2020-21 Annual Report

FOR: DR. MIRIAM SHERIN, ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AND
THE OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL

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2020-2021 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Be ready to feel challenged and supported, that's the best way to grow as a researcher.”

– URAP Student Participant

This year has been marked by three major experiences: 1) the continued adapting to COVID restrictions while trying to keep programs and students thriving, 2) the development and implementation of the three initiatives of the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations (AVDF) grant, and 3) our continued focus, though the OUR Pledge, on social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. While it has been an extremely challenging year, we are proud of the work that we have been able to offer to the University community, particularly undergraduate students.

OUR ran its full slate of grants and programs this year, awarding a record $1,405,490 to students. This increase occurred primarily due to the start of the new Emerging Scholars Program (a $10,000 award) and an expansion of the Undergraduate Research Assistant Program to provide more opportunities for first and second year students. Overall, we funded a total of 492 students, which is actually a decrease from the past two years. However, this decrease can be attributed to expected COVID-related reductions in the Conference Travel Grant and Academic Year URG programs. For example, two years ago we funded 110 Conference Travel Grants, but this year we funded 12. Therefore, when these programs return to previous levels, we anticipate the need for increased budget, particularly when the AVDF grant stops funding the Emerging Scholars Program after 2021-22.

We worked hard to meet our goal of maintaining/expanding advising and outreach even during the pandemic. For the fourth consecutive year, we met with over 1,000 students for a total of over 1,900 individual meetings in 2020-21. Through advising, workshops, and classroom visits/information sessions, we estimate that we reached over half of the Northwestern undergraduate student population with our four full time and one part time staff. We continue to expand our workshop and info session outreach. During this year, we led 94 information sessions (up from 85 last year), 79 workshops (up from 30), 111 class visits (up from 78; does not include sending requested materials to an additional 78 classes), and held 71 drop-in sessions (up from 43). Whether through individual or drop-in advising, OUR staff met with 235 of the 306 Summer URG applicants (77%), the highest total in program history. 81% of Summer URG winners worked with an advisor, including 91% in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. We are proud of dedicated staff efforts, achieved through long hours of focused work – each advisor regularly meets with 10+ students a day before the deadline; each meeting requires the advisor to review a proposal draft.

The combination of advising load and growth in workshops reveal capacity issues for the office. Students need supplemental programming to support their experience after receiving a grant (the focus of some of our AVDF project) at the same time as proposal advising requests continue to expand. Therefore, OUR is undertaking a change in staffing for the coming year. Working closely with Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education Miriam Sherin and Assistant Provost for Administration and Finance Jenny Puchtel, we created a new Education Program Manager position. This role requires curricular expertise to oversee the development and expansion of supplemental programming, which currently exist in an ad hoc array without clear learning objectives. Furthermore, this role will unify the three peer mentor programs that support the existing workshops and research programs. This change will also create more capacity for advisors, as they will not have as many workshop/peer mentor
responsibilities. Currently funded at 12 months, 80% time, this position will oversee all curricular aims for the office. In order to create the new position, we had to relinquish the current Research Workshops Coordinator position. We have recently hired Christina Ginardi to fill the new position, and she will begin on September 1, 2021.

With the AVDF grant, OUR took on three large new projects in the midst of maintaining all of our other work. Peter wrote 11 episodes of the new web series along with 5 podcast episodes. The areas of focus for the scripts came from survey feedback solicited from students on their needs and pain points within the research process. All filming/recording is complete, and we are on track to share all new content publicly at the beginning of the academic year. Megan took the lead on our CIMER adaptation, working with a broad range of internal and external partners in the development of workshop curriculum for arts, humanities, and other non-lab-based research fields. We are piloting the initial workshops currently. Finally, our proudest accomplishment of this year is the start of the Emerging Scholars Program, which focuses on supporting first generation, lower income, and/or students of color. We developed an application and review process, recruited all members of the faculty cohort, and served as student advisors. The outreach and advising proved so successful that we actually expanded the proposed mentee cohort from 7 to 10 in the first year.

2019-2020 GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND REFLECTIONS
In our 2019-20 annual report, we identified three areas of focus; therefore, we want to begin this report reflecting on our progress before we outline our priorities for 2020-21.

Equity and Access:

We reported back quarterly on progress to the stated goals of the OUR Pledge (see appendix). Some notable accomplishments include establishing the new Emerging Scholars Program and working with Center for Native American and Indigenous Research Director and Professor Patty Loew on securing a Northwestern Alumnae Grant to create an indigenous research methodologies web site and resource.

In addition, to address diminished opportunities for remote students last fall, we worked with Associate Provost Miriam Sherin to secure potential additional funding to support an expansion of URAP, particularly seeking to create as many remote opportunities as possible with an intentional focus for first year students. We continued those efforts for Summer URAP as well, leading to the largest number of URAP students in the program’s history. Given the limitations and demands on faculty time this year, we are particularly grateful for faculty support to create these opportunities.

Remote Experiences/Community:

We expanded our workshop and information session offerings this year to try to reach as many students as possible. We held over 170 sessions, an increase of almost 15% using the same staff. Both winter workshop series (Science Research Workshop and the Arts, Humanities, and Social Science Workshops) saw record registrations and their highest retention and success rates, indicating the strength of our remote programming. We expanded engagement with the Undergraduate Research and Arts Exposition, adding six synchronous sessions to our virtual format. We added the inaugural live keynote address by Professor Onnie Rogers, who focused on the
importance and impact of mentoring in research. We had nearly 5,000 visits to the Expo, including 18,333 unique presentation views. We also transitioned 41 Summer URGs (2020) to Academic Year URG for students who weren’t able to complete their projects due to lack of lab access for students, and we expanded our Fletcher Awards for the best URG projects to include a separate award for students and faculty in URAP.

Arthur Vining Davis Foundations Grant Fulfilment:

We made significant progress towards the fulfillment of our AVDF goals: 1) We launched the new Emerging Scholars Program. We recruited 17 faculty from across the University to serve as potential mentors, all of whom conduct research that addresses diversity, inclusion, equity, and/or diversity. We received 36 first year student applications; every single faculty mentor received at least one application from a student. While we had funding for 7 student-faculty pairs, the strength of the application pool and the strong desire of the faculty to work with the students led us to expand the first cohort to 10 student-faculty pairs with OUR budget. 2) Thus far, we have created 9 new workshop activities focused on research within the arts and humanities to add to the publicly available and free *Entering Research* curriculum (CIMERproject.org). We are currently piloting these workshops with the Emerging Scholars Program, and in the fall, they will be released to both on and off campus partners for additional testing and review. We continue to develop more curriculum as well. 3) At this writing, we have completed production of all 11 episodes of the video web series *Semple’s Words* and its partner 5 episode podcast. Peter is working with Stephen Poon, head of Northwestern IT’s Media & Technology Innovation group on post-production (editing, graphics, music, etc.). We are on target to debut the materials on our YouTube page at the start of the academic year.

2021-2022 GOAL SETTING

Given these developments, we propose the following goals for the 2021-2022 year, which will be expanded upon in this report.

Arthur Vining Davis Foundations Grants:

We will work towards the fulfillment of our AVDF goals: 1) Work with the first cohort of Emerging Scholars towards the creation of independent projects, recruit and run cohort two, continue to build sustainable infrastructure for the program, and begin assessment work; 2) continue testing newly created workshop materials and writing new curriculum; and 3) finalize post-production for 11 episodes of video web series and 5 episodes of its podcast and beginning to promote the new resources.

Return to Campus/Equity:

Return to in-person office activities, including advising, outreach, and workshops, while continuing to support the experiences of all students including ones who identify as first generation, lower income, and/or people of color. We plan to advocate for an increase in the Summer URG stipend to make research more accessible for students with financial need. We will hold an all-staff retreat in early September when our two new staff members begin their time. We will use the retreat to re-evaluate and update our social justice objectives for the coming year, and we will report out to the OUR Advisory Council and post it on our website.
Education Program Development:

Our new Education Program Manager will oversee current workshop programs like Finding a Lab/Finding a Faculty Mentor Workshops, URG Summer Skills Workshops, and the winter quarter Science Research and Arts, Humanities, and Social Science Research Workshop programs. In addition, this position will train and run all three peer mentor programs. During the year, this position will also help to bring cohesion to the disparate programs and do a needs assessment leading to the development of new programming.

