

## 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 with faculty led 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.



## URCA Student Assistant Directs Opera Scenes

**Dr. Marc Schapman** and **Zora Vredevel** (of the SIUE Music Department) have been working on their fall production for the Opera Scenes Program. Zora is the Assistant Director of the production and has been working on getting props, costumes and set pieces for the show. As a lifelong performer, she is excited to finally get to see what happens behind the scenes. These scenes are Halloween-themed, featuring witchcraft and ghosts. Vocalists from the Music Department will be the highlight of the production. Dr. Schapman and Zora 's work was featured in the Edwardsville Intelligencer! [http://www.theintelligencer.com/local\\_news/article\\_60788e80-8406-11e6-b157-2f57ac6fa39a.html](http://www.theintelligencer.com/local_news/article_60788e80-8406-11e6-b157-2f57ac6fa39a.html) Says long-time mentor Dr. Schapman, "The URCA program gives students experiences that they would not receive in a typical classroom setting. It enables them to understand the application of the knowledge they are learning. It is amazing to see students take on these leaderships roles, and how their peers respond. The benefits of the program are contagious to all of the students in our program."



## Recent Outcomes

- Congratulations to **Dr. Kim Carter** of Social Work and her URCA Assistants, **Victoria Greer** and **Savannah Bounds**, for having their work accepted for poster presentation at The Council for Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting in November!
- Congratulations to **Dr. Dave Duvemell** of the Biology Department and his URCA students, **Amanda Markovich** (Associate) and **Tessa England** (Assistant), for presenting their research at the St. Louis Ecology, Evolution and Conservation event this September!
- The URCA program would like to recognize **Dr. Thad Meeks** of the Psychology Department and his former URCA Assistants, **Nikki Hurley** and **Krista Sheets**, for being co-authors on a poster that will be presented at the Society for Teaching of Psychology's 15th Annual Conference in October!

## Featured Associate: Sarah O'Brien

Mentor: Dr. Aimee Howard



Sarah's project is "Drawing with Metal: Revival of Inlay Techniques." Inlay is a surface technique that implements a different material into a base. She is exploring eight different types of inlay and making sample tiles of each. Afterwards, she will create three vessels that integrate at least two of the techniques. After graduation, she plans to go to graduate school for her Master of Fine Arts. When asked what she liked about URCA, Sarah said, "The URCA program is such an amazing opportunity to build my portfolio and CV. So far my experience with URCA has been wonderful. I'm currently gathering materials and research." She has started on her first sample tiles and said they are going great. She cannot wait to see the end products in April!

## Featured Assistants: Oren Pincock and Eric Wolfe

Mentor: Dr. Gunes Ercal



Oren Pincock



Eric Wolfe

Dr. Ercal's URCA lab is focused on analyzing massive network datasets. Among other duties, her Assistants input information, run algorithms and visually present the information in graphs.

- One of her URCA Assistants, Oren Pincock, is interested in road network data. Oren is applying Dr. Ercal's VAT algorithm to the California road network to see how accurately it sorts the state into different cities. He is also seeing if the algorithm can filter out "nonsense," which includes "back roads in the middle of nowhere." When asked what he liked about URCA, Oren said, "URCA is great because it's flexible. I get to pursue a topic I choose, investigate it in my way, and am given access to university resources to achieve that goal. It gives me the freedom to stretch my legs, so to speak."
- Dr. Ercal's other URCA Assistant, Eric Wolfe, is interested in social and communication networks. For example, after someone tweets something on Twitter, he could run an algorithm to see how many other people will retweet it. He wants to use the research to build more resilient networks and study social media. His favorite thing about URCA is that it gives students opportunities to research topics in which they are interested with dedicated professors. He really enjoys that the research he is doing is new and popular in the field.
- When Dr. Ercal was asked what she liked about URCA, she said, "I love URCA! I have had awesome students work with me. All of my URCA students have been a pleasure to work with. Interacting and mentoring such highly motivated, intellectually curious, and talented students is extremely rewarding. I hope that working with me also benefits the students in unique ways, as the URCA program is also a special opportunity for the students involved."