

# Office of Undergraduate Research @ John Jay

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[OUR@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:OUR@jjay.cuny.edu)

## The Founding of the O.U.R. *Realizing OUR Vision*

What an exciting time! Thanks to the vision and hard work of so many, the Office of Undergraduate Research is now a reality. Affectionately called “the O.U.R.,” this new office strives to promote, support, and celebrate undergraduate students’ participation in faculty-mentored research and creative projects. The O.U.R. was created by Provost Jane Bowers after a year-long deliberative process by a task force of faculty members formed and led by Undergraduate Dean Anne Lopes. Faculty on this committee came from a wide range of departments and programs around the college, all committed to advancing the participation of undergraduates in research and creative endeavors. During February of last year, Teresa Booker (African American Studies), Rosemary Barberet (Sociology), Nathan Lents (Sciences), and Dean Lopes attended a weekend work-



shop offered by the Council on Undergraduate Research entitled, *Institutionalizing Undergraduate Research*. It was at this workshop that many ideas for supporting undergraduate research took shape, culminating in the completion of a strategic plan and a request that the O.U.R. be instituted.

Provost Bowers was quick to approve the request, thereby creating the O.U.R. and naming Professor Lents (pictured, top right) as the first director, who invited Professor Angela Crossman (Psychology, pictured top left) to serve as assistant director. They are assisted by Kim Do, Nathaniel Query, and Teeshavi Narayne (seated, left to right). The O.U.R. is located in 4243-N, so all are invited to stop by. If you are not yet on our list, please email us to be sure that you receive our periodic announcements.

## Making Research Count

### *Integrating Research into the Undergraduate Curriculum*

It can be a challenge to find ways to engage our students with meaningful research experiences – an important predictor of academic and personal growth and of post-graduate success. Among the most recent class of freshmen, 78% attend school full-time, but nearly 30% work 21+ hours per week for pay, with even more working between 10 and 20 hours per week. One way to make research viable for students is through course credit. In this way, balancing school and research becomes more manageable. There are numerous models for infusing research into the curriculum – some currently in practice at the College. For instance, the Forensic Science program runs an Undergraduate Research Internship course in which students work 400 hours in a lab to complete a research project. This course aims to reach students that might not otherwise have considered an in-house research opportunity.

Anthropology and Psychology are now also proposing research courses for their students. In Psychology, there will be an Introductory Research Experience in Psychology elective to allow students to try research and decide if they like it. There will also be a combination of 300- and 400-level research courses in which students can plan, conduct and complete a research project in Psychology with a mentor. A similar progression of courses can be found in the “Humanities and Justice Studies” major. In all cases – not to mention the Honors Program and the McNair Program – the obvious goal is to “kill two birds with one stone”. In this way, we give students first-hand exposure to the creation of new knowledge in a given field – without demanding more time than they can afford to give. Student-centered research and creative projects are innovating curricula around the country and John Jay is poised to be a leader.

## OUR Faculty Development *Sharing Ideas*



Last month, 17 faculty members from a variety of departments and disciplines sat together to talk about undergraduates participating in faculty-led research. The room was alive with enthusiasm, creative ideas, and collaboration, and all participants learned something, even those with prior experience working with undergraduates. The goal of the event was to promote faculty taking undergraduates into their research and creative projects and also share some best practices in doing so. "It's not always obvious to faculty how best to involve undergraduates in their scholarly work because some disciplines have a culture in which scholars are accustomed to working by themselves or only with colleagues at their same level," said one participant. "But I, for one, got some great ideas on how to get students involved. I am very excited to try these out."

"The key to making undergraduate research work is that the faculty should find the process not just rewarding but also productive. If taking young students would slow down their research productivity, that is a lot to ask of faculty, especially when they are worried about tenure, promotion, and their academic reputations," explained Herb Childress, Dean of Research and Assessment at the Boston Architectural College, one of the workshop facilitators.

Another goal of the event was that the participants take the ideas back to their departmental colleagues to help disseminate these best practices. "This was an impressive group of faculty. Clearly, they are all serious about their scholarship, but they are also dedicated to their students," said Naomi Yavneh, Associate Dean and Director of Undergraduate Research at the University of South Florida. "That's the great thing about getting undergraduates involved—you get to share your experience and passion for your work with your students and watch them transform into scholars themselves."



The workshop, contracted with the Council on Undergraduate Research and paid for by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education held sessions focused on faculty-student research mentoring and others focused on course and curricular changes to promote undergraduate participation in research and creative projects. With this first success, the O.U.R. hopes to offer faculty development programming on a regular basis.

## Highlight on a Research Group *Professor Freilich Leads a Team of Student Scholars*

Unfortunately, we live in a world where domestic terrorism is a cold reality. However, Students at John Jay have the opportunity to study with world-renowned scholars of terrorism. One of those scholars is Professor Joshua Freilich (Criminal Justice), who has been awarded numerous grants by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to study domestic terrorism and crimes related to political extremists. His research involves the participation of not only John Jay graduate students, but undergraduates as well.