Undergraduate research at Northwestern continues to thrive. However, we know there is always more work to be done.

“Doing research has also made me fall in love with learning again! I think school can be such a busy time that learning can start getting negative associations with stress, but taking the time to build on my own passions and having the opportunity to learn directly from teachers in the field was such a refreshing experience.” - URG Student
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Arthur Vining Davis Foundations Grant Fulfilment

“I have found myself enjoying the prospect of failure as no longer something to be feared; it allows for the opportunity to explore other ways of thinking about a problem. In some cases, these so-called failures actually lead to greater insight than the initial question that I set out to answer.”
- URG Student

As noted above, we are on track on all three of our AVDF aims, and below are some details around the process/experience thus far:

Web Series: Last summer, we surveyed current students about where they found the most challenges within the undergraduate research experience. We reached out to all current Summer URG and Summer URAP students, and we used this information to put together a list of topics that we wanted episodes to cover. The convention of this project is a talk show, where students come forward with questions about undergrad research which get answered (often in spite of the show’s idiot host). We have 11 total episodes, and they cover the following topics:

1. Intro of core characters and convention of the show
2. Connecting to faculty when feeling imposter syndrome
3. Approaching the complexity of research
4. Needing others (faculty) to tell you what to do and how to learn to make your own decisions
5. Exploring different careers coming from a base interest, i.e. beyond med school
6. Facing fears around making mistakes and time management
7. Refining research questions into something manageable and focusing your ideas
8. Understanding and undertaking creative arts projects
9. Framing experiences if your interests change, i.e. what if I don’t want to go to grad school?
10. Mentoring up and managing challenges with faculty mentors
11. Effectively communicating your findings to others

In addition, we developed 5 podcast episodes using the same characters/convention. While some of this material is purely entertainment, the podcast allowed us to address significant additional content around research ethics. Since student performers contributed to the content the scripts, they were given writing credit along with series director Stephen Poon and Megan Wood.

Entering Research Arts/Humanities Activities: We hired former staff member Tori Larsen as a temp employee to support the adaptation and creation of Arts/Humanities-specific Entering Research activities. Entering Research is a freely available, modular curriculum that can be used to support the development of undergraduate or novice graduate researchers; the activities support seven areas of trainee development and can be selected to create courses of any length. During material development, Tori, Megan, Peter, and Jennah hosted a biweekly writer’s room for feedback and revisions. We met monthly with our collaborators Janet Branchaw and Amanda Butz (WiSCIENCE) who developed the original Entering Research content. The original Entering Research content is aligned with a validated learning assessment survey to evaluate trainee’s learning gains, so we first needed to revise the language in the learning assessment survey (ERLA) to resonate with participants in non-STEM fields (for example, changing “keep detailed research records such as a lab notebook” to “keep detailed notes on your approach and important research materials throughout the process”). Below, please find details of the activity adaptation and where we are in the process.
Final Drafts:
• ERLA Assessment Surveys (for mentors and mentees)
• Research Documentation Process
• Case Study: Research Documentation Process
• Time Management
• Case Study: Overwhelmed
• Aligning Mentor and Mentee Expectations

• Designing a Research Project 1: Exploring Your Interests
• Designing a Research Project 2: Developing a Research Question
• Designing a Research Project 3: Developing a Feasible Research Methodology
• Translating Research to Resume
• Reflecting on Your Mentoring Relationship
• Research Experience Reflections

In Process:
• Seeking and Responding to Feedback
• Identities in the Research Context
• Undergraduate Research Goal Setting
• Critical Reading and Comprehension of Scholarly Work

To Be Developed (2021-2022, tentative list):
• Deconstructing Job Descriptions
• The Informational Interview
• Selecting a Graduate Program
• Job Search Strategies

To Be Adapted (2021-2022, tentative list):
• Designing Poster Presentations
• Presenting Posters
• Introduction to Networking
• Planning for Networking Opportunities
• Your Research Network

As activities are finalized, they will be elevated into a two-part national pilot program. Janet Branchaw and Amanda Butz are managing this aspect of activity development. First, Megan will submit activities into the CIMER Project New Activity portal where they will be reviewed by trained facilitators for feedback on structure and content. After an initial round of minor revisions, we will recruit facilitators to pilot the activities with mentees to validate learning outcomes. Validated activities will ultimately live on the CIMER portal for free, public usage.

Emerging Scholars Program: Working with Kourtney Cockrell and Daviree Velazquez Phillip, Megan and Peter curated a list of potential faculty for the new grant program, focusing on people with an excellent track record as mentors and faculty engaged in research addressing issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, and diversity. We recruited 17 faculty from across Evanston undergraduate schools, and we built a web page for the new program, including a viewbook of the faculty and their research. We promoted the grant through the faculty themselves as well as other partners and our usual communication practices such as our e-newsletter, class visits, and information sessions. Megan worked with NUIT to add the grant to our online application system, and Peter and Megan served as advisors for students interested in applying, reviewing their application materials often multiple times.

We received 36 student applications. The materials were turned over to the faculty for their own review, and they ranked candidates they received. We also asked the strength of their desire to work
with their top student, and it led us to seek to expand the size of the cohort. We had AVDF funding for 7 faculty-student pairs, but we decided to expand it to 10, given the commitment of both the faculty and students to the experience. In addition, if faculty strongly rated their second candidate, we transitioned these unfunded faculty-student pairs into Summer URAP funding if they so desired. In this way, we were able to support 7 additional students in research.

Over the spring, we held orientation meetings with the cohort to help them prepare, i.e. how to find summer housing, etc. Over the summer, we met with the group weekly (8 weeks) with workshops designed and developed by Megan, who led them. The content areas for the workshops were:

1. Aligning Mentor/Mentee Expectations
2. Research Documentation process
3. Time Management
4. Research Self-Efficacy
5. Seeking and Responding to Feedback
6. Research to Resume
7. Critical Reading and Comprehension of Scholarly Articles
8. Undergraduate Research Goal Setting

2021-22 Goals:

- Host a “red carpet” screening event to mark the launch of our promotional efforts for the web series. We will invite the cast members and crew for a discussion session, and we will promote the event to the entire undergraduate community.
- Share the web series content with colleagues/peers through the Big Ten Academic Alliance and the Council of Undergraduate Research.
- Evaluate and assess both the workshop curriculum and the experience of the Emerging Scholars using an IRB-approved assessment plan. We are working with Lisa Davidson from the Searle Center for Advanced Learning and Teaching for this assessment.
- Develop and create additional Entering Research activities. At minimum, we will complete the workshops needed for the full 15-month Emerging Scholars Program experience.
- Segue Cohort One of the Emerging Scholars Program into independent research projects. During the academic year, scholars will work with Peter and Megan to develop a URG-like proposal that will serve the basis of the project conducted during the second summer in the program.
- Recruit, advise, and run a second cohort of Emerging Scholars. We will follow the model developed this past year.

“Personally, I have learned to be more comfortable with the unknown. I have generally been a person who likes when things are orderly and I know what the outcome is going to be, but that is not the research world. Research is all about having a question and working to figure out if you can even find the answer or solution. It is about resilience and adapting to what is thrown at you throughout the process and using that to better yourself and the project.”- URG Student
Return to Campus/Equity

“While engaging in research that spanned from pre-pandemic to nearly post-pandemic, life was not ideal by any means; the unusual circumstances probably helped research to contribute more to my personal development than it would have in a different situation. Dealing not only with content-related problems but also with problems in the actual ability to perform research and handle rapid changes in all aspects of academia, including the oft-forgotten life component, provided a slightly-protected way to learn and practice the life skills needed to thrive in my academic and career future without the relative comfort afforded in undergraduate education.” – URG Student

The OUR model of individual advising continues to greatly benefit students. While we know that undergraduate research can profoundly help students, we also know they have no knowledge of how to get started, develop their own project, and write successful grant proposals. Therefore, we believe it is our responsibility to support students in these areas. We already noted in this report how success rates are impacted by advising, but the benefit goes even deeper. OUR advising is the main entrance point for students to learn more about undergraduate research, regardless of whether they apply to our grant programs or even pursue undergraduate research at all. We work expansively with students exploring how to reach out to faculty, how to explore their own ideas, etc., in addition to feedback on grant proposals. This dual focus can be seen in our website, which underwent a complete overhaul late last summer. We rewrote major sections on helping students get started, and we reformatted the annotated sample grant section to improve student use. We intend to continue with this dual focus moving forward. There are, however, some limitations to what we can offer. For example, we do not offer proposal review for students applying to programs that we do not run (i.e. if a student applies to a WCAS summer grant, OUR advising cannot read and offer comments on their proposal drafts). There are two reasons for this choice. First, we do not have insight on the standards and decision process of other programs, so we do not want to be in the position of offering advice that may be true for our review process but not true for other programs. Second, we do not have the capacity to support all other programs. As a small staff, we don’t have the ability to support other unit’s programming. Instead, we send students to our online resources, like our sample grant proposals and proposal writing guide, and we encourage them to work closely with their faculty mentors. While we would be open to offering such support down the line, it would require a direct partnership with the unit, including addressing our capacity concerns.

