

Fall Issue, 2021-2022

*A Collaboration between the Centre
for Undergraduate Research Learning
and the Huron University College
Students' Council*



CURL X HUCSC

RESEARCH AT HURON



“The Centre for Undergraduate Research Learning aims to transform undergraduate learning through experiential learning opportunities that support students in research, academia, and their future careers.”

This is the first ever issue of Huron’s new research newsletter, created by the Centre for Undergraduate Research Learning (CURL), in collaboration with the Huron University College Students’ Council (HUCSC). The newsletter will highlight the many ways in which the research experience here at Huron is unique from that of other schools. Two issues will be published a year, one per semester following each CURL Conference.

Benefits and Barriers to Conducting Research for a CURL Fellowship Entirely Online

By Ethan Coleman

Over the summer, I participated in a CURL fellowship online. It was only my last meeting that was in-person; the rest of my CURL experience was conducted solely over a computer screen.

Since my mentor and I were able to meet face-to-face over Zoom, the fellowship still felt like the personal, one-on-one experience it was supposed to be. Maintaining face-to-face discussions ensured the fellowship felt more personal, especially since I approached a professor that I knew from one of my classes to be my mentor—one of the few faculty I knew beyond their smiling picture on Huron’s website. Meeting online, I was fortunate that I had a reliable connection, so I did not have major connectivity issues or other disruptions. There were only minor amusements with faces frozen mid-speech or dogs barking.

Where I felt restriction from being online was when I tried to access some sources. I compared three different English translations of both *L’Assommoir* and *Au Bonheur des Dames*, requiring six specific translations from the 1880s and 1890s. This comparison allowed me to determine if the publisher Vizetelly’s translations were justifiably censored for obscenity compared to those by

his contemporaries. Resources like the Internet Archive and Project Gutenberg were incredibly useful, but some of the translations I sought were mislabelled. Despite this, I had plenty of material to work with: I designed the project with the understanding that it would be conducted entirely online and that I would encounter minor setbacks from accessing digital sources.

From my experience this past summer, being online worked well—I was lucky enough to be able to successfully adapt my project to an online environment. It made me consider how changing circumstances in which research must be carried out can impact what methods are viable and by extension what research can be effectively studied.



Photo by Glenn Carstens-Peters
via Unsplash

“What can CURL do to be more accessible to Students?” – An overview of the work of the Academic Collaborators

By Mekhalaa Muraly

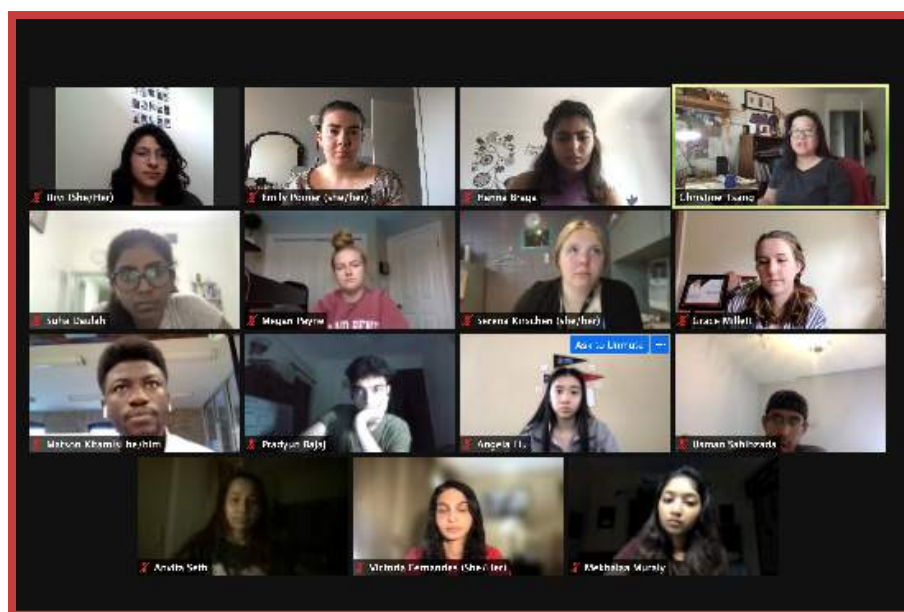
Throughout the summer of 2021, the Academic Collaborators – a group of eleven undergraduate students at Huron – worked in groups on various projects surrounding the three themes of Research Ethics, Student-Faculty Mentorship, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The goal of the Academic Collaborators was to answer the question, “What can CURL do to be more accessible to students?”

