, whose paper entitled "Ethnic Divide and Armed Conflict: Struggle and Development through the Eyes of a Child" has been accepted for publication and is scheduled to appear in *Visions and Revisions VII*. According to his mentor, Dr. Carolina Rocha, associate professor in Spanish, "Brian was in a unique position to undertake the analysis of two films. His first-hand knowledge of Peruvian culture was a springboard to understand issues of ethnicity and class division that are prevalent in these films." This is especially exciting for the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature as Brian has the distinction of being the first URCA student in the department whose work has been accepted for publication. Congratulations to Brian Massie, Dr. Carolina Rocha, and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature!!



*Dr. Carolina Rocha*

### **Benefits of URCA Last a Lifetime**

Congratulations to Dr. Ken Moffett, an Associate Professor of Political Science who, with the help of URCA Assistants, has recently had two papers accepted for publication! According to Dr. Moffett, his previous URCA Assistants (Daniel Mead, Eric Lupardus, and Mark Rosenkoetter) were influential in the development of these projects. The contributions that Mark Rosenkoetter and Eric Lupardus made were part of a paper that was presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Recently, a revised version of that paper was accepted for publication in *Party Politics*. In addition, the contributions that Daniel Mead made were part of a paper that was presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. A revised version of this paper was also accepted for publication in *Congress and the Presidency*. Congratulations to Dr. Moffett, Daniel Mead, Eric Lupardus, Mark Rosenkoetter, and the Department of Political Science for these awesome accomplishments!



*Dr. Ken Moffett*