As previously mentioned, we reached record highs with our outreach this past year. We held over 100 workshops, with nearly 1,500 students attending. In addition to the info sessions, drop-in hours, and classroom interactions, staff held over 285 meetings with external collaborators, largely other Northwestern units. We also held almost 150 meetings directly related to the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations grant, and over 300 internal OUR meetings, including grant review committee decision meetings. Taken all together, staff participated in well over 1,200 meetings in support of our undergraduate research mission.

We believe undergraduate research is an achievable objective for all interested students, and we seek to support all students, particularly ones with less experience or background knowledge. Towards this goal, Jennah Thompson-Vasquez offered weekly drop-in office hours with targeted advertising through Multicultural Student Affairs, Student Enrichment Services, and student group listservs.
We do not ask demographic information of any students in their applications, as it is not a factor used by the review committees to determine awards. However, we assess how well we are serving different student identities. The Office of Institutional Research analyzes our application and award data by cross referencing student demographic data; they generate a report indicating participation and success rates across racial/ethnic groups, first generation status, and financial need. We summarize the results here, with the full data available in the appendix to this report. While we did assess Conference Travel Grant and Undergraduate Language Grant demographics, we are not including the results in this report as COVID impacted the applicant pool of these competitions so significantly, we do not feel that the data are actionable at this point.

We will start with our flagship Undergraduate Research Grant programs. In terms of participation, we are looking for whether students across various groups are applying to programs at least at levels proportional to their size of the undergraduate population (see Appendix, “Student Applications by Demographic” and compare each grant column to the NU Population column). For Academic Year URGs, the applicant pool mimics the student body demographics fairly closely. High financial need students (demonstrated by both Pell-eligibility and financial need ratings of 4 and 5) apply at rates above their student body representation. However, for Summer URGs, applicant representation drops slightly for Black, Hispanic, and Pell-eligible students. Anecdotally, we know the current stipend rate of $3,500 is a limiting factor for high financial need students who can earn more money in minimum wage jobs working from home. This problem increases when a student’s area of research requires an on-campus presence because money has to be used towards rent and cannot be saved.

For URAP, Asian students are significantly overrepresented as applicants, while the rest of the applicant demographics largely mimic the student body. In our Emerging Scholars program, which we target advertising for first generation, lower income, and/or students of color, we see overrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, multi-racial, first-gen, and students with high financial need scores, suggesting our targeted advertising is skewing the applicant pool as intended.

Next, it is important to assess how each of these demographic groups perform relative to the overall success rate of the program (see Appendix, “Student Success by Demographic”). This data can only be interpreted in context of the starting applicant pool representation. For these data, please compare each success rate to the top row (Grant Success Rate) to see how each demographic group fared relative to the overall program rate. For Academic Year URGs, Black, Hispanic, and multi-racial students have success rates exceeding the average success rate, while there is a significant decrease in success rate for Asian and non-resident alien students. For Summer URGs, the success rate for Asian students is still below average, and the success rate for Black students also drops. The success rate for Asian students across both URG programs is particularly concerning, given their slight overrepresentation in the applicant pool. Interestingly, high financial need students succeed strongly with Summer URGs despite low representation in the initial applicant pool.

For our getting started programs, Black students are extremely successful for both Academic Year URAP and Emerging Scholars, and first gen students have increased success rates across all of these programs. Pell-eligible students have decreased success across all of these programs, though it is also influenced by low applications from Pell-eligible students to Academic Year URAP and Emerging Scholars.
Taken together, this data outlines areas for increased outreach for OUR in the coming year. While Asian Americans are applying above their population but succeeding at lower rates, we will focus on increasing their use of advising, as it is a best way to improve student success. For Pell-eligible students, we need to do more to help them discover and apply to the programs, and then we can work to make sure they utilize advising to improve their success rate. We will work with incoming Outreach Coordinator Diamond Jones on developing strategies to better reach and serve these students.

Overall, as we move back to on-campus experiences, OUR pledges to seek out student voices and needs as we make decisions around outreach and programming, particularly through the use of the 10 students serving on our 27 member Advisory Council. We aim to meet the new and evolving needs of the undergraduate population, paying particular attention to first and second year students who have been experiencing remote education for an extended period of time and have less connections to campus life.

2021-22 Goals

- **Increase the SURG summer stipend.** For two years, we have been working to increase the summer stipend, but due to the budget crisis and COVID, it has not been approved; however, we are committed to working to increase it for the coming summer, as it is an issue of equity. We do not want students with high needs to be dissuaded from participation. Although it is $3,500 stipend for 8 weeks of full-time work not formally paid as hourly wages, Summer URGs essentially work out to $10.94/hour. From conversations with students, we know that students who need to use the summer to make money will choose a minimum wage job over a Summer URG.

- **Establish a strategic plan to address gaps in participation and success rates, particularly for first generation and Asian American students.** We will work with our new Outreach Coordinator Diamond Jones and Education Program Manager Christina Ginardi to establish a plan and build relationships with relevant student groups.

- **Explore ways to support non-traditional Northwestern students, such as those students in the Northwestern Prison Education Program and student in the School of Professional Studies.** We are in conversations with program and school leaders to develop collaborations to introduce and support student engagement with research.

- **Increase engagement and foster deeper collaborations between the Northwestern Undergraduate Research Journal (NURJ) and OUR.** Peter has just been named NURJ co-faculty advisor with Medill’s Patti Wolter. NURJ’s finances will be managed by Peter and Tori.

“I learned a lot about making research more equitable and anti-racist this quarter. Within the Child Language Lab, I am part of a team called the Anti-Racist Equitable Assessment group, in which we review methodology and assessments that we are currently using with participants and discuss any revisions they might need to become more equitable. In my time on this team, I have learned a lot about the current problems with assessments and conducting research in general, as many assessments are created with WEIRD samples in mind. Having these conversations has made me realize how important anti-racism work is in research, which has affected my career plans in the sense that the future labs I work in will have to have the same awareness and commitment to anti-racism in their work.” – URG Student
Education Program Development

“This project taught me a lot about time management, balancing personal life and responsibilities with my academic work, and patience. I think that I had a hard time, in the beginning, managing my time and energy between this project and my commitments to myself, my family, and my community, which took me away from this project. However, I learned to be able to balance my responsibilities with those family, friends, and community with the commitment I made to this project. That was very difficult for me, but it was an important learning experience. This project also helped me to develop a stronger connection to my own heritage and spirituality. I was also able to broaden my community through the connections I gained through this project and that is an important area of my own personal development and growth due to this project.” – URG Student

Workshop Offerings

As experienced across academia, we saw a significant increase in attendance at virtual workshops and information sessions compared to pre-COVID in-person programming. For example, our Finding a Faculty Mentor/Finding a Lab workshops would normally bring in half a dozen students or less on average; however, this year we averaged nearly 20 students, with some sessions holding 30+ students. These sessions also support more tailored one-on-one student advising because participants have deeper, more focused conversations about their undergraduate research goals and challenges in subsequent advising meetings.

