

Student participation in an undergraduate RSCA culture at UW-RF: SURSCA in its third year.

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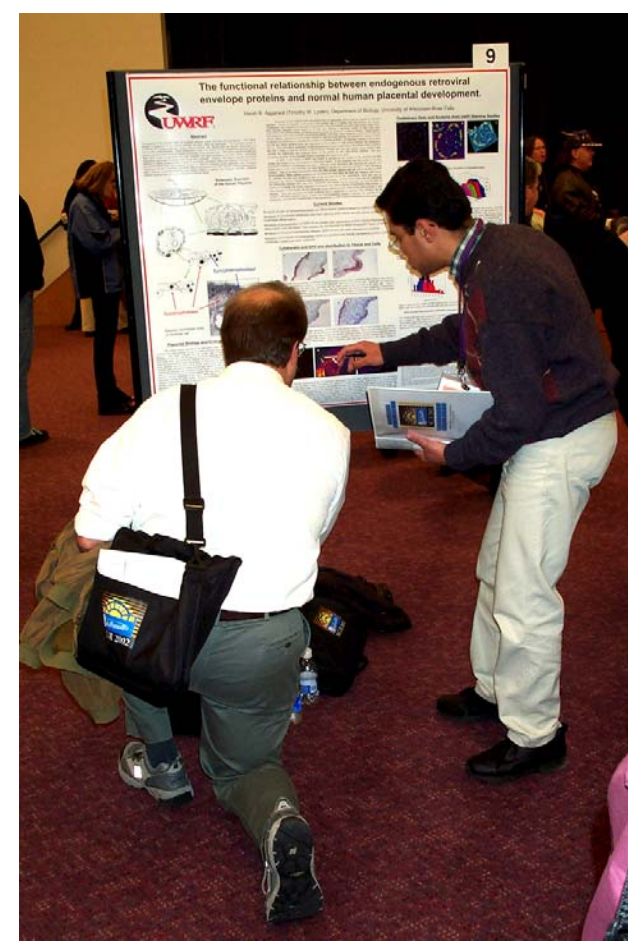
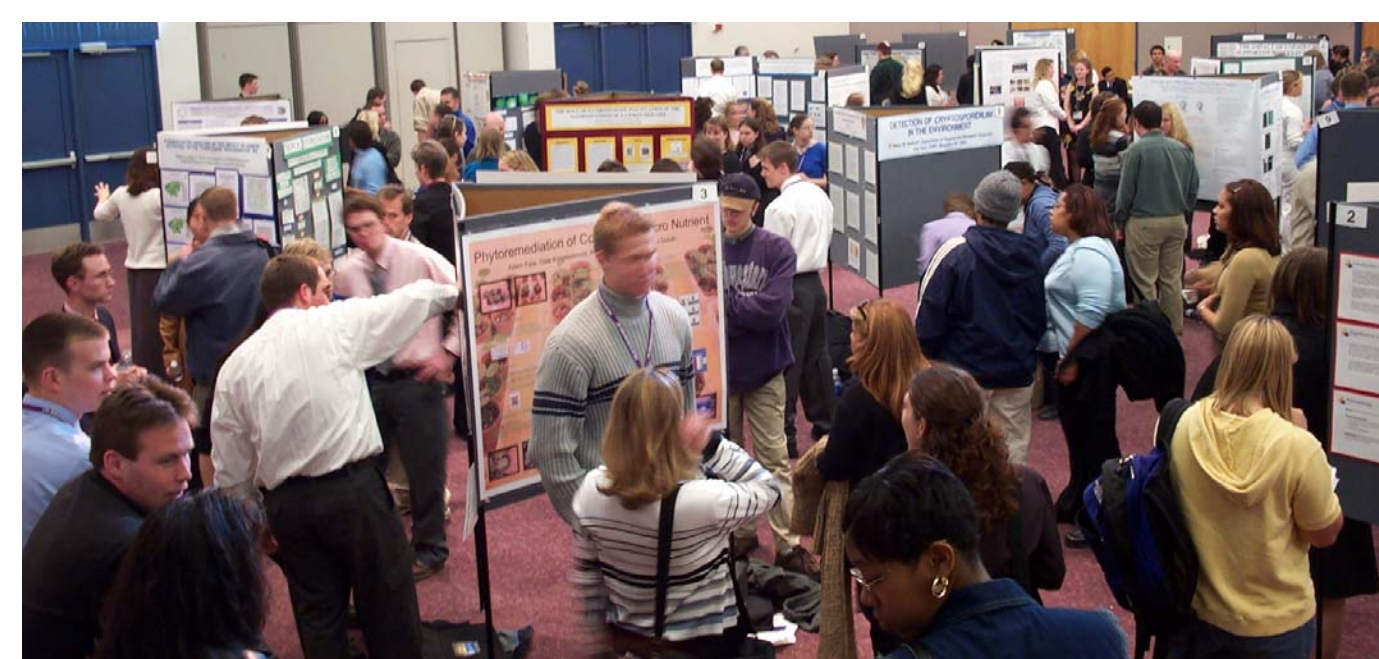
Abstract

