



# **SIUE'S URCA Program Recognizes Faculty Mentors and Student Researchers**

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EDWARDSVILLE – Each semester, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) program recognizes excellent faculty mentorship and student work through four awards.

The fall 2019 Vaughn Vandegrift URCA Research Mentor of the Semester Award was presented to Darron Luesse, PhD, assistant chair and associate professor of the Department of Biological Sciences.

Jane Barrow, head of the painting program in the Department of Art and Design, earned the URCA Creative Activities Mentor of the Semester Award.

URCA students Henry Schilling, of Alton, and Haley Inyart, of Belleville, were also recognized for their phenomenal work. Schilling, a senior psychology major, received the Research Assistant of the Semester Award. Inyart, a senior drawing major, earned the Creative Activities Assistant of the Semester Award.



The URCA program provides opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research and creative activities under a faculty advisor. At the introductory level, URCA assistants work on faculty-led research and creative activities to gain hands-on experience throughout various disciplines. URCA associates work one-on-one with faculty mentors to develop their own projects by honing their research and technical skills under professional guidance.

“All URCA assistant faculty members have to ‘try out’ each semester, and it is not uncommon to receive well over 120 faculty applications for around 90 funded positions,” said Laura Pawlow, PhD, URCA coordinator and professor in the Department of Psychology. “Those who make it are excellent mentors and dedicated to helping their students achieve specific learning outcomes. To be recognized within this fantastic pool as an award winner is incredibly noteworthy.”

URCA student Kyle Warnecke nominated Luesse for instilling a research environment fostered by curiosity, encouragement and determination for his students.

“I feel incredibly fortunate to have an URCA faculty member like Dr. Luesse,” wrote Warnecke. “He is patient, understanding, and unbelievably knowledgeable. Each time I leave his office, I walk back to the lab confidently, anxiety dissipated and armed with encouragement, determined to try again.”

Art student Sutton Allen nominated Barrow for her unending dedication to all of her students.

“By dedicating herself to her student’s success, Professor Barrow is the kind of professor that propels our entire program forward,” said Allen. “I am sincerely grateful to have the opportunity to invest myself in her work the way she has mine, though it is only for a fraction of the time she has spent on my work.”

As for the students, faculty mentor Elora Voyles, PhD, assistant professor of psychology, describes Schilling as driven, intelligent, and passionate about research. After being approached by Schilling with a developed research idea, Voyles invited him to join her URCA lab to earn credit while conducting his study.

“Going beyond his contributions to lab work, Henry contributes to the development of other students,” said Voyles. “It is clear that other students look to Henry. Given his tenacity, positive attitude, humor and intelligence, it’s not surprising that he is an excellent leader and mentor to other students.”

Since completing his own URCA project, Schilling was promoted to lab manager in Voyles' research lab. As lab manager, he oversees eight other undergraduate students and assists them in coordinating schedules and offers guidance on ideas and proposals for research conferences.

Meanwhile, Inyart's professionalism, breadth of skills, creative inspiration, and ambition all constitute her receipt of the creative activities award according to faculty mentor Brigham Dimick, professor of drawing.

"Haley has proved to be invaluable to me as a talented and efficient assistant, as well as an inspiring co-creator," said Dimick "In fact, it is highly probable that I am learning more from her than she is from me."

Inyart is extremely active in applying to juried exhibitions throughout the country, and her efforts have been rewarded by a long list of exhibitions and awards. Recently, Inyart found an exhibition for her and Dimick to apply as collaborators, whose theme focused on the conversation between the artworks of mentors and their students.

For more information on SIUE'S URCA program, visit [siue.edu/urca](http://siue.edu/urca).

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River's rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of more than 13,000.