It is difficult to project the future actions of students for 2021-22 since students had no choice but to attend virtually this past year. Will they prefer in-person experiences to another Zoom event, or will they continue to like to not have to travel to attend sessions? We will offer multiple formats to determine student behavior. In general, the format will be based on the type of material being offered. If it is intended to be collaborative, then we will favor in-person presentations; whereas if it primarily consists of information sharing, then we will offer virtual presentations. It will be part of the new Education Program Manager’s position to evaluate the experiences and offer future recommendations as the year develops.

Taken all together, OUR regularly offers 15 different workshops:

- **Finding a Faculty Mentor**: Students learn how to search for faculty, how to identify potential research mentors, and how to communicate effectively with the mentors they identify *(held every other week during the academic year).*
- **Finding a Lab Mentor**: Students learn how to search for labs, how to identify potential research mentors, and how to communicate effectively with the mentors they identify *(held every other week during the academic year).*
- **URAP Information Session**: Students learn about URAP (funding goals, application process, expectations) and how to find a URAP faculty mentor *(held 2-3 times before each faculty deadline).*
- **URAP Application Workshop**: Students learn how to write a cover letter and tailor a resume for a URAP job posting. For students applying to open job searches, attending one of these workshops can increase their chances of being selected as an RA *(held 2-3 times before each student deadline).*
• **URAP Onboarding Workshop**: Students who were selected as URAP RAs learn how to navigate the payroll process (Personal Data Form, tax forms, I9), how to use and troubleshoot Kronos, and learn about other OUR programs *(held 3-4 times after each deadline)*.

• **Circumnavigators Grant Info Session**: Students learn about the Circumnavigator Grant and how to apply *(held 2 times in fall quarter)*.

• **Undergraduate Language Grant Info Session**: Students learn about the application process and timeline, FAQs, and an overview of grant expectations *(held 3-4 times in fall/winter quarters)*.

• **Research Workshops Info Session**: Students learn about SRW and AHSS *(held 3-4 times in fall quarter)*.

• **Science Research Workshops (SRW)**: Students learn how to adapt to work in a lab and gain support applying for a Summer URG *(series with 8 sessions in winter quarter)*.

• **Arts, Humanities, and Social Science Research Workshops (AHSS)**: Students learn how to develop their own independent research or creative arts projects and gain support applying for a Summer URG *(series with 8 sessions in winter quarter)*.

• **Summer Opportunities Workshops**: Students learn about summer grant opportunities through OUR (Summer URG, ULG, Summer URAP, CTG) *(held 5-6 times in fall/winter quarters)*.

• **Expo Oral Presentation Workshops**: Mandatory two-part series for oral presenters where they get feedback on draft presentations of their talks, focusing on performance/communication issues *(14-15 sessions in spring quarter)*.

• **Expo Poster Presentation Workshops**: Students learn to put together a research poster and/or get feedback on their presentation *(held 3-5 times in spring quarter)*.

• **Summer Skills Workshops**: Mandatory for Summer URG winners to help them prepare for the research experience and to meet their peer mentor *(held 8-10 times in spring quarter)*.

• **Emerging Scholars Program Summer Workshops**: Mandatory personal and professional development workshops designed to help scholars gain confidence and skills as they learn to engage in research *(series with 8 sessions in summer, will expand include 7 sessions during the school year and 8 additional sessions during scholars’ second summer)*.

Each of these workshops fills an important need, but we are looking to bring some coherence and consistency across our programming. Therefore, Education Program Manager Christina Ginardi will first be trained on workshop content and facilitation. Then, she will begin an evaluation/assessment of their effectiveness relative to our intended goals and workshop learning objectives. We will seek ways to streamline and standardize our messaging while also exploring necessary changes or developments in what we say and how we say it. Christina will also identify additional undergraduate research related needs for additional workshop development.

We will assess the winter quarter-long research workshop series: the Arts, Humanities, and Social Science Workshops (AHSS) and the Science Research Workshops (SRW). These workshops provide a cohort-based model and weekly accountability as students potentially work towards a Summer URG application. These workshops provide some scalability beyond our one-on-one advising, while also offering a sustained hands-on experience for students just getting started in pursuing independent research. These programs have grown substantially in the past few years, and the feedback from students has been tremendous. During this past year, the programs were both run entirely virtually. Evangeline Su had to cap the number of SRW participants, turning additional people towards individual advising, and Peter had, by far, his largest cohort in AHSS. Both of their retention rates were higher than...
normal, leading to a larger number of workshop students applying for Summer URGs. These students succeeded in their grant applications at a rate higher than the general population. This result is even more astounding given the context: for SRW, the majority of participants were still trying to get into labs (or had only recently started) since inexperienced undergraduates were not allowed in labs until February. For AHSS, essentially none of the students had a clear idea of what their project would even be about, yet over 90% of the applications were funded. While we are obviously thrilled by these results, there remain challenges. For example, Peter taught the weekly AHSS workshops in addition to his regular individual advising, leading to capacity issues. We know the programs work, and we would like them to expand. However, our current model still leans too heavily on time-intensive advising from the core advising team (Megan offered substantial advising support for SRW). Therefore, during the coming year, Christina will co-lead the workshops: with Megan for SRW and with Peter for AHSS. She will learn the current curriculum and approach, and ultimately, she will make recommendations towards the revamping of the programs, with an eye towards scalability.

Peer Mentor Programs
OUR currently has three different peer mentor programs. Both SRW and AHSS use peer mentors as a core component of their winter quarter workshops. Students are recruited from past participants of the programs, and they undergo formal training with the program leaders. Peer mentors offer support for students during the workshop process. However, the programs do diverge in how they utilize the peer mentors, both in terms of the number of peer mentors chosen and the tasks/responsibilities that they have. We also have a summer peer mentor program run by Megan that offers support and community for students undertaking Summer URGs. This program is fundamentally different from the other two, as it is not about grant applications but rather the experience students have actually completing research. Students are recruited across different disciplines from previous grant winners, and they are formally trained by Megan.

All three programs are important and effective (with great student feedback). However, what it means to be an OUR peer mentor varies significantly across programs, creating confusion both for mentors and students interacting with them in terms of expectations and responsibilities. Christina will take control of all three programs, working in conjunction with Peter and Megan. Initially, the goal will be to sustain the current programs, but we will be looking for Christina to develop a more cohesive and comprehensive approach to peer mentoring across OUR and our programs.

Finally, with Megan’s leadership, we are developing a new workshop series designed to help student researchers have a more meaningful experience. The combination of personal and professional development workshops were designed for the Emerging Scholars Program; however, this content is valuable to a much broader audience. Therefore, we seek to pilot and further develop these workshops over the coming year, with an eye towards expanding eligible participants next summer.

Taken together, we believe these workshops and supports offer the future of complementary OUR programming. Our advising-centric model for supporting students applying to our grant programs is working exceptionally well. Now, our focus needs to be supporting students within these experiences. By offering expanded wrap-around support throughout their experiences with research, we will help students maximize their experiences. We know undergraduate research can profoundly and positively impact a student’s college experience and life trajectory, and we feel that with more intentional focus
on holistic support beyond the proposal we will be able to make the good we are already doing even better.

2021-22 Goals

- **Conduct a needs assessment of SRW and AHSS.** We will use this data to inform future program restructuring towards scalable offerings.

- **Conduct a needs assessment across our three peer mentor programs.** We will use this data to inform a future program revamping. Importantly, we seek to unify peer mentor training programs and clarify roles and responsibilities.

- **Adapt the current Emerging Scholars Program summer workshops for more OUR undergraduate research participants.**

- **Identify unmet student need not satisfied by existing OUR programming and recommend areas of content development.**

“This project has encouraged me to go outside of my comfort zone and choose experiences that contribute to my understanding of the world. Being able to talk with so many people about a variety of important topics has truly enriched how I look at life, and I’ve learned a lot of life lessons from every one of them. I have met and formed relationships with many people through this project, and I know I will keep in touch with them long after it is completed!”- URG Student
BUDGET UPDATE

“The URAP program gave me multiple avenues for professional development for me to use not only in my future job endeavors but also in my future job searches. Just this past week, I was able to discuss a project I did for URAP in an internship interview (which I was offered!).”- URAP Student

For 2021-22, the Office of Undergraduate Research budget will be flat after two years of declines. We met all expenses this past year with this budget, but there are concerns. As mentioned earlier, we anticipate a rebounding of participation numbers in Conference Travel Grants and Academic Year URGs while we seek the continued development of URAP and Summer URGs. Plus, we are committed to increasing the summer grant stipend, while we also seek to expand the Emerging Scholars Program pilot.