Although our institution has embraced the concept of undergraduate "research, scholarly and creative activities" for many years, little progress was made in developing an RSCA culture until 2002. During that year, UWRF sponsored the travel of some 35 students and faculty to NCUR. As a direct result of our student's experience at UW-Whitewater, a new student organization was founded to support the enhancement of RSCA throughout our campus community. Several students, together with interested faculty and administrators formed the "Society for Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities". The group quickly established a campus-wide "Fall Evening Event" to showcase scholarship, built a website and worked to secure continued funding and support from the institutional administration. In part as a result of SURSCA's efforts, UWRF has continued to field approximately 30 students at each of the following NCUR meetings. In the spring of 2004, we were very proud to welcome a sister group into existence as a chapter of SURSCA opened at UW-LaCrosse. By supporting and assisting in the founding of SURSCA, UWRF has provided it's students with a direct investment in the future development of their own scholarly community and fostered wider understanding of and appreciation for an undergraduate RSCA culture.

NCUR 2002, birthplace of SURSCA



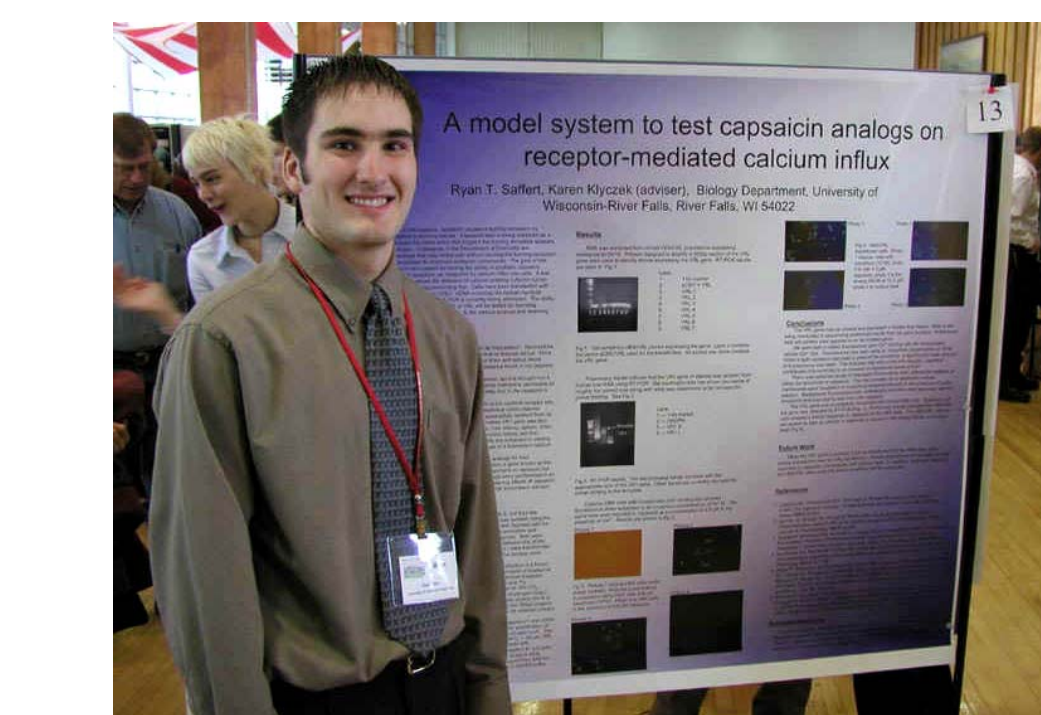
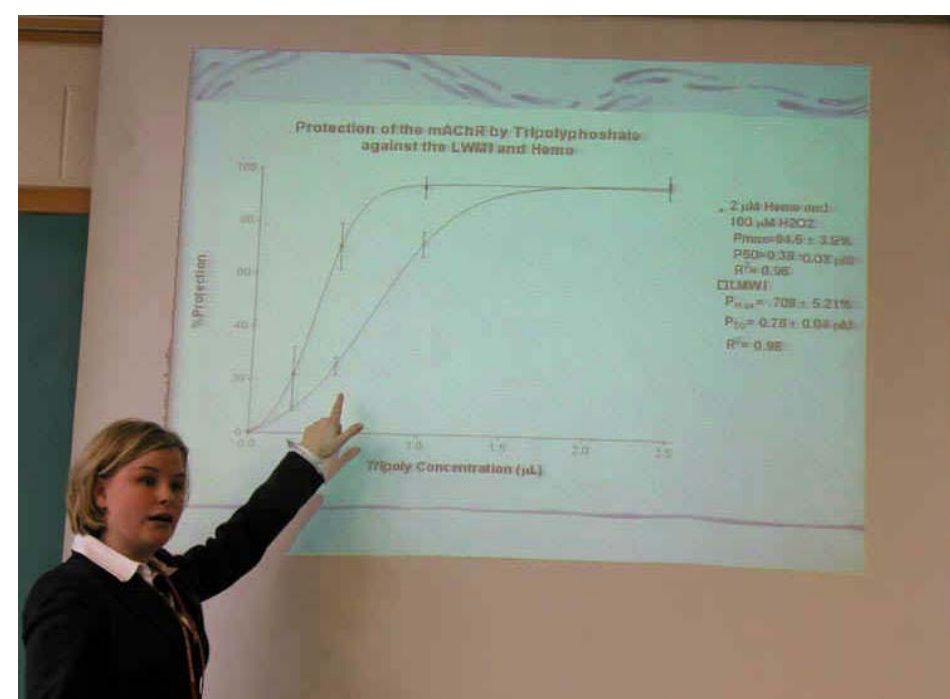
In Spring of 2002, UWRF sent about 30 students to our first NCUR meeting. The primary impetus behind our participation that year was location, UW-Whitewater was an easy drive from UWRF and so we could field a large contingent. This proved to be fortuitous on several fronts, including the generation of a "critical mass" of students with a keen interest in RSCA. This meeting also correlated with a new influx of faculty interested in undergraduate "research" and a new administrative team who recognized both the value and trend toward RSCA as an enhancement to more traditional methods of teaching. The confluence of these interests sparked the imagination and drive of the students who attended and lead to the formation of SURSCA over lunch the second day. By that afternoon the group had it's founding officer corps and faculty advisor in place.



NCUR 2003, success in the mountains.



