The Psychology Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research provides networking opportunities, activities, and resources to assist psychology administrators, faculty members, students, practitioners, and others in advancing undergraduate research.

Chair: Karen L. Gunther (Wabash College)

Newsletter Team: Amy M. Buddie (Kennesaw State University) &
Tsu-Ming Chiang (Georgia College & State University)

Greetings from the Chair

Greetings CUR Psychology members!   I hope you have had restorative summers and are excited to engage in research with your students during the upcoming year.

In our fall newsletter, we introduce one of our new division representatives (Chris Dabbs) and we offer some teaching tips.   In addition, we are putting out the call for applications for the student research/travel award (due November 1), and encouraging any of you who would like to get more involved with the division to nominate yourselves to be divisional representatives (call for nominations opens October 15).   Our MidCareer Mentor Awards are given every other year – look for a call for this next fall.

Please let me know if there is an activity that you would like the division to engage in (guntherk@wabash.edu).   We welcome any teaching/research tips that you would like to share in our spring newsletter!

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and are inspired by what our psychology colleagues and their students are doing.

Karen L. Gunther
CUR Psychology Division Chair
Professor of Psychology
Wabash College

2024-2025 Psychology Undergraduate Student Research or Presentation Awards

The CUR Psychology Division will again be offering a limited number of awards for student research or for travel to conferences for students to present their research. Each award will be limited to not more than $400.

The application deadline this year is November 1. We will let you know by December 1 if you are one of the award recipients. We look forward to learning about your research!

Last year's winners say…
- "I learned how to leverage source code material to implement innovative forms of analysis! I've been delving into textbooks that provide in-depth explanations of code structure and the necessary files required to execute the code. I see this as crucial in my graduate studies by allowing me to remain flexible to the possible ways of analyzing data." (Matthew Bazan, University of Georgia)
- "The hardest component of my research project was getting the literature review together. Whenever doing something new for the first time, especially in academics and research, it can be difficult to know where to begin. … With the help of my research mentor, Dr. Amber Shipherd, I gained the necessary instruction and expertise on how to use past literature to my advantage." (Daimien Josiah Campos, Texas A&M University, Kingsville)
- "This project has propelled my career goals. My goal before entering my undergraduate degree was to go to graduate school to become a clinical psychologist. As a first-generation student, I was not aware of what this entailed, but I knew where I wanted to be. This experience has allowed me to become better equipped for what graduate school has to offer in terms of the research process." (Carmen Ford, Georgia Southern University)
- "I found networking at the SPSP [Society for Personality and Social Psychology] conference to be a little out of my comfort zone. With that said, talking about my research was much easier than expected—it was as if I was speaking with kindred spirits about something that we both found fascinating." (Lakota Wall, Southwestern University)

See the CUR website for more details on how to apply:
https://www.cur.org/membership-community/divisions/psychology-division/divisions-psychology-student-awards/

Welcome New Psychology Division Representatives! Chris Dabbs is highlighted here. Chrysalis Wright was profiled in our spring newsletter. There are openings for new representatives to join the Psychology Division. Watch for calls from the CUR National Office to nominate yourself to join us. Nominations open October 15.

Chris Dabbs, Valparaiso University

I work at Valparaiso University, an independent Lutheran university consisting of five colleges. My college, the College of Arts and Sciences, supports the University's liberal arts curriculum.

I am a counseling psychologist by training. Counseling psychology, confusingly, is a subfield of psychology and not counseling (it lives alongside the other two subfields of health service psychology: clinical and school). What makes counseling psychology unique is its focus on the ways human ecology impacts mental wellness and our focus on multiculturalism. Counseling psychology was born out of the soup that was the vocational guidance movements of the 1940s, the rise in focus on psychometrics in clinical care, and disagreement with the medical model of understanding mental distress. 80 years later, and here we are!

I like to think that I've always been a researcher or, at least, empirically-minded. My mom jokes that my incessant 'whys' growing up were annoying, but now my incessant 'whys' pay my bills! The first teacher I remember kindling my researcher fires was Mrs. Hogan, my middle school science teacher at Lake Ridge Middle School in my hometown of Gary, IN. My first "formal" or "academic" experience in research came during my undergraduate education at Wabash College, particularly within the courses for my psychology major.