During the last year, a budget discrepancy in the information provided to our office ultimately resulted in a $100,000 budget cut beyond the base percentage cut required by all Provost Office academic units over the past two years. It is still not clear why this happened, but it has made this past year more challenging than anticipated, as we were operating under different budgetary assumptions.

The situation is not fully bleak, though. Our award number never matches the amount that we actually pay out for two major reasons. First, not all students accept their Summer URG award. Students decline for a variety of reasons, including internships, other grants which pay better, or a desire to take classes instead. Over this year, 18 students declined their Summer URGs, leading to a cost savings of over $60,000. Also, URAP pays students for actual hours worked up to a maximum grant amount. Historical data shows that Academic Year URAP usually ends of paying out around 80% of the awarded total; Summer URAP pays out at around 85-90%, so we have anticipated cost savings. Second, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education Miriam Sherin and Assistant Provost for Administration and Finance Jenny Puchtel have been great champions of undergraduate research, including approving us to expand URAP to provide additional opportunities for remote first year students. We ended up not needing additional money due to cost savings from other programs, but the overall support for the mission of undergraduate research remains strong.

Still, we must plan to work within our existing budget. Here is our intended approach:

- We recently received a generous gift and the start of an endowment from the Hong-Farinelli family. The gift will provide us with $15,000 a year for 2022 through 2027. Additional endowment money will be available in 2024, eventually providing around $25,000 a year. The Hong-Farinelli family want to focus on STEM experiences within McCormick and Weinberg. The gift prefers opportunities that could advance diversity in these fields and for students who are the first generation in their family to attend college.
- Our AVDF grant will pay for 7 faculty-student pairs for a second cohort of the Emerging Scholars Program. We will have the option of using OUR (or Hong-Farinelli) funding to select additional members as we did this year.
- We will advertise and promote all programs to the fullest extent possible in keeping with our mission to expand student involvement in undergraduate research.
- We will keep two changes to Academic Year URAP. 1) We will allow faculty to hire up to two research assistants with each student receiving the full grant amount. Since the number of
faculty able to use URAP is finite, this approach allows more students to get involved. 2) We will keep the full grant amount at $1,500.

- After running all other grant programs, we will assess our financial situation before Summer URAP commences. We will be able to expand or constrict the size and scope of the program based on where our budget stands at that point. If we are required to constrict Summer URAP awards, preference will be given to applications who most strongly adhere to the funding priorities.
STAFFING

“Another thing that I feel I developed was being more assertive with my ideas as well as what I wanted to research instead of what I felt like others wanted me to research.” – URG Student

OUR staff have performed remarkably well during pandemic adversity. As outlined in the report, OUR maintained or expanded all its programming, and these tremendous results were accomplished in an ever-changing and unsettled environment for staff. They dealt with shifting expectations for in-person work along with budget reductions that directly impacted the work that they do. Through it all, they remained focused on supporting students while maintaining our quirky OUR humor.

This year marks the fourth year for Associate Director Megan Wood, and she continues to be an innovative force for growth and development within the office. Administration, Finance, and Communications Coordinator Tori Saxum completed her first year with OUR, and she dramatically improved our record keeping and communications. Director Peter Civetta has been with the Office of Undergraduate Research since its founding in 2012, though he began running the grant programs in 2009 before the formalized office.

This year OUR is saying goodbye to two key staff members. Outreach Coordinator/Advisor Jennah Thompson-Vasquez recently began a PhD at the CUNY Graduate Center. The Research Workshops Coordinator position filled by Evangeline Su was eliminated in order to facilitate budget feasibility for the Education Program Manager role. We are deeply grateful for everything that Jennah and Evangeline brought to OUR. They were both tremendous colleagues.

We are excited to welcome two new people to our team. Recent graduate Diamond Jones will start as our Outreach Coordinator/Advisor, and Christina Ginardi will be our first Education Program Manager. We are excited about how they will help us grow, and we look forward to learning from, and collaborating with, them.

While our building remained closed by Admissions/Financial Aid through the 2020-21 fiscal year, Megan, Tori, and Peter have returned to working in the office. They are now regularly in the office, and it is our plan/expectation to resume in-person activities in the fall. We anticipate offering students the opportunity for in-person advising along with remote/Zoom options. As mentioned previously, we will assess which workshops and information sessions will be offered in person once the full staff is assembled in September.
"The opportunity SURG brought has filled my days with a sense of excitement and anticipation for going to the lab and making progress in my project. During this time, I was able to grow closer with the rest of my lab members and found myself finally at home in the lab. I am thankful for SURG bringing me closer to the research experience and making it accessible. I acquired valuable interpersonal, team-work skills and attention to detail that will surely be of great benefit in my future career. I would recommend SURG experience to anyone who is interested in undergraduate research." - SURG Student

"Through working with URAP, I was able to form a close professional relationship with my faculty mentor, which I find to be an invaluable connection to have. In addition to gaining research experience, I learned that I was personally capable of research, and bolstered my personal and professional confidence." - URAP Student

Here we begin a breakdown of our core programs.

Undergraduate Research Grants (Academic Year, Summer, and Advanced URGs):

Given the craziness of this COVID year, the numbers for the program remain high. We began the year administering 41 grants that were converted from Summer URGs to Academic Year URGs due to COVID restrictions, although the grants were paid out using fiscal year 2020 funding. These grants were almost exclusively for lab projects where the lab wasn’t open to undergraduates in the summer. In the conversion, the students enrolled in an independent study course and were given $1,000 for research-related expenses. The regular Academic Year URG program was trimmed to four deadlines from its usual five because students did not return to campus after Thanksgiving. Therefore, numbers were down for the year. We funded 76 students out of 104 applications, including three students funded through the Academic Year URG Advanced program, allowing students a second grant during their undergraduate career through a cost share with their school. While the numbers represent a modest decline from the previous year (79 funded out of 121 applications), there has been a steep drop from the previous program high in 2018-19, where we funded 134 students out of 202 applications. We feel it will take a while to build back up to those numbers again, as COVID experiences has caused a decrease in independent studies and theses which provides the eligibility for this grant. Academic Year URGs resubmission policy continues to provide students with the opportunity to learn from the review committee feedback and still pursue their project. Of the 14 students who resubmitted, 13 ultimately received funding.

For Summer URGs, 221 students were awarded grants from 306 applications. We had a record high number of applications and awards in the Arts, Humanities, and Performance subgroup. Conversely, our biggest area of concern was expected: we saw a decline in the number of lab-based applications from WCAS and McCormick, particularly from first year students. Since first year students were barred from labs until February, this drop was anticipated. If it wasn’t for the Science Research Workshop, the number of first year lab students would be even worse.

Other highlights include:

- 7 of 8 (88%) of Summer URG-Advanced applicants were approved for funding: COMM (3), McCormick (2), and WCAS (2).
• 20 of 24 (83%) of URAP to URG applications were successful, creating a pipeline for students just getting started to independent work.
• 47 out of 55 (85%) creative output projects were funded, including arts, journalism, and documentary projects.

Undergraduate Research Assistant Program (URAP):
The Undergraduate Research Assistant program pairs inexperience students with faculty needing assistance on their own research projects. In doing so, students who do not have sufficient research experience to pursue independent projects gain first-hand mentored knowledge of research practices in their discipline, while faculty who would not otherwise be able to hire Research Assistants get help with their own projects. During this year, we leveraged the URAP program to 1) provide more opportunities for new students who had not yet had the chance to deeply connect with Northwestern, given COVID restrictions and 2) provide financial support for faculty research in a particularly challenging environment. We made some programmatic changes, which, while not fundamentally changing the program priorities, made significant improvements for faculty, staff and admin alike. Overall, we funded a record high 163 students (out of 804 applicants) through 111 faculty awards. Importantly, first and second years comprised a high percentage of participants; there were only 30 awarded juniors or seniors relative to 133 first or second years.