The Academic Collaborators researched gaps in each of the three themes relating to academic life in order to problem solve and provide recommendations to various stakeholders at Huron. They also conversed with other students and faculty to collaboratively create group-specific deliverables. Matson Kitamisi, one of the collaborators in the Equity Diversity and Inclusion group, recalls his experience on the project, “We provided recommendations about what we identified as gaps

in the EDI principles incorporated by CURL to ensure that resources such as information about opportunities, conferences, and applications are easily accessible to students.”

In addition to the work done by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion group, the Research Ethics group also contributed to the question of student accessibility. The group looked at how to make students more invested in undertaking ethical research practices and focused on facilitating research ethics through better accessibility. Throughout the summer, the group produced podcasts and infographics to be published on several platforms to enhance students’ awareness about conducting ethical research at Huron. The last group of Academic Collaborators explored Student-Faculty Mentorship and provided recommendations on how these opportunities, resources and academic supports can benefit the student body at large.

Throughout the experience the Academic Collaborators were able to effectively work on deliverable-based projects with the aim of improving academic experiences at Huron. The Research Ethics group created a four-episode podcast, which can be viewed on the CURL Instagram (@curlathuron).



A zoom meeting of the Academic Collaborators

CURL's 2021 Fall Conference - A Note on Engagement

By Kit Roffey

The Centre for Undergraduate Research Learning's (CURL) biannual conference was held online once again from December 8th to the 14th. The conference, which focuses on undergraduate research at Huron, totaled sixty-two Instagram posts over the eight-day period. With over 500 followers on Instagram alone (@curlathuron) the conference was able to reach those interested in undergraduate learning in a unique way.

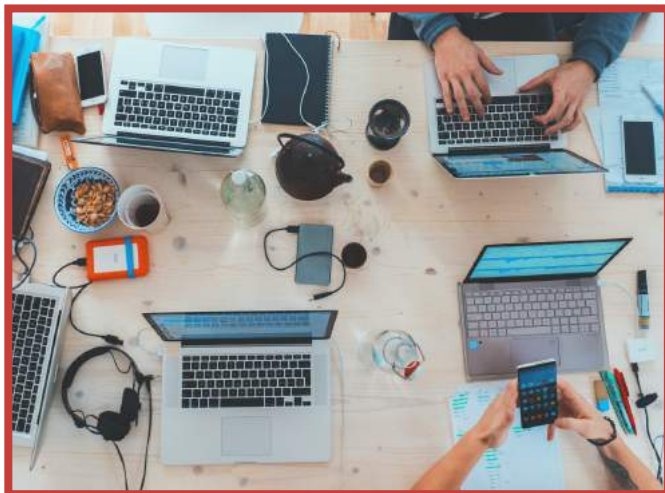


Photo by Marvin Meyer
via Unsplash

The CURL conference featured research done as a class as well as independently, information about undergraduate research, work from the CURL academic collaborators, and culminated in the announcement of the CURL Research Fellowship winners. The CURL Instagram included “menus” every day of what would be posted which allowed attendees to focus on the posts and areas of undergraduate research that most interested them. The CURL conference was presented through both posts as well as some IGTV videos. This mix of mediums allowed for information to be engaged with quickly through swiping through a post, or more deeply through watching a video.

The posts and IGTV videos used different techniques and graphics to convey a lot of research in a short amount of time. Photos taken by student researchers, often involving books and laptops, allowed attendees to get a first-person glimpse into how research happens. Infographics were also prominent, breaking down key information to help attendees understand pivotal outcomes. Historical artifacts and texts such as newspapers, books from the Western library archives, and photographs created added interest and allowed many attendees a chance to view these texts and artifacts that they might not otherwise have had.

In addition to the style of posts and videos that helped to support engagement with undergraduate research learning, the nature of the online format also created a new opportunity for engagement. Without restrictions such as classes, assignments, or exam schedules the CURL conference was able to be attended by many who might have not had the time or the chance to attend an in-person event. In addition to this, the online format allowed the undergraduate research to extend beyond the Huron community. Those interested in the CURL conference can still visit the CURL Instagram (@curlathuron) to view, like, and comment to support the wonderful undergraduate research learning happening at Huron.



Photo by Christina
via Unsplash

CURL's 2021 Fall Conference - A Note on Accessibility

By Alyssa Kaminski

The Centre for Undergraduate Research Learning (CURL) places great emphasis on being accessible and inclusive in everything it does, including its biannual conferences. CURL works with students to help them present their research at the conferences in a manner that is accessible to all. Having the Fall Conference online over the CURL Instagram (@curlathuron) made presenting and viewing research more accessible than ever.



