

What is URCA?

URCA is a program designed to get undergraduate students more involved in research and creative activities.



Associate

Year-long positions in which a student designs his/her own research or creative activity project and then works with a mentor to see it through.

Required to attend monthly meetings and to present their scholarly work at the Spring Symposium.

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.

Assistant

Semester-long positions in which students assist faculty with their research or creative activities.

Not required to attend monthly meetings or present their work.

Up to 90 students each semester may receive a stipend; however, each semester several students also participate as unpaid Assistants.

Possible to earn course credit for participation.



Mentor: Ms. Kathryn Bentley

Department: Theater & Art

Associate professor and head of Performance, Kathryn Bentley, has been a part of the URCA program for awhile and has consistently applied to be a mentor for the past 10 years! She thinks it is an amazing opportunity to allow faculty members to work closely with students on research and creative activities. She states, “to see the work that the students develop in just a semester is always gratifying.”

In the Spring of 2023, Leanna Lewis had the opportunity to assist Professor Bentley in a creative activity by co-directing the Black Theatre Workshop with Joshalyynn Gibson. Leanna and Joshalyynn worked on the production *Shades of Blackness: A Celebration of Black Joy*, which showcases the essence of Black Joy beyond the historical trauma. Professor Bentley helped guide the students in directing and organizing a cohesive script. The cast was full of talented artists where students composed dance and music! There has been a total of five performances at SIUE and an additional shortened performance at Lewis and Clark. Leanna reports that her favorite part was getting to know all the cast members— “we were all able to really connect and just be ourselves to the fullest.”

Leanna has been a part of the URCA program twice and has found it to be an enriching experience. Leanna states, “I love that you get to collaborate with a professor on a hands-on project. You get a tap into their process and learn how to build your own for the future. This program is something that I would encourage other students to apply for.”

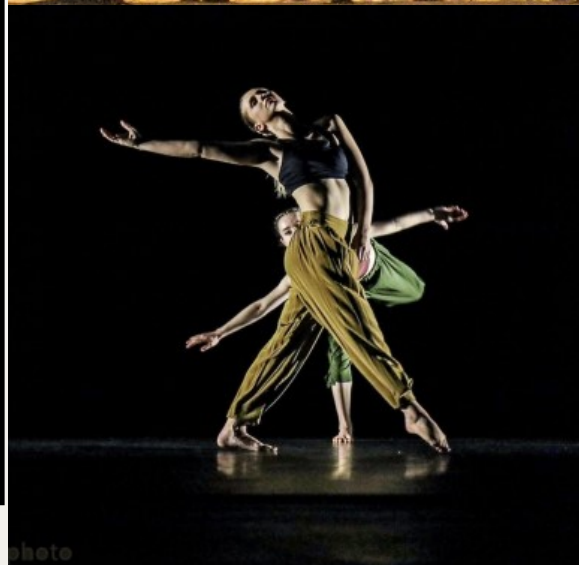
Mentor: Mrs. Kristin Best-Kinscherff

Department: Theater & Art

Associate professor and head of Theater and Dance, Kristin Best-Kinscherff, enjoys the URCA program because “it allows students to explore an activity outside their normal routine.” She has “always had eager students that are excited about our projects!”

Kristin Best-Kinscherff has been working with Ali Hay for two semesters now helping with the social media attraction for the Theater and Dance Department. This has consisted of making flyers for events, research-based projects, or planning outreach programs. In the Spring of 2023, a series of outreach programs were designed for elementary students and for senior citizens. This included short dances that involved participation from the audience while sitting. They have done one performance and plan to perform at Eden Village Retirement Center in the near future. Additionally, Ali has been working on her senior project, which is choreographing a dance for the Student Dance Concert including six dancers. Her project was inspired by “the differences between the left and right hemispheres of the brain and my [Ali’s] choreography was created to match the energy for those differences” she stated. Kristin has helped Ali with opportunities to create and showcase her work along with observing leadership positions.

Ali has found URCA to be a very helpful experience! Ali states her “experience with URCA thus far has been so helpful to me and for my future as far as learning how marketing works for the field that I am going into, helping alongside choreographers in rehearsals, and being able to spend time on creating something with the assistance and suggestions from Kristin.”



URCA Assistant: Leanna Lewis

“After graduation, I am going back home to Chicago. I will continue to take dance classes, audition for different choreography and performance opportunities, and further my studies in forensic sciences. I am involved in SIUE's University Dance Company which does performances within the community and St. Louis. I am the secretary of the University Dance Organization. Despite my busy dance schedule for company and semester concerts, I was able to perform in one musical and three student-led theatre performances in the last three semesters.

URCA Assistant: Ali Hay

“I have been dancing since the age of thirteen and have been in love with it ever since. Here at SIUE, I am a member of the University Dance Company as well as the University Dance Organization. My favorite style of dance is modern because I love all of the different techniques within that style. After graduation, I plan to dance for as long as I can and hopefully I will one day be a part of a professional dance company in the St. Louis area.”