First, we overhauled the URAP webpage and created separate faculty facing and student facing pages. The format allowed us to clarify eligibility requirements, the application process, and the decision processes. Centralizing this information has yielded more in-depth relationship building with faculty and less time on logistics questions. Next, we updated the program to reflect COVID19-related needs and challenges, including: guidance on remote versus in person projects, faculty ability to hire two students without requiring students to split the award financially, and a faculty honorarium.  As we look to the future, faculty will denote whether opportunities are in-person or remote (which will provide more flexibility for students). The single most impactful change was allowing faculty to hire two students without splitting the award: it eased the administrative tracking of the program, expanded the number of opportunities available, and allowed more students to fully participate. We will preserve this change if financially possible. The $500 faculty honorarium to all faculty awardees was very well received, but to manage our budget for 2021-2022, we will revert to a $250 supplement that can be requested within the URAP application. During the academic year, Tori Saxum led an initiative to increase the number of students opting to use this award for their work-study allotment. 15 students chose this option (our largest number ever), more than doubling the potential number of hours they could earn and giving our office a potential cost-savings of at least $16,875. Lastly, we launched the Fletcher Awards for URAP (Excellence in Research Mentorship and Rising Undergraduate Research Star) which were announced at our Research Expo. We presented 5 student awards (Hannah Christensen, Samuel Jung, Shayan Malik, Sue Um, and Julian Zigelboim) and 4 faculty awards (Alexandria Volkening, Lia Wendeln-Bernardi, Shuyi Weng, and Ida Yalzadeh.

Next year, we will change the final survey for the URAP program to be in alignment with data collected for the AVDF grant. Students will prepare brief, mandatory final reports, and both mentors and mentees will complete assessment around the student’s learning gains.
Conference Travel Grant Program (CTG):
This program has been the most profoundly impacted by COVID. In 2018-19, we funded a record 110 students to present at conferences, but across this year, we funded only 12. Many professional meetings, and particularly student conferences, were cancelled. There were a number that moved to a virtual format, and in some cases, there were no fees associated with presenting. Therefore, the number of students who actually presented this year is higher than our grant number, but it still lags far behind previous levels. We believe it will take a couple of years to resume to pre-COVID levels, as less students have been involved in independent studies and thesis seminars which produce the majority of grant candidates. However, we plan to do outreach to faculty to remind them of the opportunity for their students.

Circumnavigators Travel-Study Grant:
With hope, we ran the grant competition in the fall, and we received 12 applications (second most in six years). The winner was Mackenzie Gentz, a dual degree student in Bienen (Oboe Performance) and WCAS (Linguistics and German). Mackenzie plans to use the grant to study English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in Perú, Portugal, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Japan. Her project focuses on the language background of each program's city, the relative centralization of the curriculum, and what degree of accent training each involves. This project supports Mackenzie’s broader goal of being able to make US policy recommendations for improving the way ESL is taught in the United States. While COVID travel restrictions meant that she could not go on the trip, we worked with the Circumnavigators Club Foundation (our grant partners), and she will be able to travel in the summer of 2022. Unfortunately, 2020 winner Mandy Davis graduated this year, so she will be unable to take her trip.

Undergraduate Language Grant (ULG):
Overall, ULG applications were significantly down (11 applications in 2021; 56 in 2020); this drop was expected after the University announcement to suspend all University-sponsored undergraduate non-credit international travel through August 27th, 2021. We worked with the faculty review committee to define parameters for remote intensive language learning programs; however, we do not anticipate including remote programs in future years as they simply do not accomplish the immersive experience this grant seeks to fund. We will seek advice from the faculty review committee on how to proceed, pending what is feasible within university guidelines. 9 awarded students (including 2 NUQ students) and 7 students who deferred their ULG from 2020 had the option to pursue language study this summer. Ultimately, 4 NUQ students and 4 Evanston proceeded with the grant. The remaining students declined the award. We anticipate an influx of applications in 2022 should undergraduate international travel be permissible, given the pent up demand for international experiences.

Undergraduate Research and Arts Exposition (Expo):
The goals of the Undergraduate Research and Arts Exposition are three-fold: 1) To provide students with the opportunity to share their work with a broader audience. Presenters are not limited to those students funded by OUR; instead, we encourage all students to apply and present. We offer online resources to help them prepare abstracts and for poster making. 2) To offer students feedback on their research from expert faculty and the general public; we want students to experience the reflection and collaboration that can happen through presenting work at conferences. 3) To give students dedicated feedback on their presentation skills. Too often, we focus entirely on the content of presentations;
students need to learn that how you communicate is as important as the content itself. We aim to provide specific feedback in that regard. We run presentation workshops for all presenters (mandatory for all students selected to give an oral presentation). These workshops seek to help them become better communicators of their knowledge, especially learning the skills of how to communicate with people outside of their field of study.

We used Forager One’s Symposium platform again this year. We featured 150 presenters over the 36 hour event. During that time, we had nearly 5,000 visits to the site including 18,333 unique presentation views. Viewers left almost 1,000 comments to presenters, and a total of over 465 hours of engagement were spent on the platform during the event.

We established our inaugural live Expo Keynote Address, and we invited Professor Onnie Rogers to give it. She gave a tremendous speech on the power and impact of mentoring and research. We plan to continue to have a keynote address at future Expos. We also held four live question and answer panels for students giving oral presentations, providing students the opportunity to get feedback on their work. In addition, we hosted a film screening of a documentary about the mentoring research lab run by Professor Haoqi Zhang. Professor Zhang and the filmmakers were present for a discussion as well.

We continued to have judging for all three aspects of the Expo: poster presentations, oral presentations, and the Creative Arts Festival. We developed an online judging form that dramatically improved the ease of use for faculty and administrators. The Best Expo Poster Presentation Award went to Finn Wintz for his poster, “It’s Just a Color of the Skin:’ How Black and White Parents Justify Racial Sameness Perception.” The Best Expo Oral Presentation Award went to Anna Davis for her talk, “Vesicle-Based Sensors for Extracellular Potassium Detection.” The professional jury adjudicated the Creative Arts Festival, selecting Peach (Ganpicha) Sahasakul’s animated short film My Mother Fled to the Submerged Palace for first place. The People’s Choice Awards went to Xinyuan (Joyce) Pu’s staged reading of her play A Flower Explodes (Creative Arts Festival), Adia Fielder for “‘Nasty Names’ Black Adolescent Discussions of Sexuality” (Poster Presentation), and Aran Mehta, who had a record 522 views of “The Hindu Rashtra Meets Dar al-Islam: The Impact of Hindu Nationalism on India’s Relations with Muslim-Majority Countries” (Oral Presentation).

The success of the event has changed our long-term thinking about the Expo. The digital format allowed more NU-Q students to participate that would normally be possible, where expensive travel costs limited opportunities. In addition, the digital platform allowed for increased attendance from students’ family and friends; whereas Expo attendance is normally counted in the hundreds, this year we had thousands of visitors. Therefore, moving forward, we plan to hold both in-person and digital versions of the event, and we will consult with the OUR Advisory Council on planning for how to do so effectively.
OTHER INITIATIVES
The Office of Undergraduate Research has grown to encompass more than the specific core programs that we administer (and the advising connected to them). A number of additional initiatives now take up an increasing amount of time for the staff. However, these initiatives remain directly connected to the core mission of OUR. This next section will offer brief summaries of these other initiatives.

Northwestern Undergraduate Research Journal
OUR has collaborated with NURJ for a number of years. In particular, we helped the student executive board recruit potential authors through our grant winners and promoted the journal on our web page. With the sudden passing of longtime NURJ advisor Alan Taflove, the NURJ board reached out about deepening our relationship. Peter is now joining Medill Professor Patti Wolter as the NURJ faculty advisors. The finances for NURJ will continue to come from the President’s Office, but they will be run by OUR via Tori. Peter and Patti are excited to work with NURJ and see where this growing group can go.

Research Workshops
The winter 2021 Science Research Workshop (SRW) class, led by Evangeline Su, enrolled all available seats in the program with a 100% completion rate. 63.4% of enrollees were from Weinberg, 36.6% from McCormick, with one double major in Bienen. The program had 11 alumni return as peer mentors. SRW peer mentors were trained on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics such as Identity Development and the Cycle of Socialization, Inclusive Active Learning Group Environments, Microaggressions, and Bystander Intervention as preparation for facilitating groups online. This year was particularly difficult to get new undergraduate researchers into STEM labs due to the pandemic restrictions banning novice researchers from being in the physical lab space for most of the year. Due to the difficulties in not being able to be in the lab in person, the fact that 65% of SRW was able not only to join a lab in this academic year, but also figure out an independent research project and write a proposal to apply for the SURG is excellent. 19 of 26 applicants from SRW to the Summer URG program were funded for a 73% success rate.