Although she is just getting started, Angela Juliano, a sophomore at John Jay, claims that she has already reaped significant benefits through the experience. Specifically, the mentoring she's received has helped create lasting relationships with professors and assisted her in discovering a career path.

Celinet Duran, a senior studying Criminal Justice, states that she originally thought she would pursue a career in law. However, the research experience with Professor Freilich opened her eyes to her

true passion: domestic terrorism with quantitative studies. "Research gave me the unique opportunity to participate in conferences that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to otherwise," said Celinet, who was recently accepted into several graduate programs, including the Ph.D. Program in Criminal Justice here at John Jay.



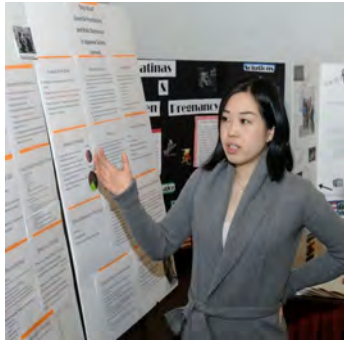
Diana Rodriguez, another senior at John Jay, claims she was never interested in research until her professor approached her with the offer to join this project. Diana has been working on a study involving the tragedy at Fort Hood, its portrayal by the media, and how claim-makers effect public perception. Ms. Rodriguez's participation in this research has given her the opportunity to build lasting relationships with professors and has helped illuminate the path toward her career goal of becoming a researcher within a federal organization. She hopes to pursue the terrorism certificate offered at John Jay, a masters degree in International Justice, and eventually perhaps a Ph.D.

The undergraduates are not the only ones getting benefits. "Research experience is not only very helpful for the undergraduates, but it helps the doctoral students make progress on their projects while learning how to teach and how to mentor," says Freilich. Further, at least part of the reason that Professor Freilich has been such a productive scholar at John Jay is the access to very talented doctoral, masters, and undergraduate student helpers. How an exciting that our students can be a part of such important work!

# Celebrating Student Research and Creativity

*A week of student showcases, May 9-13*

Three years ago, the PRISM program within the Science Department began a yearly symposium in which undergraduate research students present their research projects in poster form and at which there are keynote addresses by a current and former student. Inspired by this event, two years ago the college instituted a college-wide symposium called the Celebrating Student Research Event @ John Jay to showcase the marvelous work conducted by students at the College under faculty mentoring. In that first symposium, research projects were submitted by students from the freshman year through the doctoral program, and in a variety of disciplines.



Last year, the event further expanded to include students' work in the arts and was thus renamed **Celebrating Student Research & Creativity Event @ John Jay**. This event featured 267 students presenting their projects from every corner of the college community. The energy of student presentations permeated the entire campus!

This year, the weeklong celebration of student scholarship will take place **May 9-13**. Programs will be distributed around the campus and faculty are encouraged to attend as many of the presentations and poster session as possible. In addition, last year, many faculty gave students in their courses extra credit for attending the symposium and supporting their peers. Some even cancelled classes and required attendance at the symposium instead! The O.U.R. enthusiastically endorses faculty providing some sort of incentive for students to attend the symposium. Students that see their peers presenting research projects will often be inspired to do the same!

Fresh on the heels of the exciting research presentations by the first-year experience learning communities, we expect this to be another record-breaking year for the symposium. This can be a transformative experience for students as they present their work to the larger community and begin to view themselves as contributing scholars in their fields. Come see what all the excitement is about!



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## The O.U.R. Gets Some Seed Money

*College's Recent Title V Grant Includes Support for Student Research*

"Funding the O.U.R. will always be a paramount concern and a considerable part of our efforts," says Nathan Lents, the director of the O.U.R. During the first year, there is much organizational work to be done, building interest and promoting participation, as well as laying the foundation for a vibrant and supportive program. "The bottom line is that we will need ways to support our students financially if we really want this to take off." This is because the vast majority of John Jay students must work off-campus in order to support themselves, thereby limiting the amount of time that they can devote to extracurricular activities such as research and creative projects.

At its inception, most of the funding for the O.U.R. was institutional. The office of the Provost has agreed to support the program directors, while the Office of Undergraduate Studies, where the office resides administratively, provides a budget for the part-time college assistants and some OTPS costs. But supporting the staff only goes so far: what is really needed is support for students. Currently, the college scholarship committee awards on a competitive basis one-time scholarships of \$1,500 to undergraduates pursuing faculty-mentored research projects. However the scholarship budget is limiting. "We can support 10 or so students per year with scholarships, and that's a good start, but we are going to have to do better than that if we really want to make a big impact on the campus," says Lents. The aggressive long-term goal includes the support of hundreds of students each year.

Fortunately, the first opportunity to increase student support came quickly. Over the summer, Anthony Carpi (Sciences) and Katelin Szur (First Year Experience) submitted a \$3.2 million grant to the U.S. Department of Education to support a number of different activities around the college to increase student success and retention. After helping to craft a different aspect of the grant, Lents spoke with Carpi about including the O.U.R. as one of the activities proposed and supported by the grant.

