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. Typically 15-25 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. Assistants are not required to attend monthly meetings or present their work. Up to 100 students each semester may 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.

Dr. Kristine Hildebrandt Receives a CAREER Grant

Dr. Kristine Hildebrandt has a passion for languages - a passion that has recently been recognized by the National Science Foundation in the form of a CAREER grant. This is the first time a CAREER grant has been awarded to a professor at SIUE, and it is a 5 year grant that is designed to help a professor establish oneself within his/her field. Dr. Hildebrandt, along with her collaborators Dr. Jessica Krim from the Department of Curriculum & Instruction and Dr. Shunfu Hu from the Department of Geography, will use this grant to research, document, analyze and archive four specific tribal languages in the Manang District of Nepal: Manange, Gurung, Gyalsumdo, and Nar-Phu.

As a linguistics professor, Dr. Hildebrandt is not only interested in the specific speech sounds and grammatical structure of each language, but also the views that the speakers have about their native language. Some of these diverse languages in Nepal are thriving while others are dying out, and Dr. Hildebrandt is interested to understand why. This summer, she will travel to Nepal to begin her research, which will include recording variations in speech sounds between different languages, and interviewing native speakers.

After Dr. Hildebrandt returns from Nepal in the fall, she plans to include URCA students in her research. They will be trained to transcribe and digitize all of the data she collected while in Nepal and work to create an online digital atlas that will document Manange, Gurung, Gyalsumdo, and Nar-Phu and where each language is natively spoken. Eventually Dr. Hildebrandt mentioned that she would like to include her URCA students in her summer travels to Nepal. She stated that it would be a good experience for undergraduate students to “see the world through their eyes.”

Dr. Hildebrandt has been a URCA Assistant mentor for the past two years and by including undergraduate researchers in this research is exemplifying the goal of the URCA program through - to provide undergraduate students with an opportunity to participate in research and creative activity projects that will allow them additional experiences and knowledge they may not learn in the classroom.

Congratulations, Dr. Hildebrandt!
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Featured Associate: Leah Wallace (English Language & Literature)
Dr. Nancy Ruff, Mentor

Leah’s URCA project is titled “Uncovering the Truth: The Power of Corrupt Authorities in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales.” Throughout the year, she had been accepted to present her research at numerous conferences including the Mid America Medieval Conference and the 21st Annual Undergraduate Conference on English Language and Literature. Congratulations, Leah!

Featured Assistant: Lauren Winchester (Social Work)
Dr. Hsin-hsin Huang, Mentor

“My assistant is the BEST help I have ever had. Efficient, reliable, and insightful. A big help!”
- Dr. Huang

URCA Award Winners

Congratulations to our Spring 2012 URCA Award Winners!!

Vaughn Vandegrift URCA Research Mentor of the Semester
Dr. Hsin-hsin Huang, Social Work

URCA Research Assistant of the Semester
Rosey Morr, Psychology

URCA Creative Activities Mentor of the Semester
Dr. Carolina Rocha, Foreign Languages & Literature

URCA Creative Activities Assistant of the Semester
Kayla Hays, English Language & Literature