After a successful first year which saw the first "RSCA Gala Evening" in the Fall, we struggled to ensure funding for a repeat attendance from UWRF at NCUR 2003. Our goal was to get about the same number of students to Utah as we had to Whitewater. It was with considerable pride that we managed to field 28 students and covered all their expenses except meals. This, despite a significant state budget crisis, clearly reflected the strong commitment of the campus administration to our efforts.



**Society for Undergraduate
Research, Scholarly and
Creative Activities**

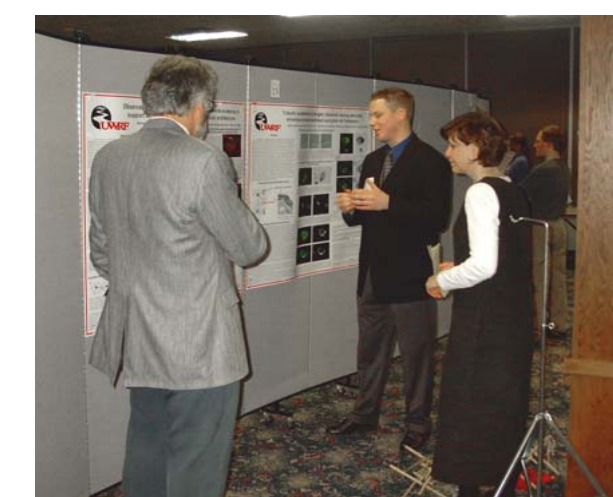
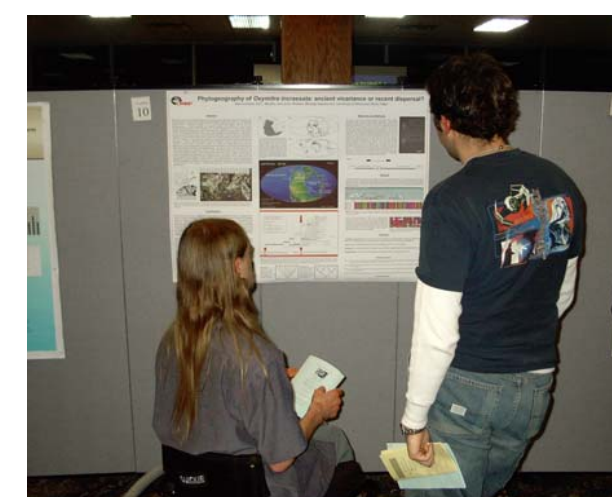
A Brief History, 2002-2005.

In the spring of 2002, approximately 39 UWRF students from many different fields and academic disciplines attended the Nation Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) meeting held at UW-Whitewater. These students did a fantastic job in presenting their scholarly activities to colleagues from across the nation with 48 states represented and some 2500 students, faculty and administrators participating. In all cases, the presentations were well received and the students were given wide acclaim for the quality of their work and the professionalism of their presentations. As a direct result of this collective experience, a number of these students together with Dr. William Campbell, Dr. Tim Lyden and Dr. David Rusterholz, decided to form an organization to support UWRF student participation in future meetings (both NCUR and others) as well as to help foster a positive campus environment for research, scholarly and creative activities. Dr. Lyden agreed to serve as Faculty advisor and Dr. Campbell as an administrative advisor to the new group. Following an organizational meeting and the drafting of a constitution, the Society for Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities (SURSCA) was recognized on May 15, 2002 by the Student Organizations Committee as an official member of the UWRF community. During the summer of 2002 several meetings and discussions took place to begin planning future activities and to help maintain the momentum of this important student effort.

Fall of 2002 saw the first formal SURSCA group meetings with some 20-25 students and interested faculty in attendance. At the first of these a rough structure was established and the first officers chosen. These were: Ryan Saffert, President; Harsh Aggarwal, Vice-President; Clay Carlson and Jeremy King, Finance Officers and Niti Aggarwal, Communications Officer. At that first meeting a name was also selected for the group and the concept of the Fall "Evening Gala of RSCA" was chosen for our first major activity. Planning and organization continued and the first "Gala" was held in November of 2002. This event was well attended, with about 12 presenters including representatives of biology, chemistry, psychology, social sciences and computer sciences. The arts were also represented with sculpture, pottery, paintings and jewelry on display. Dr. Ginny Coombs, Provost of UWRF presented the officers with Certificates of Appreciation for their efforts. Approximately 35-40 people attended this first "Evening Gala Event" and a tradition was born.

