Can you believe that it’s already April? Neither can I! Exciting ventures are on the horizon, so be sure to give this edition of the URC Newsletter a thorough read through.

First up, Summer URECA grant applications (page 3) are due April 4th, so be sure to wrap those up if you have not done so already. We also welcome you to join us for a Thesis Publication Workshop hosted by Dr. Karen Nourse (page 5).

Undergraduate Research Week is the week of April 15th and we have some more workshops for you to participate in (page 6). The week will conclude with the SOAR Spring Social on the 18th (page 7). Please RSVP as supplies are limited!

Then, take a look at the recap for Scholars Week and the RCA Expo from last month (page 8). While you’re at it, check out the list of RCA Expo winners (pages 9-10). Additionally, NCUR 2024 is just around the corner, and the URC is sending more than 20 students to present their work (pages 11-15).

Last but not least, graduating seniors are now encouraged to apply for graduation distinctions in undergraduate research (page 18). Next month, the May newsletter will showcase some fantastic seniors, too!

Until next time,
Ross Sibley, Editor
(rhs2x@mtmail.mtsu.edu)
THE URC TEAM

YOU, our students and faculty, are our #1 priority. We are here to help however possible, whether it is getting you involved in undergraduate research, helping you find a faculty mentor, thinking through a research or creative activity project, hosting a workshop on a topic of need, or facilitating events. Meet our team!

**DR. JAMIE BURRISS**

Dr. Burriess oversees the URC, the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR), SOAR Ambassadors, the URECA grant program, communications, Scholars Week, Posters at the Capitol, and all other activities related to the URC.

Prior to returning to MTSU, Dr. Burriess served as the Curriculum Administrator for the SELECT MD Program at the University of South Florida while pursuing her doctorate. After USF, she accepted a position at Vanderbilt University as the Assessment Analyst for the College of Medicine. But, her heart has always been TRUE BLUE and she is happy to once again serve her undergraduate alma mater.

**CHANNON FULTS**

Program Assistant

Channon was born and raised in Murfreesboro, TN. She graduated MTSU in 2006 with a Bachelor’s degree in Interior Design and a minor in Human Sciences. Between working part time with the URC program and being a Mom she continues to pursue her interior design career as well. She is excited to be joining the URC team and is eager to be a part of helping enhance student education at her alma mater.

**SOPHIA ROBERTS**

Major: Sociology
URC Involvement: Research Assistant
Fun Fact: Sophia graduated in December 2023 with the Scholar Distinction in Undergraduate Research.

**ROSS SIBLEY**

Major: Biochemistry
SOAR Involvement: President, Communications & Social Media Ambassador
Fun Fact: Ross was funded to present his research in the UK at the World Congress on Undergraduate Research.
SUMMER URECA GRANTS

APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 4TH, 2024 BY 4:30PM

STUDENTS MAY APPLY FOR THE FOLLOWING LEVELS:

- **Assistant** - beginners, one semester project, $500 stipend
- **Silver Scholar** - experienced student researcher, one semester project, $1000 stipend
- **Gold Level** - experienced student researcher, 2 semester project (fall & spring), $2,400 stipend

Team - All levels

Want to get paid to do research or work on a creative project?

**THEN CHECK OUT OUR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY GRANTS**

To support our vision of nurturing a culture of research and creative activity at MTSU, the URC offers Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity (URECA) grants to students three times a year. Awards range from $500 for beginners to $3,500 for experienced researchers.

Team applications are now being offered during the fall, spring, and summer semester. More information about the team structure can be found [here](#).

To learn more about URECA grants and how to submit proposals, check out our website.

**NEW!!** Need assistance finding a mentoring or figuring out which level grant is best for you? Contact our Peer Mentor Scholar, Emilie Conners, at emc5w@mtmail.mtsu.edu. Emilie can also help with proposal development, budget and justification, creating a timeline, and proposal review.
I'M HERE TO HELP YOU...

GET INVOLVED IN UNDERGRAD RESEARCH
APPLY FOR A URECA GRANT
FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT IT!

OFFICE HOURS
EVERY MONDAY
3-4 PM

REACH OUT TO ME (EMILIE CONNERS) AT EMC5W@MTMAIL.MTSU.EDU
CONSIDERATIONS FOR PUBLISHING YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION

APRIL 2, 2024
11:00-11:30am
LIB 264A
LIGHT LUNCH INCLUDED!

Interested in publishing in a peer-reviewed journal? Join us to learn some guidelines and directions in moving your work to publication.