"I was excited about this idea," says Carpi. "We've seen how transformative undergraduate research has been in the Science Department and I was thrilled to help spread these opportunities college-wide." Carpi, Szur, and Lents wrote and submitted the grant in June of 2010 and the grant was fully funded in October, earning an unprecedented perfect score from all three grant reviewers.

With this additional money, the O.U.R. will be able to dramatically increase the number of students it can financially support, as well as offer faculty development, and a poster printing service for undergraduates. In addition, the O.U.R. will also support supply grants and student travel costs to conferences, in cooperation with the college scholarship committee. Says Lents, "If we do our job well, lots more students will be doing research and we'll soon be desperate for more money, but for now, this is a great start."

## OUR Students Presenting and Publishing

**Robert Riggs** (Urban Anthropology) authored an article in the journal *Dialectical Anthropology* entitled *The PRI: Employing the Unemployable* in January 2011.

**Jason Quiñones** (Forensic Science) co-authored an article in the *Journal of Environmental Quality* with Prof. Anthony Carpi (Sciences) entitled *An investigation of the kinetic processes influencing mercury emissions from sand and soil samples of varying thickness* in January of 2011.

**Kadiatou Sylla** (Justice Studies) wrote a one-act play entitled *Guinea's Rebirth*, a modern adaptation of an ancient Greek drama which was selected to be read by the La MaMa Experimental theatre in February of 2010.

**Zuleyma Peralta** (Forensic Science) co-authored an article in the *Journal of Forensic Identification* with Prof. Nathan Lents entitled *Analysis of the suitability of the iPrep DNA purification instrument for routine forensic applications* in November 2010.

**Amora Mayo-Perez** (Forensic Science) gave a poster presentation co-authored by Prof. Anthony Carpi (Sciences) entitled *The potential role of silicon dioxide as an oxidizing surface in strong sunlight: studies on mercury behavior* at the Annual Meeting of the American Chemical Society in August 2010.

**Darakshan Raja** (Justice Studies) gave an oral presentation entitled *Army of roses: female suicide bombers*, based on research mentored by Prof. Toy-Fung Tung (English), at the John Jay International Conference on Criminal Justice held in Morocco in June 2010.

**Richard Piszczatoskwi** (Forensic Science) gave a poster presentation co-authored by **Michael Lugo** (Forensic Science) and Prof. Nathan Lents (Sciences) entitled *MZF-1 regulates CTGF expression in the hematopoietic compartment* at the Gordon Research Seminar on the Cell Biology of Megakaryocytes and Platelets in March 2011.

**Diana Rodriguez** (Criminal Justice) co-authored a poster presentation with Prof. David Green (Sociology) entitled *Is it terrorism or an ordinary crime?* at the Annual Conference of the American Society of Criminology in October of 2010.

**Isabel Pereira** (Forensic Psychology) co-authored a presentation with Prof. Deryn Strange (Psychology) entitled *Television produces more false memories for news content than newspapers* at the Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science in May 2010.

**Sheneeka Saul, Ozlem Yuksel-Sokmen, and Katherine Navarro** (all Forensic Psychology) co-authored a poster presentation with Professor Jill Grose-Fifer (Psychology) entitled *Gender differences in the feedback-related negativity (FRN) in a simple gambling task* at the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Neuroscience Society in April 2010.

**Amanda Vasquez** (Forensic Science) gave a presentation co-authored by Prof. Gloria Proni (Sciences) entitled *Lawson's Derivatives: New Reagent for Fingerprint Detection* at the LSAMP Conference Series in April 2010.

If you don't see your student's publication, presentation, or award listed here, please email [OUR@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:OUR@jjay.cuny.edu) and we will include it in the fall newsletter.

## OUR Award-Winning Students

**Johnny Cardenas** (Criminal Justice) won a scientific leadership award from the Department of Homeland Security which funded a summer internship at the Savannah River National Laboratory in the summer of 2010.

**Celinet Duran** (Justice studies) won both an American Society of Criminology Undergraduate Student Minority Scholarship in 2009 and a Department of Homeland Security Career Development Program Scholarship in 2010.

The following student projects were awarded \$1,500 undergraduate research scholarships in 2010 from the John Jay College Committee on Scholarships:

**Aneesa Baboolal** (International Criminal Justice), *The role of community in addressing the cultural legitimization of domestic violence among Indo-Caribbean immigrant women*

**Susann Cortes** (Forensic Psychology) *Community attitudes and perceptions toward sex offenders*

**Melissa Fleck** (CUNY BA student) *Perspectives of life on the Dominican Republic-Haitian border*

**Trisha Gangadeen** (International Criminal Justice) *Unmasking masculinity and wartime rape*

**Michael Lugo** (Forensic Science) *Connective tissue growth factor*

**Victoria Oyaniran** (Criminal Justice) *Nigeria's underdevelopment paradox*

**Richard Piszczatoski** (Forensic Science) *Characterizing the relationship between CCN2 and platelet activation*

**Lina Rojas** (Criminal Justice) *Violence, political instability and the trafficking of women in Columbia*