



Board Ready

What it Takes to Lead with CUR

Serving on the CUR Board means shaping the future of undergraduate research, guiding strategic decisions, and ensuring the organization remains responsive, inclusive, and impactful. Board members bring a combination of vision, expertise, and collaborative skills. They help CUR anticipate trends, support its community, and advance its mission. This guide outlines the strengths, capabilities, and expectations that enable board members to lead effectively and sustain CUR's long-term success.



CUR offered me the guidance to lead my organization, at this point, from an organization where people were establishing offices to mature ways of thinking of undergraduate research as a high impact practice. They gave me a network of people, men + women across the country, that I learned from and worked with to be able to think of not only what we were doing as an institutions but think nationally about the model of undergraduate research."



*Bethany Usher, PhD
Radford University
CUR President 2023-2024*



Role + Responsibilities

Set Strategic Direction: Guide CUR's mission and vision, shaping long-term goals and anticipating external changes in higher education, research, and nonprofits.

Provide Governance Oversight: Uphold fiduciary duties of care, loyalty, and obedience; ensure CUR's financial sustainability and compliance with policies and bylaws.

Serve as Ambassadors: Represent CUR and the value of undergraduate research to members, administrators, funders, policymakers, and the broader community.

Collaborate Across CUR: Engage within CUR's leadership model - while the Board sets the goals, staff and volunteers work together to shape the best ways to achieve them.

Engage in Foresight Planning + Future Readiness: Identify trends, risks, and opportunities to make certain CUR remains nimble, inclusive, and relevant in a changing landscape.

Strengths + Capabilities

CUR operates in a dynamic and evolving environment, where strong leadership is vital to sustaining the organization's impact and shaping the future of undergraduate research. Candidates for the CUR Board of Directors should demonstrate the following strengths and capabilities, enabling them to help guide CUR's mission and support its community.

Strength + Capability	What it Looks Like
Strategic + Forward Thinking	Anticipates external shifts; contributes to long-term planning; comfortable with ambiguity and future-focused decision-making.
Governance, Policy, + Nonprofit Expertise	Upholds nonprofit fiduciary duties; ensures financial stewardship; acts wholly on behalf of CUR, setting aside personal or institutional agendas. Familiarity with board and leadership development within nonprofit organizations.
Ambassadorship + Advocacy	Promotes CUR's mission; champions the value of undergraduate research; builds connections with external stakeholders.
Collaboration + Partnership	Works together effectively through collaborative team building with the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, National Office staff, and CUR volunteer bodies; builds relationships across disciplines, institutions, and sectors; aligns efforts toward common goals.
Decision-Making + Integrity	Engages in courageous conversations; respects diverse viewpoints; commits to evidence-based, mission-driven decisions; adheres to CUR's code of conduct, confidentiality, and other volunteer policies.
Community Building	Champions a forward-thinking, inclusive future; anticipates the evolving needs of the undergraduate research community; promotes equitable access; and ensures CUR's governance is prepared to support and shape the community ahead.
Leadership Development	Demonstrates commitment to growth in nonprofit leadership and foresight; adapts to change; mentors and supports future CUR leaders.
Engagement + Accountability	Prepares for and participates fully in Board activities; follows through on commitments; models transparency, responsibility, and accountability.

Time + Engagement Expectations

Serving on the CUR Board of Directors requires a meaningful commitment of time, talent, and expertise. Prospective Board members should have the capacity to dedicate the necessary time to their responsibilities and the support of their employer to fulfill this commitment.

- Attend 5–6 Board meetings per year: four (or five) virtual meetings lasting 3 hours each, and one in-person meeting lasting 1.5 days.
- Prepare for meetings by reviewing materials and engaging in strategic discussions.
- Participate actively in CUR’s strategic initiatives, task forces, and Board working groups.
- Represent CUR externally through advocacy, outreach, and partnerships, as appropriate.
- Dedicate time to reflection, foresight, and decision-making that support CUR’s long-term sustainability and impact.

On average, a Board Director can expect to spend about 5 hours per month on CUR Board-related activities. Board Officers in the Presidential Line may spend 2–5 hours per week, with increased responsibility and time commitment during the year of service as President.



CUR Core Values

CUR is committed to fostering a culture that models our core values. We actively work to create an environment where all members feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute to CUR as we work together to influence undergraduate research in higher education. We strive to lead the profession by example, embedding our values into our programs, offerings, events, practices, processes, policies, and relationships, while continuously learning and adapting to better serve our organization, our members and advance our vision and mission.

Excellence: CUR strives for excellence in all of its work.

Respect and integrity: CUR values respect and integrity in all interactions.

Flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation: CUR values flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation in its implementation.

Recognizing and valuing differences: CUR recognizes and values differences in its community.

Strategic Plan: CUR TWENTY•30

The organization’s strategic plan for advancing the undergraduate research community outlines three key goal areas that guide CUR’s work, support member growth, and elevate the impact of undergraduate research nationwide.

Empowering the Undergraduate Research Community: Fostering professional growth, collaboration, and long-term impact of CUR members.

Driving Excellence and Innovation in Undergraduate Research: Ensuring institutions use CUR resources to achieve excellence aligned with their mission.

Elevating Undergraduate Research: Ensuring the value of undergraduate research is recognized and leveraged by stakeholders, institutions, and policymakers.

Board members play a key role in ensuring that governance, foresight, and strategic decisions align with these goals, advancing CUR’s mission.

