

**Stetson Undergraduate Research Committee**  
**Annual Report**  
**May 2, 2020**

Dr. Noel Painter, Provost  
Dr. Rosalie Richards, Associate Provost  
Dr. Elizabeth Skomp, Dean, CAS  
Stetson University

Dr. Painter and Dr. Skomp:

On behalf of the Undergraduate Research Committee, I submit to you an appraisal of the Stetson Showcase and the Stetson Undergraduate Research Experience for 2018/9.

The Undergraduate Research Committee that reviewed SURE Grant applications and recommended the successful candidates, as well as had begun to organize for Showcase on April 14, 2020, consisted of Dr. Kimberly Reiter (Chair), Dr. Melissa Parks, Dr. David Schmidt, Sidney Johnston, Dr. Randall Croom, Dr. Kevin Riggs, Grace Kaletski, Dr. John York and Dr. Ken McCoy (replaced by Dr. Su Young Choi in the Fall). There was also important assistance from Mary Bernard, administrative assistant in the Department of History. The Committee took on three tasks:

1. An analysis of the Capstone Requirement
2. The SURE Grants
3. Stetson Showcase

## **Capstone**

In the Fall the committee assembled a preliminary report on the state of the Stetson Senior Research project. That can be found in Appendix One. The report was generated on the assumption that all capstones across the undergraduate schools and colleges satisfy three requirements:

All Capstones must demonstrate the following:

1. Research, analysis and interpretation appropriate to the discipline undertaken. This could come from lab, library, business or community-based research. It could come from the study of skills in creative arts or music.
2. A physical artifact that meets the standards of the discipline. This could be a research paper, a researched portfolio, computer software, artwork, composition or an annotated music program. The artifact should demonstrate originality, self-authorship, and an understanding of the various perspectives or interpretations germane to the artifact.
3. Public oral communication of the Capstone. This could be an oral or poster presentation, an exhibition, a recital, or a demonstration

## ***SURE***

All students awarded a 2018 SURE Grant completed their research. For those who reported:

Vincenzo Cornacchione: “I will be taking a gap year before I head to grad school. My goal is to gain experience working full-time and study for the GRE over the summer. I will also spend most of time finding the right Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) program for me and work on submitting a manuscript of my research for publication in an academic journal. And of course, keep on learning in this globalized world.”

Dakota Figueroa: “In my short term plan I am likely going to do an internship over the summer if possible, and have applied to Stetson Law, Boston Law, and Indiana University (Bloomington Area) Law. Based on the scholarship money I get I will either go to the university or stay to take some time to raise my LSAT score, get a short term job and internship with help from Graduate Prep from Stetson, and apply early next school year for a better chance alongside the scholarship list I have in the guide. My long-term academic and professional goals will aim to be a lawyer who focused on civil rights and activism, working alongside NGOs or other entities to fight for activism. I would really like to focus on human rights activism, and will be eager to participate in any other forms when I find the opportunity. From there I plan to maybe be a history professor later on, and/or go into the political realm, likely running for Congress utilizing the connections and background I have gained over time.”

John Levee became the first student in the SURE program to receive back-to-back funding for the same project, a study that awarded him a coveted spot at the May 2019 World Congress. John Levee was accepted to graduate programs at Brooklyn College, Northeastern, and Northwestern, and plans to attend Brooklyn College to pursue an MFA in Sonic Arts.

Jeffrey Lu will be applying to medical school in the fall, and finishing his senior year.

Emily Maule: “I hope to pursue a MFA in the upcoming years. I desire to work with either those in need through Art Therapy or pursue teaching in higher education within Studio Art.”

Jennifer Palmisano: “I am taking a year to work as a lab manager, an intern at the Reptile Discovery Center, gain more experience in the research field, and publish my senior research. Following that year, I will apply to grad school with a focus on ecology and conservation in the fields of herpetology.”

James Parman will take gap time until school returns to normal sessions, and then will pursue a degree in Law.

