From CUR's Executive Officer

As we eagerly anticipate the transition of *CUR Quarterly* to *Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research* (SPUR), this last issue of *CUR Quarterly* heralds that launch with articles that thoughtfully tackle the future. Not the future of the burgeoning international undergraduate research movement, but the future of higher education itself. In other words, “ask not

what higher education can do for undergraduate research, but what undergraduate research can do for higher education.” For, as editors James LaPlant and Janice DeCosmo stated in the call for papers, “undergraduate research has moved from an elective activity that engaged a handful of faculty members and students to a central part of the undergraduate experience at many colleges and universities.”

In 1978, the chemists who started CUR shared the firm belief that undergraduates were fully prepared to pursue research with faculty mentors. Now, almost 40 years later, although we recognize that there are those in higher education who may question the level of sophistication that can be reached by undergraduate research (UR), the fundamental right of undergraduates to access research experiences is generally accepted. A central goal of CUR's founders—recognition—largely has been met.

What's left for us to do? Well, given that resources and infrastructure to support UR across all types of institutions remain woefully insufficient and unequally distributed, quite a bit. For some nations (including the United States), the job of expanding UR equitably will possibly become more challenging in the near term, as we deal with likely redirection of government funds away from research investments and student support. Some good news: integration of UR into curricula is clearly accelerating, as witnessed by the excellent articles in the fall 2016 and winter 2016 issues of *CUR Quarterly*. The movement for course-based, authentic UR experiences (CUREs) now appears to be well established and will certainly help close the gap between undergraduates seeking UR experiences, and the capacity of faculty mentors and the institutional research infrastructure to fulfill that need. But will CUREs be the only medicine needed to achieve widespread UR? No. Full integration of UR will entail fundamental rethinking, new partnerships, and real structural change in higher education.

The diverse articles in this *CUR Quarterly* issue and *CURQ on the Web* help with that rethinking and place UR at the center of higher education culture and practice. We can democratize, as Jenny Olin Shanahan and her colleagues describe, to empower a much more diverse cadre of students to participate. By far, the largest group of students currently

untouched by UR are attending community colleges, so programs that support more UR in that environment need to proliferate (Candice Foley and Nina Leonhardt). We can tie UR more effectively to entrepreneurship and/or the “maker” movement (Jeanne Mekolichick and Joseph Wirgau), thus shortening the time between discovery and marketplace, and generating more direct economic benefits and job creation. Lastly, we can accelerate the trend for interdisciplinary, multifaceted, project-based UR, breaking open disciplinary silos and unleashing the full potential of UR to solve complex problems and generate interdisciplinary communities (Karen Mumford, Stephen Hill, and Laurel Kieffer; Alexa Sand and coauthors). The concept linking all of these excellent examples is that UR provides a *public good* as well as individual benefits.

CUR Quarterly has been an important avenue for UR thought leadership since (almost) the organization's inception. In 1994, Donald Scott, coeditor of *CUR Quarterly*, looked back at the first 14 years (Scott 1994). His closing paragraph is eerily resonant with current events: “Public awareness is essential for successful undergraduate research....Through CUR we can coordinate our individual actions.” True words then as well as now. As we close this CUR chapter and begin another, let's appreciate the achievements of Mike Doyle, Tom Goodwin, Barbara Byrne, Donald Scott, Anant Godbole, Tom Wenzel, Charlotte Otto, and Kelly McConaughay, previous *CUR Quarterly* lead editors. Their shared dedication established *CUR Quarterly* as a central information resource for the entire UR community and provided the foundation for us to now celebrate the launch of CUR's new flagship, peer-reviewed journal, SPUR.

Reference

Scott, Donald M. 1994. “Access to CUR's History: Observations on the Fourteen-Year Newsletter/Quarterly Index.” *CUR Quarterly* 14(4): 176–178.

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Look for the SPUR Call for Papers in July 2017 on “Diversity and Inclusion in Undergraduate Research” (Summer 2018 Issue)