Photo by Glenn Carstens-Peters
via Unsplash

Presenting at or attending the conference when it is in-person is difficult for many people due to the end of semester stress and workload. For those with disabilities and non-normative access needs it can be even more challenging. The online conference format allows for more individuals to participate and engage with research at Huron. It also reduces many of the barriers involved with presenting and attending in-person which is especially important when considering limitations set in place by the pandemic. It allows people to participate from different time zones and while working through exams. Viewers are able to read or watch posts whenever they choose to.

CURL aims to make conferences even more accessible through assisting presenters in creating

accessible content for conferences – whether in-person or online – by offering a guide outlining ways they can convey their research. It covers auditory and visual barriers, and how to remove or reduce them: using image descriptions and subtitles; carefully choosing fonts and colours; and providing handouts and ensuring assistive technologies can work properly with the content presented.

CURL employs these strategies in their own posts as well. The graphics and layouts are clean, and images are kept simple to not distract from the main information in posts. Text stands out from the background and from images and is in simple fonts that are easily understood by assistive technologies, like screen-readers. Images have descriptions in the caption or comments, and slide presentations have text summaries, in order to be read by assistive technologies.

By holding the Fall Conference over Instagram, CURL made it easier to present and participate in research at Huron. The difficulties that come with holding the conference in-person – such as time constraints, anxieties around health and physical limits, and the end of year workload – are reduced so that more individuals are able to engage with research at Huron.



Curl Instagram

Huron's Research Ethics Board

By Ethan Coleman

“The REB has traditionally tried to have a student position open . . . to hear student voices with regards to ethical issues as they come through the board.”

As the Student at Large representative on Huron's Research Ethics Board (REB), Erdanya Anderson participates in reviewing applications for student and faculty research. The REB process involves both students and faculty from different disciplines.

Erdanya's role allows students' voices to meaningfully contribute to the REB process. “The REB has traditionally tried to have a student position open . . . to hear student voices with regards to ethical issues as they come through the board,” Erdanya explains. “Our main goal is to ensure that the participants and/or the people that are involved in the research aren't going to be harmed in any way.”

REB meetings are “always conducted in a respectful manner. Nobody's perspective is lower or higher on the scale of value.” Since the REB consists of faculty and students from different experiences and disciplines, Erdanya explains that the “variety of perspectives. . . can be very helpful in trying to understand the vast collection of projects that come across our table.”

The most valuable insight Erdanya learned by being a part of the REB is the challenge to provide constructive criticism to applicants. “[Ethics] is really about constructing an environment [around] . . . the ability to move forward in a productive manner.” “We're all taught [to look for] the problem with something rather than looking for the potential, and there's a middle ground where you're able to see a problem and still see the potential,” Erdanya points out. “You're able to find . . . a possible solution that allows you to still actualize the potential, which is really helpful.”

Ethics review is a crucial part in promoting an academic environment of safe and respectful research. Submitting to the REB is intended to be a constructive process that benefits researchers. Applications and templates for submitting a project to the REB can be found on Huron's website.

Summer Research Assistantships: One of Huron's Many Research Opportunities for Undergraduate Students

By Madeleine Marcelino

Over the summer, Lea Smit worked as a research assistant to Dr Christine Tsang, Chair of the Psychology department at Huron. Their research investigated whether the brief exposure to sung words versus spoken words facilitates six-to-ten-month-old infants' ability to transfer their learning of auditory-spatial metaphors in the visual modality.

Lea spoke about how valuable her research experience was, saying that it “was enlightening and beneficial to [her] success as a psychology student. [W]orking on the initial aspects of research allowed [her]...an in-depth understanding of the research process and...the time and dedication it takes.” Lea is thankful for Dr Tsang's mentorship, and grateful to Huron for the opportunity.

Ultimately, Lea credits Huron for offering “such incredible experiences that allowed me to be recognized rather than feeling like a number”. Speaking about Huron's small class sizes and one-on-one learning opportunities with professors, Lea said, “[these experiences] have allowed me to excel in my studies, discover my passions, and apply my knowledge to my research assistant position.” Lea encourages every Huron student to reach out to professors about potential new and exciting opportunities.

From Mentee to Mentor – Nikesh’s Journey through the Scholar’s Electives Program

By Mekhalaa Muraly

Nikesh Mehta-Spooner is a Huron student who has been involved in the Scholar’s Electives Program – designed to provide a fundamental background of research methodology for high-achieving undergraduate students – for almost three years now. Over the course of his journey in the program, he has been mentored by various professors at Huron and is currently mentoring new students entering the module.