The Arts, Humanities, and Social Science Research Workshops (AHSS) were led by Peter Civetta with significant support from three undergraduate peer mentors: Caroline Hsu, Alicia Ross, and Titobi Williams. AHSS peer mentors provide a crucial link between the challenges involved in developing their own independent project for the first time and the real life student experience. All three peer mentors had been through the application process themselves, so they provided significant insight to the students involved. They received similar training as SRW, but they were suited to field differences. A record 23 students participated in the program with 14 applying for a Summer URG. An astounding 13 of them were awarded their grant- a 93% success for a program that starts in January with students having no idea what their project will be.

Since the programs were larger and had less attrition this year, it is clear that the virtual format had appeal for students, although both workshop leaders noticed a gap in engagement from previous years. Therefore, we need to determine the format for the coming year. OUR’s new Education Program Manager will co-lead these workshops this year with Megan (SRW) and Peter (AHSS) and will have a strong voice in determining their formats.
Global and Research Opportunities Database
In 2015, a joint project between NUIT (Academic and Research Technologies), the Office of the Provost, and the Office of Undergraduate Research produced the Global and Research Opportunities database (http://globalresearchopportunities.northwestern.edu/), a comprehensive searchable database of opportunities to get involved in research and global experiences for students, faculty, and administrators. Peter is the only administrator of the site, which has been revisioned with a focus on undergraduate students. We believe this database has increased potential as a comprehensive resource for undergraduate opportunities of all types. We hope to expand the database by adding listings from student affairs, residential communities, etc. in order to make the site a one-stop location for a large range of undergraduate initiatives across the University. After this work is completed, the site will likely need to be renamed/rebranded, but OUR is committed to maintaining and administering it moving forward.

Peer Mentor Program
21 grant alumni were recruited to serve as Summer URG peer mentors. Each peer mentor was assigned a cohort of 8-12 mentees. Mentor/mentee pairs are expected to complete a communication contract and meet at least 3 times between June and September. Based on previous feedback from peer mentors, mentor training was restructured into three training sessions with content better aligned with mentor assignments. The first training focused on the role of peer mentors, active listening techniques, mock mentee sessions, and preparation for facilitating the Summer URG Skills workshops. The second training session focused on communication styles, mentee needs, and more mock mentee sessions. The third training focused on institutional resources and goal setting. As the peer mentor programs move under the purview of the Education Program Manager (Christina), we will re-assess training content and peer mentor expectations in alignment with the two other peer mentor programs.

CAURS (Chicago Area Undergraduate Research Symposium)
CAURS was created 17 years ago by a Northwestern student, Chandler Robinson, who wanted to provide opportunities for students at area schools to get together, share their work, get feedback from faculty across all of the schools, and gain presentation experience. Six schools sponsor the event: University of Chicago, Loyola, DePaul, Illinois Institute of Technology, Roosevelt, and Northwestern (through funding from the Office of the Provost). Peter Civetta serves as the faculty sponsor of the event, and its finances run through OUR administrator, Tori Saxum. Since the 2020 event was cancelled, Peter connected the directors with NURJ, and NURJ/CAURS collaborated on an online journal to share the work that would have been presented: https://www.caurs.com/caursxnurj. This year’s event was held remotely, using the Jublia platform. Northwestern students continue to do very well (winning 25% of the awards), including Kendall Gail for Top Overall Oral Presentation and Anika Nerella for Top Sociology, Anthropology, or Psychology Poster Presentation. Students again had the opportunity publish their work through a collaboration with NURJ: https://www.caurs.com/caursxnurj2021. The group hopes to resume an in-person event in 2022.

TEDx Northwestern
Nine years ago, a group of students successfully brought the TEDx conference to campus with support from a faculty sponsor. After two years, the faculty member left the University, and Peter became the faculty sponsor. TEDx became an officially registered student organization this year. This year’s event was livestreamed on April 24th with five speakers: https://www.tedxnorthwesternu.com/2021-
The event was well managed and attended. The current directors are hoping to host a live event in 2022. The new director Tanya Bhargava will be attending the TED Women 2021 conference in December in part to secure our license to hold our 2022 event.

**Office Communications/Branding**

Last September, OUR was obligated to redesign and revamp its website due to NUIT changes to the web infrastructure. The whole team took on this challenge and used the opportunity to add content that will better serve students. For example, we added a new “Get Started” section that guides students through the preliminary stages of the research process. Previously, this information was available only through Canvas, which meant students had to register to access it. We rewrote large swaths of our content and reorganized the pages, so that information about our programs and resources is easy to find and readily available. Each staff member revised multiple webpages and had to take a crash course in Wordpress web design in order to make this happen – no small feat during the beginning of a new academic year in a remote setting. Tori has taken the lead in maintaining and updating the site since the redesign.

In November, Tori redesigned the weekly “Blast” e-newsletter. She aimed to make the aesthetic cleaner and more visually engaging. She creates original memes in an effort to communicate our programs and events in a relatable way. The Blast also serves to demonstrate that our office is welcoming and approachable. We regularly receive positive feedback from students; the Blast has been described as “fresh” and “the best newsletter on campus.” The number of subscribers to the Blast has increased 40% from August 2020 to today (2,200 up to 3,121), which is all the proof we need that our dedicated effort to the newsletter is effective outreach.
APPENDICES:

OUR Pledge

The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) stands in solidarity as the world cries out against the systemic racism and inequality experienced by the Black community. We have been listening, learning, and consulting with colleagues, including Sekile Nzinga, interim chief diversity officer and associate provost of diversity and inclusion and director of the Women’s Center, with whom we remain in dialogue. As Northwestern advances its own commitments to social justice, we in OUR state our commitments to engaging more fully in anti-racist practices and to becoming better community partners and advocates both now and for the long term through our engagement with undergraduate researchers across campus.

As a unit, the OUR recognizes that advancing an anti-racist agenda begins with a necessary examination of our daily work. Research creates knowledge that can transform and improve lives, but we must also acknowledge that there is a history of research and research practices that contributed directly to the systemic racism and inequalities we continue to fight today. From the U.S. Public Health Services’ infamous Tuskegee Study and Guatemala experiments that began in the 1930s and 1940s to the many biomedical discoveries in the past six decades that would not have been possible without Henrietta Lacks, whose cells were taken without her consent, bias and racism have and do show up in research. We do not aim to present an exhaustive list here, but rather to acknowledge that there are unfortunately far more examples than we could share in this one message. Today, the intersections among race, racism, bias, and research also surface in recent discussions about COVID-19, including in concerns about colonialist-mentalities during COVID-19 vaccine trials in Africa. Bias also shows up in research in data collection, data analysis, and publication opportunities. Systemic racism, bias, and microaggression diminish the work of many involved in research and perpetuate the inequities found in research environments. There are, of course, already people doing innovative work that is applied, community engaged, and social justice oriented, including many scholars at Northwestern, to counteract these practices. OUR will strive to build resources to link undergraduate student researchers more intentionally in support of this important work.

Therefore:

- We pledge to work with leading scholars on our campuses to support their work through undergraduate involvement, including funding from OUR grant programs. Having undergraduate researchers learn from and engage with historic and persistent forms of erasure with diverse scholars doing innovative scholarship within the research/academic context is essential.

CURRENT RESPONSE: All 17 faculty mentors selected for the new Emerging Scholars Program received student requests to work with them, indicating strong student interest in the areas of research we are seeking to highlight. We are currently in the
process of creating the second cohort of potential faculty mentors using the same selection criteria established above.

- We pledge to create new online, freely-available resources to support first-generation, lower income, undocumented/DACA students, and/or minoritized students who want to get involved in research. These resources also will help support the development of more informed and engaged mentoring by faculty. This work will be achieved with funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

CURRENT RESPONSE: We continue to adapt the WiSCIENCE’s *Entering Research* curriculum to speak to experiences in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and other non-research group environments. We have piloted new activities with the first Emerging Scholars Program cohort over 8 weeks this summer. As we continue to refine them, we are also sending them out to other groups for testing and feedback before they are eventually added to *Entering Research*. We also completed filming of 11 episodes of our new web series *Semple’s Words*, along with 5 complementary podcast episodes. They are in post-production, and we plan to have them on our YouTube page early in the academic year.

