

# From the President

## Informing Public Policy

This issue of the *CUR Quarterly* highlights the influential role that undergraduate research can play in informing public policy. The editors have selected a nice collection of papers for the issue that provide a range of best practices, strategies, and recommendations for working with federal and state policy-makers, with public and private agencies, with media outlets, and with other professional organizations and stakeholders that may share an interest in undergraduate research.

It's a very exciting time for CUR members to become engaged in advocacy efforts. Perhaps for the first time, an American President has spoken publicly about undergraduate research. In a speech to the National Academy of Sciences on April 27, 2009, in which he laid out key funding priorities for research, development, and education, President Barack Obama said the following: *"It will support an educational campaign to capture the imagination of young people .... It will create research opportunities for undergraduates ...."*

CUR recently hosted our 13th Annual Posters on the Hill event, which is designed to bring students to the United States Capitol to showcase their undergraduate research projects. The event, held on May 5, 2009, also provided the opportunity for the students to talk directly with members of congress about the value of this high-impact scholarly and pedagogical experience to their own constituents, as well as to the entire country's strategic position as a world leader in both discovery and higher education. It was a timely opportunity to be in Washington, DC given the increased calls for greater accountability, affordability, and transparency in higher education in recent months, especially in light of the current economic crisis facing the United States and many other countries. As legislators, parents, and business leaders ask more-and-more questions of higher education, it is critical for all of us to both highlight the powerful student learning outcomes that result from undergraduate research in building a 21st Century workforce, as well as significantly advancing our country's competitive edge in research and development.

The 78 students who presented their research at Posters on the Hill did a wonderful job at conveying first-hand the transformational potential of undergraduate research and how the experience has shaped their own lives. In fact, CUR received a

record number of applications for the 2009 Posters on the Hill event; over 425 applications were received for only 60 poster slots. In addition to other data, these figures speak to the growing number of students and faculty mentors engaged in undergraduate research nationally.

If CUR and CUR's individual and institutional members are to remain at the forefront of the undergraduate research landscape, we must continue to act at the local, state, and national levels. CUR will continue to focus on collectively moving the organization forward in realizing CUR's mission and in expanding CUR's reach and impact. In particular, CUR has been involved in discussions with the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) about strategic opportunities for the two organizations to most effectively advance the cause of undergraduate research. You will be hearing more about these in future columns in the *CUR Quarterly*.

This is my final President's column, and it has been a true honor, privilege, and pleasure to serve with so many CUR volunteers and dedicated staff members in the National Office. All of these individuals have been eager to promote undergraduate research and to expand the capacity of faculty members, institutions, and students engaged in this high-impact endeavor. I wish President-elect Diane Husic and the 2009-2010 Executive Board well, and I look forward to working with them over the next year as Past-president.

  
Jeffrey M. Osborn  
CUR President

