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 formed 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 its students with a direct investment in the future development of their own scholarly creativity and fostered wider understanding of and appreciation for an undergraduate RSCA culture.

A Brief History, 2002-2005.

In the spring of 2002, approximately 30 students attended NCUR 2002 in Salt Lake City, Utah. A significant number of these students 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 on the topics of agriculture, 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.


On the evening of November 12, 2003, SURSCA hosted the second annual “Gala Evening of RSCA” in the River Room of Rodd Commons. This event showcased the creative activities of students throughout the campus community. Scientific posters and oral talks were displayed about the rich diversity of biological and social sciences at UWRF, including various wild populations and analysis of human cultural patterns and social fabric. In addition to classic forms of “research” we had a wide range of other “scholarly and creative activities” including some 25 individual pieces of artwork were also presented. Also present were examples of photomontage and graphic arts. Altogether there were 34 presentations.

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 will make them more competitive for graduate school. In his reflections, Chris pointed out that the quality of SURSCA RSCA has been recognized and complemented by students, faculty, and administration of both UWRF and the larger River Falls campus community.

Dr. Ann Lydecker, UWRF Chancellor, who addressed the audience about the growth of awareness 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. NCUR 2005, one of three travel groups heading home from NCUR 2005, SURSCA President presents the VM badges (upper left), 10 poster sessions (upper right, UWRF students present their work, posters are shown).