Nelson Quezada Herrera will finish his time at Stetson with a second SURE Grant, this time in literature (See Appendix Two). He will present his senior research, based on his 2019 SURE

grant project, at the American Political Science Association in September. He intends to apply to graduate programs in Political Science.

Breanna Shi: “I was accepted into university of Illinois and University of Minnesota computational biology PhD program. I am pursuing the computational biology program at the University of Minnesota with a Diversity fellowship from the university.”

This year twenty students were awarded a Summer Research Grant. One student declined after receiving a FIEA Grant. The names, titles and mentors of the nineteen students who accepted SURE funding are listed in Appendix Two. Expected total expenditures are in the attached Excel document. The Committee met as a group after reading the applications through shared files and each submitted scores for aggregate totals. The grants were generously funded by Palm Beach Community Trust, the Prat Undergraduate Research and Creativity Fund the Farmer- Hartke Undergraduate Research and Creativity Fund, the College of Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Research Fund and the Frueauff Foundation. The students were awarded \$62,855.00 in total, including \$10,355.00 for faculty mentors. Ten students were awarded an additional \$500 for travel needs. There were nine Frueauff scholars. Three applications were denied funding because of much lower scores. All the students will be required to present at the 2021 Showcase.

The Committee is grateful to the Office of Academic Affairs for finding the funding for the non-Frueauff students. The efforts are much appreciated.

### *The Future of SURE*

While the conversation was cut short by the COVID-19 lockdown, Development and Marketing had initiated a dialogue to create a fundraising campaign. I hope to continue that conversation. The hope was for a 1.7-million-dollar endowment with an annual drawdown to support up to ten \$5000 SURE Grants. A few other suggestions were made. Several are continued from the 2018/19 report:

- a. Despite increased funding, the award amounts will no longer support or interest the science students. The very talented will find external funds well above the SURE amounts of \$2000 plus \$500 for travel needs. A grant of \$5000 makes the SURE Grant more competitive and allows the students more freedom to travel and research, given the high cost of research travel going forward.
- b. We are glad to have had an extra \$500 each for ten students who must travel, but it is still not enough. Moreover, projections are that travel will become more expensive until a COVID-19 vaccine proves effective. While several conferences may be moved online for the next year, conference fees will remain high, and can take the entire \$500 travel fund.
- c. The same faculty are advising the successful candidates year after year. It is recommended that junior faculty be given orientation on the SURE process, to diversify and widen the applicant pool, and to be assured credit towards Tenure and Promotion by

doing so. As for last year, a better method of promoting the grant opportunity has to be found.

- d. Finally, faculty stipends have to be revisited. The URC recommends the following scale, based on summer teaching stipends:
  1. \$1000 for mentors who advise online over the summer.
  2. \$2000 for mentors who must meet with and work with the student during the project.
  3. \$3000 for mentors involved in lab work or fieldwork for at least three hours each week average in the summer.

## **Showcase**

From what I wrote in Stetson Today the week of April 20:

### **Showcase 2020: The Vision Endures**

By March 1, 2020, the Undergraduate Research Committee had prepared for the frenzied six weeks leading up to Stetson's marquis celebration of scholarship, innovation and creativity, the Stetson Showcase, on April 14. We expected almost 250 students from all schools to be presenting in venues across campus. Students through the College of Arts and Sciences were preparing talks and posters. Eight junior music recitals were to be selected, the Art Exhibition was timed to present Showcase week, the School of Business was gathering its best students in Sales, Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Investment. Even the College of Law would send five Honor students to present. There was a keynote speaker nationally known for her work in promoting STEM to underserved populations, a winning artwork for the posters and covers, judges, moderators and interns. Like its predecessors starting in 1999, Showcase 2020 was on track to be another successful day of scholarship and creativity.

And then it all ended in March. On a Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup>.

With the closing of campuses due to COVID-19, colleges and universities across the country were forced to difficult decisions with their own Undergraduate Research days. Larger schools and those with large undergraduate research offices went virtual, putting posters and presentations online. Suddenly the chat rooms for the Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR) brimmed with platform ideas. However smaller schools like Stetson were stuck. Many of the research projects that would have been presented at Showcase were redesigned for different presentations within majors. Without a dedicated staff on campus and two eager but stressed interns who had returned home, there was no way that Showcase could use any of the myriad platforms other schools were trying on such short notice.