REGISTER NOW

tinyurl.com/LRWSworkshop
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH WEEK
4/15 - 4/19/24

APR 15
FANTASTIC FACULTY MENTORS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM
10:00-10:30am in LIB 264A | RSVP HERE
CFA Chicken Minis & Fruit

APR 17
ESTABLISHING YOUR RESEARCHER PRESENCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA
12:00-1:00pm in LIB 264A | LUNCH PROVIDED!

APR 18
SOAR SPRING SOCIAL: FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS & MINI CANVAS PAINTING
5:00-7:00pm in STU 220 | RSVP HERE
Pizza Dinner Provided
Join us for a fun-filled night as we make friendship bracelets, paint mini canvases, and enjoy a pizza dinner!

April 18th, 2024
5:00 - 7:00pm
STU 220
RSVP HERE
Throughout the RCA Expo, student presenters were judged by volunteer staff and faculty members. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards were presented for each academic college (see next page).

SCHOLARS WEEK RCA EXPO

The 18th annual Scholars Week Research and Creative Activity (RCA) Expo on March 15th, 2024 featured almost 200 projects across all colleges on campus. Student presenters and attendees were welcome to participate in two poster presentation sessions as well as two halftime creative performances while enjoying lunch and dessert. Blackman High School juniors and seniors were also invited to present as part of the READY to SOAR outreach program.
RCA Expo Winners

College of Basic and Applied Sciences

UNDERGRADUATE
1st Place: Meirola Endraws & Cole Huddleson
Dr. April Weissmiller
2nd Place: Amy Brown
Dr. Souvik Banerjee
3rd Place: Rand Hasan
Dr. Kevin Bicker

GRADUATE
1st Place: Rahimi Anini
Dr. Elizabeth Barnes
2nd Place: Manikanta Sai Venkata
Siddhardha Chedllla
Dr. Joshua Phillips
3rd Place: Ahmeed Yinusa
Dr. Misagh Faezipour

College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

UNDERGRADUATE
1st Place: Letisha Bates & Logan Dowd
Dr. Elizabeth Smith
2nd Place: Justin Yule
Dr. Anna Galizio
3rd Place: Maria Lira
Dr. Andrew Owusu

GRADUATE
1st Place: Ryah Al-Amin
Dr. Judith Van Hein
2nd Place: Taiya Mitchell & Sara Rodriguez Molina
3rd Place: Marialuisa Zirilli
Dr. Rudy Dunlap

College of Education

UNDERGRADUATE
1st Place: Kera Reynolds
Dr. Amy Kornstange

GRADUATE
1st Place: Kendra Miller
Dr. Terry Goodin
2nd Place: Lori Klukowski & Fonya Scott
Dr. Seth Jones

Click Here for a Full List of Winners and Project Titles
College of Liberal Arts

UNDERGRADUATE
1st Place: Eli Ward
   Dr. Rebekka King
2nd Place: Brittany Eidemiller, Sara Sandefur, Karsen Gray, Brynlee Wolfe
   Dr. Bridget Donnelly
3rd Place: Rada Ryan
   Dr. Carter Smith

GRADUATE
1st Place: Tamara Costello
   Dr. Amy Sayward
2nd Place: Amanda Floyd
   Dr. Carroll Van West

Click Here for a Full List of Winners and Project Titles

College of Media and Entertainment

UNDERGRADUATE
1st Place: Jacob Moore, Josiah Parkhurst, Emily Duff
   Ms. Carla Fox
2nd Place: Cynthia Lowe
   Dr. Sanjay Asthana
3rd Place: Francisco Galvan & David Nelson
   Ms. Carla Fox

GRADUATE
1st Place: Connor Chase
   Ms. Cosette Collier
2nd Place: Ines Lopez
   Ms. Cosette Collier
3rd Place: Elijah Matlock
   Dr. Trevor de Clercq

Jones College of Business

UNDERGRADUATE
1st Place: Anna Collins
   Dr. Sam Zaza
2nd Place: Emma Ankar & Ashley Landaverde
   Dr. Gaia Rancati
3rd Place: Priscilla Hammermeister
   Dr. Tom Brinthaput
   Dr. Murat Arik

GRADUATE
1st Place: Lothida Mamidi & Jennifer Nanmejo
   Ms. Yaping Zhu
   Dr. Sam Zaza
2nd Place: Maria Grefberg
   Ms. Yaping Zhu
   Dr. Sam Zaza
NCUR 2024 PRESENTERS

Anna Collins
The Ordinary Price of Zero &
The Impact of Accessibility and
Connectivity on Farmer’s Intention to Leave Their Land