In the Spring of 2003, SURSCA spearheaded the effort to send 28 students to NCUR 2003 in Salt Lake City, Utah. A significant number of these presenters and attendees were also McNair Scholars program participants. Despite the logistical and financial challenges of sending such a large group so far from River Falls, the trip was a resounding success and our students again received broad acclaim for their work. This group included large numbers of students from Biology and the other Sciences represented in CAS, as well as a large contingent of students from CAFES. Both poster and oral presentations were made in fields ranging from advanced cell biology to livestock management and social psychology. Following NCUR, SURSCA students played a significant role in the 2003 UWRF RSCA Day and UW System RSCA Day. The year ended with new officers and a well earned pizza party.

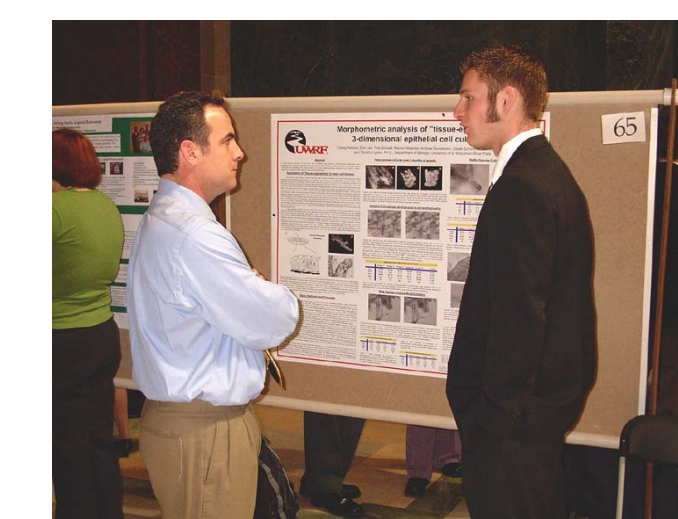
"Gala Evenings of RSCA": 2002, 2003 and 2004.



On the evening of November 12, 2003, SURSCA hosted the second annual "Gala Evening of RSCA" in the River Room of Rodli Commons. This event showcased the creative activities of students throughout the campus community. Scientific research ranged from the structural biology of cells to feeding habits of various wild populations and analysis of human cultural patterns and social fabric. In addition to classic forms of "research" a wide range of other "scholarly and creative activities" including some 25 individual pieces of artwork were presented as well. Also present were examples of photojournalism and graphic arts. All together, there were some 34 presenters.