However, Marketing and Development stepped up and offered a compromise. Any student who still wanted to be in Showcase and the 2019 Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Grantees would find a place on the Marketing platform. Ten students from across the spectrum accepted the offer, with research that has impressed all who have seen it. To add to that, the Creative Arts faculty worked with their students to create a Virtual Exhibition of all the artists who would have presented on April 14. Showcase 2020 lives in the words, presentations, art and music.

The theme this year is Showcase 2020: Vision. Stetson looks forward to a new presidential administration, new programs and new educational challenges. Our educational philosophy of in person classes that utilize engaged learning, embedded research and creativity, innovative approaches and perspectives, and critical thinking. The artwork by Reeva Licht and Cameron Gerstenslager reflects this so well. I will let the artists speak for themselves in their concept, but the reason my interns and I chose this artwork to represent the theme was the joyful and vibrant energy of the student's vision. Instead of being focused on just one field of study, they see a treasure of different subjects and fields ahead of them. Stetson is not a school where we promote a singular passion for a narrow field. Our vision is broad, seeking new ways to explore the world around us. And the 2020 Showcase projects show this.

Showcase 2021 will be the first Showcase that President-Elect Roellke will experience, and we promise it will be as bold as ever a year from now. However, we will not be caught unprepared next time. The interns were charged with creating a viable online plan just in case, while Marketing and Development stand ready to expand the Showcase offerings if need be. The proposed theme, A New World, will acknowledge the challenges we will face in the 2020's as well as the opportunities for innovation in a liberal arts core.

As the song goes, "Up from the ashes grow the roses of success", Showcase will rise again, and be even stronger through the lessons of 2020. The vision endures.

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Showcase would have been managed with by Mary Bernard in the Department of History Administrative Assistant, Mary Bernard, and the Showcase Interns Connor Darby, Madison Goff, and Noemi Loeza. As I had no Showcase to run, Madison and Noemi, who were taking the internship for credit, were tasked with writing a term paper for creating a Virtual Showcase. That paper is attached to this report and is extraordinary in its scope. We hope never to use it, but will have it in place for next year, and may use it to post the Maris winners and SURE students online through Marketing.

I am also very grateful to Bruce Chong and his Marketing Team for helping us create a small Showcase. We have had positive comments from Stetson alumni who have viewed it, strengthening the case to post some of the Showcase offerings online next year.

The Keynote Speaker was to be Dr. Donna Chamely-Wiik, Associate Scientist in Chemistry and Biochemistry and Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Research, undergraduate Studies. Dr. Chamely-Wiik is nationally known for her work in in Chemical and STEM Education. She will join us in 2021.

To celebrate the 2020: Vision theme, the Program was to be illustrated with inset boxes featuring the new and innovative programs introduced by Stetson over the past few years, and contributions had already been obtained from various programs. The posters and cover art "2020 Vision" was created by Reeva Licht and Cameron Gerstenslager.

SURE was successful this year, and we had anticipated a healthy Showcase. To continue the success of the Stetson Showcase in case of emergency shutdown, and SURE program, the Committee recommends:

1. A fundraising campaign targeting SURE funding and raising it to levels that can support student research in an ever more expensive research environment.
2. Investment in a working virtual platform that can feature up to 200 presentations. The Committee recommends such a move only if the Campus is closed.
3. An investment in posting the best Showcase presentations on a research page, with specific advertisement of that page to alumni and potential donors.
4. Support of the Capstone recommendations as we go forward with Critical Thinking and Learning in the QEP.

Respectfully submitted,



Kimberly D. S. Reiter  
Chair, SURE/Showcase

#### Appendices

1. The URC Capstone Paper
2. SURE Grants 2020

#### Attachments

1. SURE Awards Spreadsheet
2. Showcase Intern Report for Virtualizing Showcase