Ariel Nicastro
Acoustic Forcing: Device Design and
Applications in Neuromodulation

Braedyn Hollingsworth
Chemotaxonomy of Dinoflagellate Tongula britannica as Based on Sterols and Galactolipids

Connor Prim
Integrating Classical Music Into the Elementary Classroom

Eden Anderson
Detecting Estrogen in the Stones River Waterways Using the Yeast Estrogen Screen (YES) Test of the Saccharomyces cerevisiae
NCUR 2024 PRESENTERS

Emilie Conners
The Body Positivity Movement: Bettering College Women’s Body Image and Health

Fatimah Alnasseri
Optimization of a Rapid and Efficient Method for Ginsenoside Extraction

Hannah Antrican
“What Can I Do About It?”: Eco-Anxiety in College Students

Janna Abou-Rahma
Mechanism of Action of Antifungal Peptoids

Jillian Degrie
Breaking the Stigma Around Autism: an Interactive Art Exhibition
NCUR 2024 PRESENTERS

Jorden Johnson
Assessing the Fidelity of Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) Profile in Architectural Lighting

Karmina Ghobrial
Exploring Coffee Silverskin Extract’s Effects on Age-Related Gene DVE-1/SATB1 During UV-Induced Oxidative Stress

Khadijah Alnasseri
Optimization of a Rapid and Efficient Method for Ginsenoside Extraction

Lindsey Tran
A Preliminary Study: Harvesting and Storing Electromagnetic Radiation using Animal Blood and Micromagnetic Beads

Meirola Endraws
Biological Evaluation of Novel Tubulin Inhibitors for Treatment of Cancer
NCUR 2024 PRESENTERS

Nottely Seagraves
Bridging the Divide: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Implementation of Opportunity Investment Funds to Combat Inequality in Development.

Rand Hasan
Synthesis and Evaluation of Polyaspartate Peptoid Polymers

Rosemary Guttierez
Electromagnetic Ionization and Radiation Creation in Neuroblastoma Cancer Cells

Ross Sibley
Effects of Cyclization on Antifungal Peptoid Efficacy, Cytotoxicity, and Permeability

Sophia Roberts
Stopping the Willow Project on Social Media: An Exploration of the Social Problems Process in a Sub-Environmental Issue
NCUR 2024 PRESENTERS

Weston Williams
Removal and Bioconversion of Pharmaceutical Waste Created by the Production of Antibiotic Penicillin, and the Spread of Antibiotic Resistance in the Environment

Zaynab Alnasseri
Optimization of a Rapid and Efficient Method for Ginsenoside Extraction Abstract

Kera Reynolds
A Look at University Student Engagement and Connection and its Impact on At-Risk First-Year Students Residing in Housing and Residential in Housing and Residential Life at Middle Tennessee State University

Stay tuned for a NCUR Recap in next month’s edition of the URC newsletter!
The Good and Bad of Undergrad Research

I came across a recent article (Adebisi, 2022) which discussed undergraduate student involvement in research. The author found the following benefits and barriers for students:

### Benefits to Students Participating in Research
- Improve problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Develop advanced writing skills
- Improve academic success in coursework
- Faculty mentorship and career guidance
- Improve problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Develop communication skills and responsibility in teams
- Publication & presentation opportunities

### Barriers to Conducting Research
- Lack of time to conduct research due to coursework and other responsibilities
- Difficulty in choosing topics
- Students self assess themselves as unqualified/lacking knowledge

### Addressing Perceived Barriers

**Lack of Time:** It is true that getting involved with research is an additional commitment, but choosing to go to college in the first place is an investment of time: you are trading these years for the prospect of higher income. When you graduate college, you will have years ahead to work and make money, but you will no longer have the chance to work with faculty on research. This is, therefore, a unique time in life in which you must weigh the return on (time) investment. Research hits so many important extracurricular goals (such as networking, developing your skills, and personal growth) that one could make the argument that it is a worthwhile return on your investment. Consider your long-term priorities, and see if you can arrange your schedule to accommodate the additional short-term responsibility of research. I think it is very rare that graduated students say “Wow, I wish I hadn’t spent time doing that research project in college!”

**Insufficient Research Skills:** This is a much easier barrier to address than time! You are in college so you are not expected to know everything: in fact, knowledge gains are exactly what you are paying tuition for! So take heart and know that there are many people here who have made it their life’s work to help you overcome a lack of skills/knowledge about research: your faculty (including your friendly Walker librarians) all want to help you on your research journey. You just need to reach out to them!