I started mentoring undergraduate research during my Ph.D. at Oklahoma State University within the research lab I co-founded with a cohort member and friend, Dr. Barrett Williams. After establishing our lab under the supervision of our doctoral advisor, Dr. Carrie Winterowd, I began recruiting undergraduate students from the undergraduate courses I was teaching. From there, I continued mentoring undergrad researchers during my first academic appointment at Knox College. At Knox, I mentored students in my own research lab, the [Clinical Research in Identity and Belief](#) (CRIB) lab, and I mentored psychology seniors' capstone research projects. Today, in my position at Valparaiso University, CRIB lab has evolved to include undergraduate and graduate student researchers, former students of mine who have maintained participation post-graduation, and academic and clinical affiliate contributors. Valparaiso University maintains an endowed scholarship in psychology and religion, the

[Nelson Scholarship](#), which provides students with a monetary award and the opportunity to work with me on a psychology of religion and spirituality research project.

What excites me about mentoring undergraduate research? I'm a big 'ideas guy,' and I am consistently astonished at the interesting ideas my undergraduate students bring to the table. Their ideas are serviced by their drive: many of my current students are some of the most hard-working people, not just students, that I have ever had the pleasure of working with. They are open-minded, flexible, and dedicated. When my knowledge becomes *our* knowledge--when their knowledge becomes *our* knowledge--that is the main fuel for our community building. This may be a hot take (or maybe not, given our audience here), but few things bring me more occupational joy than the research I do with undergraduate students.

Teaching Tip 1: Establishing Shared Goals in Undergraduate Research
Marcus Leppanen, University of Mary Washington

For many undergraduate students new to research, the experience can oftentimes feel like a class where they are trying to memorize new content. What they do not always notice is that they are learning a new set of research skills. At the beginning of each new research project, I create a document with my students of our shared goals for what we want to accomplish/learn that year. That document serves two purposes: 1) it helps students see that they are working on skills more than just learning new content and 2) it helps me to make sure that I am meeting their needs. While there are skills that we know our students need to be good researchers, we do not always know which skills they want to focus on growing. Periodically throughout the year, we will go back to the document to see whether we are meeting our goals or not. This process helps students to see how the tasks we do in the lab have helped to develop those skills and to come up with plans to work on the skills we have not gotten to yet. While there are many practical reasons to track goals in this way, there are also subjectively important outcomes like more student buy-in on the project and investment in the tasks they are asked to do.

Teaching Tip 2: Using Copilot, a Generative AI Tool, in a CURE
Sara Goodman, St. John Fisher University

Students in my CURE course have worked in teams to design and conduct their own research. To facilitate the brainstorming and idea-formation phase of their projects, we've been learning to effectively use generative AI tools like Microsoft Copilot. When I first introduced the idea of using generative AI to students, they were surprisingly apprehensive. They had all heard really strong messaging about generative AI as a potential violation of academic integrity policies, and were missing the opportunity to learn to use it as a powerful tool.

We started the semester with a conversation about 1) the value of AI as a tool rather than a liability, 2) the best kinds of tasks to use these tools for, and 3) considerations to make about where information goes when it's entered into an AI platform. Our institution's license agreement with Microsoft makes Copilot a safe resource for students to use, so as a class, we decided we were comfortable using it as a tool.

Then, we learned about writing effective AI prompts. There are many resources available to guide users through the process of writing specific, useful requests. (Like many institutions, our university's Center for Innovation and Teaching Excellence has a great toolkit for this, but a quick Google search will generate some helpful hints as well). One particularly useful strategy is to specify what the AI tool should act as, or what kind of expertise it should inhabit as it processes a request. For example, "Act as a researcher with expertise in the intersection between technology use and classroom learning." I demonstrated how to use Copilot to generate a list of topically specific research ideas, select one, and request elaboration. Then, students had an opportunity to test it out on their own. Most teams ultimately used Copilot to help them brainstorm a list of ideas, and whittle the list down to the most viable options. As a result, the five teams who are enrolled in this CURE have generated and pursued entirely unique, inventive studies.

As we've progressed through the semester, students have opted to use Copilot for a variety of different tasks and have learned to exercise discretion when they do. They're thinking carefully about the costs and benefits of sharing information with these generative AI interfaces, and are finding some creative ways to improve the quality of their work.

A Few Tips:

- Set some ground rules. When is it okay to use AI tools for class, and when should students avoid it?
    - For example: "Generative AI can be used to generate ideas and to revise or edit original written work. It should not be used to generate the first draft of original writing."
- Have a conversation about students' current understanding of AI tools.
- Learn how to use AI tools effectively so you can teach your students to write useful prompts.
- Demonstrate the use of AI tools in class, narrating your rationale for how you're using them. Work through a few iterations so students can observe how the tool can respond to additional requests for modification.