- We pledge to establish a new grant program focused on developing a community of undergraduate research scholars from first-generation, lower income, undocumented/DACA students, and/or minoritized communities on campus. The program will provide funding to students conducting research and/or creative projects over an extended period of time and will also include extensive personal and professional development workshops. This work will be achieved with funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

CURRENT RESPONSE: We created the Emerging Scholars Program, and we funded 10 faculty-student pairs. The students have been working with faculty as research assistants this summer while attending weekly personal/professional development workshops. During this fall, the workshops will help them to start developing their own independent projects. We are also preparing to recruit a second cohort in the coming academic year.

- We pledge to continue OUR’s work with Northwestern’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that ethical research practices are robustly followed in all aspects of student research, including the *Principles of Ethical Practice in Community-Engaged Learning, Research, and Service* developed in partnership with the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. OUR will also continue to collaborate with campus units, including Campus Inclusion and Community and Student Enrichment Services.

CURRENT RESPONSE: Peter worked with IRB Social and Behavior Manager Braden Van Buskirk to get all 38 Summer URG winners who required IRB clearance completed before the start of summer. We are scheduling our annual meeting with SES and MSA to go over last year and plan for the coming one, including introducing them to our new
Outreach Coordinator Diamond Jones and new Education Program Manager Christina Ginardi.

- **We pledge** to continue to collaborate with the [Center for Native American and Indigenous Research](#) (CNAIR) to support the development and funding of student research projects. [Northwestern campus sits on the traditional homelands](#) of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami and Ho-Chunk nations, and it is our responsibility as an academic institution—and as the Office of Undergraduate Research—to help foster the dissemination of existing scholarship and the development of further Native and Indigenous research.

   CURRENT RESPONSE: Megan, Peter, and Professor and Director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research Patty Lowe were awarded a grant by the Northwestern Alumnae for a summer project to create open source resources to promoting and supporting best practices in indigenous modes of research. We also added a new annotated Sample Grant Proposal that features indigenous research methodologies.

- **We pledge** to work with current Northwestern programs, including [Chicago Field Studies](#), the [Center for Civic Engagement](#), the [SESP Civic Engagement Certificate](#) to help further facilitate the collaboration of undergraduates and community groups through OUR’s existing grant funding programs.

   CURRENT RESPONSE: Megan continues to do outreach with faculty and departments at Feinberg, which is creating greater opportunities for students to get involved in research on the Chicago campus. When our new staff are in place, we will reach out to build new partnerships with CFS, CCE, and SESP CEC.

- **We pledge** to continue to collaborate with Northwestern’s Institutional Research Office to obtain and analyze OUR application and award rate data for first generation, low income, and/or minoritized students. We pledge to share the results publicly and use them towards our goal of *at minimum* having these groups apply at levels commensurate to their group size and with success rates *at minimum* equal to the overall success rate of the program.

   CURRENT RESPONSE: The 2020-21 OUR Annual Report outlines the results of this data analysis, which identified many strengths in our ability to reach and fund diverse student populations while also indicating areas for continued improvement. The report is publicly available on our web site.

- **We pledge** to work as a staff to continue our ongoing education around anti-racist practices in order to inform our outreach to and advising for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous,
People of Color) students to more effectively support them and their research projects. We will devote staff time to these efforts.

CURRENT RESPONSE: Current staff continue to get appropriate trainings, such as Bystander Intervention and Diversity in Hiring training, and we plan to have new staff trained in areas as needed. We are still awaiting plans from the University on their training strategy on implicit bias training. We will pursue additional topics on our own as a staff.

- **We pledge** to continue our work with groups within the Evanston area that support these communities, and we pledge to promote to our students the work of local community groups through posting their events in our undergraduate e-newsletter

  CURRENT RESPONSE: Through [Evanston Scholars](#), Peter continues to offer advising to a couple of their students looking to get involved in research. He also continues to volunteer at ETHS, including helping to coach the Mock Trial team to their first state championship (and 8th place nationally).

- **We pledge** to support BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and women owned businesses in Evanston whenever possible.

  CURRENT RESPONSE: While our remote operations have limited purchases, we have sought out opportunities to support these businesses, including catering for the web series filming. We hope to expand our use of these businesses as we return to campus life.

We realize that these pledges are preliminary steps, but they speak to our stated commitment to engage more fully in issues regarding anti-racist practices in general and within the worlds of research and Evanston in particular.
Student Demographic Assessment Data

Guide to Interpreting Results

Data were submitted to the Office of Institutional Research for demographic analysis. A few important notes about this analysis: 1) NUQ students were not included in this data analysis due to data access issues. 2) We are comparing our data to the overall campus undergraduate student demographic data for fall 2020. These data are from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), so there are defined reporting categories that informed this analysis.

The IPEDS method includes: one category per student. If a student is Hispanic, then they are counted as Hispanic. If a student indicated more than one race other than Hispanic and are not International (non-resident alien), then they are in the “two or more races” category. We are not showing data for student respondents who responded “not applicable”. Given the limitations of “one category per student”, we also provide an alternative “count all” method wherein every category indicated by a student is represented.

For the Financial Needs Index Data, the scale indicates as follows:

- 5 – 90% or more need
- 4 – 75% to 89% need
- 3 – 50% to 74% need
- 2 – 25% to 49% need
- 1 - up to 25%
- 0 - Did not apply for financial aid

Put another way, those in the 5 category can pay for 0 to 10% of their educational costs without help.

Lastly, students were counted for each application in our dataset. However, it does not necessarily reflect final outcome for the student. For example, students are invited to apply to multiple URAP positions, so they may be represented as rejected for two positions but awarded for one position. For the Academic Year URG program, students are invited to revise and resubmit their grant application if they are not successful, so they similarly may be represented multiple times within that data set.
Student Applications by Demographic

The data in each “Grant Type” column can be compared to the overall student population representation in the “NU Population” column. If IPEDS Race/Identity is shaded darker than the NU Population in that column, that particular demographic had better representation in the student applicant pool relative to the population representation within the overall student body. Conversely, if the IPEDS Race/Identity is shaded lighter than the NU Population, then that particular demographic had decreased representation in the applicant pool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Pool</th>
<th>NU Population</th>
<th>Academic Year URG</th>
<th>Summer URG</th>
<th>AYURAP Student</th>
<th>SURAP Student</th>
<th>Emerging Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First gen</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pell</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Pool</th>
<th>NU Population</th>
<th>Academic Year URG</th>
<th>Summer URG</th>
<th>AYURAP Student</th>
<th>SURAP Student</th>
<th>Emerging Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (greatest need)</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Pool</th>
<th>NU Population</th>
<th>Academic Year URG</th>
<th>Summer URG</th>
<th>AYURAP Student</th>
<th>SURAP Student</th>
<th>Emerging Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Resident Alien</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American count all*</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American count all*</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the lowest two rows for “Count All” are an alternate analysis method wherein a student is counted in all categories indicated. The first seven rows only count one category per student.
Student Success by Demographic

The data in each “Grant Type” column can be compared to the overall Grant Success Rate in the first row. If IPEDS Race/Identity is shaded darker than the overall Grant Success Rate in that column, that particular demographic had greater success rates than average. Conversely, if the IPEDS Race/Identity is shaded lighter than the overall Grant Success Rate in that column, then that particular demographic had lower than average success rates. However, the representation of a particular demographic directly impacts the potential success rate (i.e. if 0 students of one identity apply, the success rate will also be 0).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Type</th>
<th>Academic Year URG</th>
<th>Summer URG</th>
<th>AYURAP Student</th>
<th>SURAP Student</th>
<th>Emerging Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant Success Rate</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pell</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Type</th>
<th>Academic Year URG</th>
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<th>AYURAP Student</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant Success Rate</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (greatest need)</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
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</tbody>
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<td>21.3%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Resident Alien</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Alien</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American count all*</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10.3%</td>
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