**Choosing a Topic:** I devoted my column last month to tackling this issue. Please give it a read if you haven’t already: [Click HERE](#)

Conducting research as an undergraduate student yields many academic and professional benefits. And at MTSU, undergraduate research can even carry financial incentives; learn more here: [https://w1.mtsu.edu/urc/ureca/index.php](https://w1.mtsu.edu/urc/ureca/index.php) Don’t let perceived barriers hold you back from making the most of your MTSU years!

SOAR is our awesome student organization comprised of undergraduate students who are committed to developing and sustaining an active and successful undergraduate research environment at MTSU.

SOAR's Mission
To enhance student’s research capacity through increased awareness, collaboration and skill building.

Why Join?
- SOAR will enhance a student’s research capacity through increased awareness, collaboration and skill building by offering workshops and trainings to fulfill the needs of undergraduate researchers.
- SOAR will assist students in the preparation of poster presentations and development of abstracts to increase conference presence on a national level, encourage students to attend the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, and facilitate travel preparations.
- SOAR will provide peer mentoring to students new to undergraduate research.

JOIN SOAR!
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH GRADUATION DISTINCTIONS

LEVELS OF RECOGNITION:

Distinction in Undergraduate Research
- Students must fulfill all requirements
  - Successful completion of an Assistant level URECA project - 50 hours of research or more.
  - Poster presentation or creative performance at one of the URC’s signature events: Fall Open House, Scholars Week, or Summer Research Celebration.
  - Active participation for at least one academic year in the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR).
  - Confirmation of support from URECA faculty mentor.

Scholar Distinction in Undergraduate Research
- Students receive a dark blue, light blue and white cord AND a medallion (see image to the right)
  - Successful completion of a Scholar level URECA project - 100 hours of research or more.
  - Poster presentation or creative performance at one of the URC’s signature events: Fall Open House, Scholars Week, or Summer Research Celebration.
  - Active participation for at least one academic year in the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR).
  - Poster or presentation at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research or published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.
  - Confirmation of support from URECA faculty mentor.

DISTINCTION CRITERIA

Distinction in Undergraduate Research
*Students must fulfill all requirements

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3. Active participation for at least one academic year in the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR).
4. Poster or presentation at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research or published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.
5. Confirmation of support from URECA faculty mentor.
LOOKING TO START YOUR RESEARCH JOURNEY?

The URC's guide for upcoming student researchers, Research Guide: How to Start your Student Research Journey, is a great resource for undergraduates seeking to enter the world of research! This guide covers when to start research, how to find a project, student experiences, helpful advice, URC resources, and SOAR resources at MTSU.

The next time you are asked how to get involved in research, direct that student to this resource!

This guide was initiated, compiled, and formatted by Dara Zwemer.

Stories were provided by SOAR students, including Cassandra Perrone, Leah Piccirillo, Javier Hernandez, Robert Conner, Charlotte Daigle, Madeline Aadnes, Maria Fernanda Clark, Kylie C. Moe, Miquellie Bonner, Merry Young, Kaitlyn Berry, Zachary Sanchez, Kap Paull, and Christopher Hall.

We hope you find it useful!

Check Out Our STUDENT RESEARCH GUIDE
MTSU’s outstanding Research Groups and State of the Art Laboratories, all in one place.

The URC is proud to announce our new directory. This resource will allow students to learn about excellent MTSU labs and research groups across several disciplines. Both new and experienced student researchers can utilize this document to find research positions, set up collaborations with other labs, or to establish a specific thesis mentor.

This directory is also a resource for faculty members seeking student researchers. Each lab or group’s accomplishments, publications, and goals are detailed within the pages of this directory.

This directory contains descriptions, key skills necessary, and semester openings for several labs, divided by specific college. To access the directory, click the button on the right or scan the QR code.

PDF copies of the directory are also available to print.

*Please send any additions or updates to our URC Research Assistant, Gracie Johnson: gpm2h@mtmail.mtsu.edu
Summer Immersion on Innovative Approaches in Science - Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

- The Summer Immersion is designed to educate the next generation of scientists committed to advancing science ethically using nonanimal methods for research and testing. This FREE 3-day program provides an overview of in vitro, in silico, and in chemico approaches and their many applications in basic, translational, and regulatory science to replace animals. Attendees will participate in scientific talks, career development workshops, poster presentations, technology demonstrations, and more. **Apply by April 5th, 2024.**

Interested in more opportunities? [Click here](#) to explore more internship/research opportunities!

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**Check out the links below to explore other helpful resources!**

- Internships and Research Opportunities
- Student Journals
- Paper and Presentation Opportunities
- Student Resource Center