



URCA

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities

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Fall 2018

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.

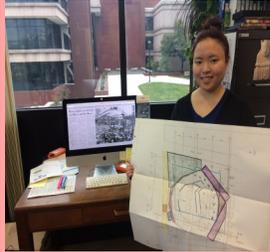
Associates: These are year-long positions in which a student designs his or her own research or creative activity project and then works with a mentor to see it through. Associates are required to attend monthly meetings and to present their scholarly work at the Spring Symposium. Associates earn a stipend 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 90 students each semester receive stipends 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 Assistant Jenna Heng Helps to Build Rose Theatre Archive

Mentor: Dr. Johanna Schmitz, Theater and Dance

Jenna Heng, sophomore Theater and Dance and English Language and Literature major, has made a significant contribution to the progress of the development of the Rose Theatre Archive (1989-present). The Rose playhouse stood in London from 1587 to about 1605, just across Maid Lane from The Globe. It fell out of use after 1605 and disappeared from living memory until 1989, when it was found during routine site clearing for the construction of a new office building. This archive is a collection of primary and secondary sources that will preserve the story of the discovery of the Rose, the public protests that saved it from being destroyed by new construction, and the thirty-year effort to complete its excavation and create a new public access to the site. So far Jenna has helped to capture social media accounts dating from 2009 to the present, scanned original documents into various digital formats, has learned how to create metadata to label these documents, and has recently started the "Friends of the Rose" collection to chronicle the activities of the volunteer organization that helps keep the doors open to the public at this Scheduled Ancient Monument. Soon she will be creating a spreadsheet to determine not only what is in the archive, but also what is NOT in the archive so that researchers can better understand not only the contents of the collection but also material that is yet to be found. During the first two months of the semester, the archive has grown from 1,695 items to over 2,500, a clear indicator of how URCA students help scholars at SIUE gain momentum in their research efforts.



*URCA Assistant
Jenna Heng*



*URCA Assistant
Jenna Heng is a
Provost Scholar
and in the Honor's
Program.*

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"I have gained valuable life experience from the URCA program that I would not have learned in the classroom."

- URCA Associate
Paige Niepoetter



URCA Team
Dr. Walter Siganga
and his son Thomas
Siganga.

"The most enjoyable part about working with an URCA Assistant is that I get to work with someone outside my field, and often they have never worked on a research project."

-Dr. Walter Siganga

Featured Associate: Paige Niepoetter

Mentor: [Dr. Chaya Gopalan](#) Applied Health, Primary Care and Health Systems Nursing Departments

Paige's URCA project is called "Determination of Physical and Mental Exhaustion with Ketogenic and Intermittent Fasting Diets in Normal and Obese Rats." The project investigates two popular diets: the ketogenic diet and the intermittent fasting diet. The study assesses fatigue by doing various stress, anxiety, and memory tests. This is a preliminary study, and the goal is to eventually evaluate the potential for fatigue associated with the ketogenic and intermittent fasting diets in human subjects.

Paige was an URCA Assistant for 2 years before starting her associate project. She said that her "love for research grew while working on Dr. Gopalan's project." When discussing her project, Paige stated, "I know that dieting can be hard, and people are often concerned about not having energy while on diets. While the data on weight loss effects is vastly available for most diets, there are no studies that involve mental exhaustion on the ketogenic and intermittent fasting diets. I decided to center my project around the exhaustive effects of these diets in order to potentially encourage those suffering from obesity to engage in these diets and aid their overall health."

Paige also mentioned that "I have had a wonderful experience with the URCA program, both as an assistant and associate. I would encourage anyone who is thinking about participating to go for it! I would also like to thank my research professor, Dr. Chaya Gopalan, for always encouraging me and pushing me farther than I ever thought I could go with research."

Paige plans to apply to medical school after graduation with the hope of becoming a surgical oncologist.

Featured Assistant: Thomas Siganga

Mentor: [Dr. Walter Siganga](#), School of Pharmacy

This Father-Son team designed a survey that was sent to pharmacists asking for feedback regarding their Continuing Education needs in order to improve existing and plan new programs coming from the SIUE School of Pharmacy. Regarding this process, Thomas says, "I am learning about the preparations for survey research along with the coding of data which occurs after getting the survey results. "

"My main reason for trying out the URCA program as a freshman was to learn something new that may be beneficial for my future. My favorite part so far has been learning programs such as SPSS, which is a program for statistical analysis which makes the data easier to organize, and Qualtrics, which was used to prepare the questionnaire. The research program has been a worthwhile experience. I love how manageable time is with URCA. Even with classes I am still able to fit in research and get a lot done. URCA has been a good experience and I am glad it is something SIUE offers. I like how manageable URCA is along with how it still teaches me new things."

Thomas is a computer science major who is also involved with the SIUE orchestra, club tennis, game development club, and the autonomous robotics club. His father could not be more proud!