Nikesh regards his experience as a mentee in the program as extremely valuable and enriching. “In the first two years, I had a breadth of learning



Nikesh Mehta-Spooner

experiences as I interacted with professors in different disciplines. In my first year as a mentee, I was able to get valuable advice from Dr. Nesbitt-Larking about the value of research, what can make your research project unique, and the importance of research”. He also appreciates

his research experience with Dr. Crimmins and Dr. Hope as he was able to improve on his writing skills, understand different perspectives, and learn how to approach research differently from other researchers.

Nikesh believes that the “value of being a mentor is that you not only get to pass on knowledge but also get to receive knowledge”. Mentoring first-year students allowed Nikesh to explore how his own knowledge can be transformed by engaging with the mentees. “I think the first-year students have taught me as much as my mentors.

taught me in my first year, specifically in terms of communicating the importance of research to someone who is new to [research]”, says Nikesh.

He is presently working on a project titled “The American Civil Rights movement in international context: The Black Press and Ghanaian Independence”, for the capstone course in the Scholar’s Electives program. He spoke to his experience of doing research during the pandemic: “I understood how engaging the digital archive is, especially because I am not able to travel to different state archives due to Covid. As challenging as it was, I learned ways to use digital archives while [recognizing] what my biases are.”



An issue from the newspaper The Crusader titled “Ghana, New Nation Born”, which Nikesh is using in his research

A Personal Reflection on the Psychological Impacts of the Pandemic

By Madeleine Marcelino

During the summer of 2020, following the COVID-19 rules of quarantining provided me with the time and opportunity to reflect on the impacts of the pandemic. I read a newspaper article on the psychological impact the pandemic was having on people, which left me with several questions, and I reached out to Dr Irene Cheung – a social psychology professor at Huron – to answer them.

Dr Cheung, myself, and another colleague began researching the theme of moral injury through the eyes of various professions and life experiences. Over the summer and up to the present day, we have been discussing over zoom the news articles on moral injury in the medical field, first responder work, personal experiences, and genocides.

Being a part of this research has broadened my knowledge on the topic, allowing me to apply what I have learnt in a larger, worldwide setting – especially regarding health care professionals, such as the shortage of PPE gear, and the guilt that continues to stay with them. As a result of the pandemic, many people have battled with a fluctuation of emotions. Having this illuminating experience while working alongside Dr Cheung and our colleague has deepened my understanding on what it means to care for someone by finding truth with their pain and ways to help reconcile with their pain.

Creating Space for Students in Research: A Glimpse into Dr. Marina Palaisti's Work

By Ethan Coleman

Over the past year, Dr. Palaisti has continued involving students in her research about prejudices towards math and STEM studies in the classroom.

To continue exploring stereotypes towards STEM studies, students were hired as research

assistants this October. More specifically, the current project investigates how “racialized students are being marginalized in the classroom.” Dr. Palaisti explains that “a classroom is a microcosm of society—whatever happens in society, it is brought in the classroom. Prejudices exist in the classroom only because they exist in the world.”



Dr. Marina Palaisti

The perspectives of students continue to be crucial in this research to understand how societal prejudices and barriers exist in the classroom and how they can be broken by more informed instruction by teachers or professors. Ensuring that research assistants are treated as equals in the research process is important for Dr. Palaisti. “At the end of the day, my project is something that is meant to help me help my students. Students are the ones that should determine what they are interested in finding out, dissecting, and analyzing.”

The transition to conducting research online last January has had some positive effects. “Actually, data collection became easier during COVID . . . We used Qualtrics, and the data anonymization was done automatically . . . also, we didn’t manually need to transfer answers online for analysis.” Being online did have some challenges, with the largest issue being the reduced number of participants. “It doesn’t matter how many places you put a questionnaire out if people are burnt out and don’t want to take some-

thing that is done on a voluntary basis,” Dr. Palaisti explained.

Huron’s Undergraduate Research Journal, *The Liberated Arts*

By Madeleine Marcelino

Liberated Arts is an academic journal at Huron that publishes peer-reviewed undergraduate



research from post-secondary institutions around the world. It provides students the opportunity to publish original research, or to engage in the peer-review and publication process as a junior editor working alongside faculty editors.