A short program was presented in which several people associated with SURSCA spoke. This began with Chris Knoop, the president of SURSCA, addressing an audience of approximately 75 people who attended the event. Chris reflected on his own experiences conducting undergraduate research, presenting his work at both local and national meetings and told his collected fellow students that such experiences have changed him and helped to make him much more competitive for graduate school. In his reflections, Chris pointed out that the quality of UWRF RSCA has been recognized and complimented by students, faculty and administrators from around the country during national meetings. Chris also introduced, Dr. William Campbell, Grants Director of UWRF and co-founder of the organization who spoke about the importance of undergraduate RSCA and about the unique history of UWRF SURSCA. Dr. Campbell introduced Dr. Ginny Coombs, UWRF Provost, who spoke about the impact of RSCA on the campus and the need to showcase the breadth of activities which are part of our campus culture. She then presented current SURSCA officers with certificates of appreciation. Dr. Coombs was followed by Dr. Ann Lydecker, UWRF Chancellor, who addressed the audience about the growth of awareness of RSCA both on and off our campus. She made the point that awareness of the depth and breadth of RSCA on our campus enhances the community's view of UWRF. She also pointed out that our efforts in this regard have even been recognized by the UW-Madison Chancellor at a recent System Regents meeting. Dr. Lydecker thanked and congratulated all of the students, faculty and administrators who participate in this collaborative effort to enhance the RSCA culture here at UWRF. The program of speakers concluded with Dr. Tim Lyden, SURSCA Faculty Advisor, who echoed the points made by all the other speakers and added his thanks to fellow Biology Department faculty members who contributed to the success of the evening. He also reminded everyone that the successes so far are only the start of our efforts with the deadline for NCUR 2004 fast approaching. The evening concluded with an hour-long "poster-session" in which both presenters and attendees engaged in lively discussions of the RSCA being shown. With 34 presentations and 75 people attending, the evening was another resounding success and a great kickoff event for RSCA during the 2003-04 academic year.

UWRF at "Posters in the Rotunda", 2004 and 2005



These photos show UWRF students in action at the state capital in Madison during the "Posters in the Rotunda" events in 2004 and 2005. Above the van arrive in 2004 and the contingent views the scene from above (middle). And what a view that was (right). During the program, SURSCA Officer Mike Salmela spoke on behalf of all UW undergraduates. In 2005, our students and faculty presented 6 posters (right corner and center). In the center frames, our student becomes the teacher for this state senator as he explains some of the work being done in biology at UWRF.

In the spring of 2004, approximately 27 UWRF students attended NCUR 2004 in Indianapolis, Indiana with both oral and poster presentations by individuals and groups from biology, chemistry, psychology, several social sciences, political science and mathematics. Once again the students had a transformative professional experience learning how to present and gaining an understanding of where they fit into the national picture within their own fields. Many faculty and administrators commented positively about the number of students UWRF had sent and the quality of the work being done here. In addition to the students, Drs. Campbell, Lyden and Coombs presented a poster about the development of SURSCA at this meeting which was very well received and which eventually lead to the creation of a new SURSCA chapter at UW LaCrosse. Once again, a student from that institution was so impacted by the NCUR experience that when he read our poster about SURSCA, he decided to copy our model and initiated a group for his campus. Needless to say, we provided all the help we could and within a month our sister-organization had it's first meeting. Upon return from NCUR 2004, members of UWRF SURSCA also participated in the campus RSCA Day and the State meeting which was held in Oskosh that year. Once again, the campus RSCA-Day grew in participation and attendance during 2004.

Also in the in the Spring of 2004, the UW System sponsored it's first ever "Posters-in-the-Rotunda" which showcased work from many of the campuses including UWRF. Several members of SURSCA presented their research at this event, however the most significant part of the day was the fact that our Financial Officer, Mike Salmela was asked to give the keynote speech for the day. Mike represented all UW undergraduate students in thanking the legislature and governor for their support of undergraduate education and research. Together with our posters, UWRF and SURSCA made a big impact on the state of Wisconsin that day. The year ended with selection of new officers for 2004-05 and a date set for the third Gala event.

In the Fall of 2005, the third annual "Gala" event was held with record numbers of presenters and attendees. More than 38 posters and pieces of art as well as musical pieces were presented in mid-November. Approximately 80 people attended this event including many faculty members from a number of disciplines across campus. The current President, Megan Theed spoke on behalf of SURSCA and echoed the sentiments of her two predecessors concerning the value of the organization and it's impact on the campus as a whole. Dr. Virgil Nylander, UWRF Interim Chancellor, addressed the audience about the changes that have taken place on campus throughout his 36 years in the community and how very impressive the RSCA of today is within that historical context.