To learn more about the journal, we interviewed Dr. Steve Bland, Chair and Associate Professor of Philosophy at Huron. Dr. Bland serves as a faculty editor on Liberated Arts. In this interview, he spoke about how his position at the journal changed the way he thinks about undergraduate research learning: “The way [junior editors] are able to understand feedback that reviewers give and that senior editors give and then communicate with the authors about what’s expected of them and shepherd each paper that they’re in charge of through the process... was a really eye-opening experience.” He said he “always knew that undergraduates were capable of really remarkable research...but it was a new level of research understanding on their part.”

Dr. Bland also spoke about how he was “pleasantly surprised [by] how supportive and wise and understanding our students can be with other authors.” He encourages students to continue with undergraduate research and incorporate new and innovative research approaches into their lives, like *Liberated Arts*.

Those interested in having their academic work published can go to the [Liberated Arts Journal website](#) to view submission dates and guidelines. Previous issues of the journal can also be found on the website for those interested in reading student work.



Aaron Burden
via Unsplash

“Research is a set of tools for learning more about the world” – Dr. Stephen Van Hedger’s Thoughts on the Importance of Undergraduate Researchers

By Mekhalaa Muraly

Dr. Van Hedger is a professor in the department of psychology who has worked on several projects with undergraduate research assistants, and he has been involved in the study “The Role of Musical Tuning on Individual Preference Formation”.

With the goal of publishing a multi-experimental project report, the team led by Dr. Van Hedger began working on the project by developing the stimuli, programming the experiment on a software, and then collecting and managing the data in an online environment. Dr. Van Hedger elaborates on the benefits of conducting research online during the pandemic: “One of the advantages is that we have the opportunity to diversify and increase the kind of participants we are considering for the study which has been very important in thinking about the generalizability of our findings”. Dr. Van Hedger and his RAs found that listeners have a very weak preference for conventionally tuned music, and they plan to further investigate this.

Dr. Van Hedger emphasizes fostering a collaborative environment in the process of conducting research with RAs. “One of the reasons why I chose to be at a place like Huron is to be able to forge meaningful collaborations with undergraduate researchers... I might be directing the research, but at the end of the day, I hope that undergraduate researchers can really take ownership of the project and contribute at more than a superficial level”, says Dr. Van Hedger.



Dr. Stephan Van Hedger

When considering the scope of extracurricular research, Dr. Van Hedger believes that “It is more about the excitement, willingness and motivation to immerse oneself in the process above and beyond any pre-existing hard-skills that you come into the experience having”. Dr. Van Hedger regards the involvement of RAs in a project as essential: “There is something refreshing about bringing in somebody who is excited and motivated and may not have the same depth of previous knowledge because sometimes, these individuals can make really cool connections and have profound insights”.

Afterword

CURL and HUCSC share in our vision to enhance student learning, foster mentorship, and facilitate a culture of collaboration between students and faculty members at Huron. With this newsletter, we come together to celebrate the talent and efforts of our student body, and recognize students as scholars in their own right. Undergraduate

research takes many forms at Huron. As research assistants and volunteers, as collaborators, and as independent scholars, students contribute to the research ecosystem at Huron every day, conducting stellar research within and outside their courses. By bringing these stories together, we hope to shed light on the inner workings of a research project: sharing not just the successes and outcomes, but also the challenges and setbacks of the research process, faced by junior and senior scholars alike.

We are thankful to all those who shared their work and stories for this issue. Most importantly, we are grateful to the team of student editors, writers, and graphic designers working tirelessly behind the scenes to put this newsletter together. We hope this is the first of many issues in the years to come!

CURL is always looking to spotlight undergraduate research!



If you have:

- A cool independent project
- An interesting class project
- Travelled for research
- Visited local archives
- Collaborated with community partners
- Done some digital work

We want to hear from you!

If you'd like to write for or be featured in the next issue of the CURL Newsletter, email us at curl@uwo.ca or info@myhuron.ca!

Thank You

To everyone who made this issue of the Huron Research Newsletter possible.



Kit Roffey
Editor



Alyssa Kaminski
Editor



Ethan Coleman
Writer



Madeleine Marcelino
Writer



Mekhalaa Muraly
Writer



Joey Lisser
Graphic Designer

We appreciate everyone who took the time to be interviewed for this issue: Dr. Steve Bland; Dr. Marina Palaisti; Dr. Stephan Van Hedger; Matson Kitamisi; Erdanya Anderson; Lea Smit; and Nikesh Mehta-Spooner.

A special thank-you goes out to everyone at the Centre for Undergraduate Research Learning and the Huron University College Students' Council; especially Dr. Christine Tsang, Sherri Liska, and Urvi Maheshwari, as without them this newsletter would not exist.