In the Spring of 2005, SURSCA was again at the forefront of a whirlwind of meetings and events. In early April, UWRF again participated in the "Rotunda event" at the State capital with 6 posters representing biological, political science and social science research conducted by our students. This event was followed by NCUR 2005 in Lexington, Virginia where UWRF managed to field the 4th largest contingent of student presentations in the country (after the host schools). SURSCA members played prominent roles among the 42 UWRF students and 6 faculty/staff members. Officially, there were 250 schools in attendance with some 1768 presentations and 35 of those were from UWRF. As with each of the previous NCUR meetings, faculty and administrators from across the country commented extremely favorably about our presentations and quality of our students, not to mention the size of our contingent.

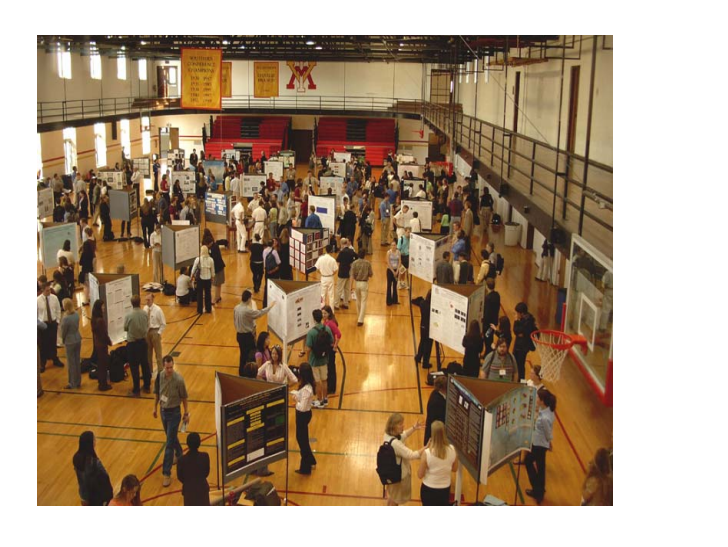
NCUR 2004 and 2005, the successes just keep coming!!!!



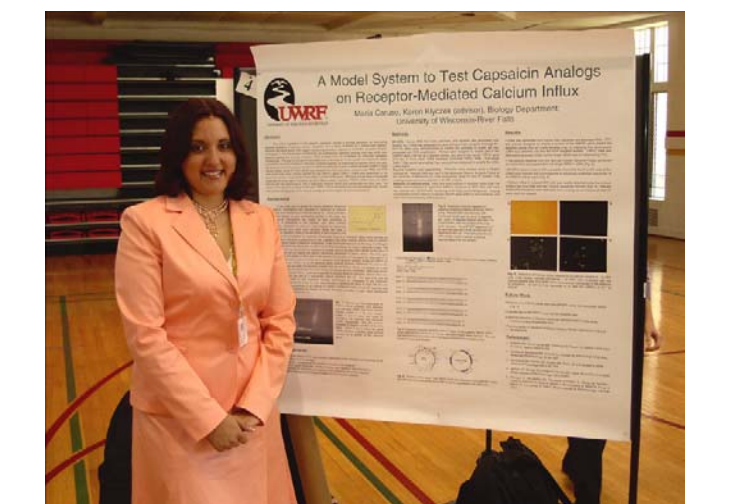
NCUR 2004, one of three vanloads leaving UWRF



NCUR 2005, SURSCA President meets the VMI cadets (upper left), one of 8 poster sessions (upper right), UWRF students present their work (below).



NCUR 2005, one of three travel groups heading home from VMI.



Acknowledgements

The students, faculty and administrators involved in creating and fostering SURSCA would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of the entire administrative team at UWRF. Without their help and support this effort would not be the success that it is today. This is particularly true for one of the co-authors of this poster, Dr. Ginny Coombs (Provost) who has consistently backed our efforts with the resources of her office. In addition, we would like to specially acknowledge the help, assistance and support of our late chancellor Ann Lydecker. Without both these people SURSCA would not exist today. Thank you.