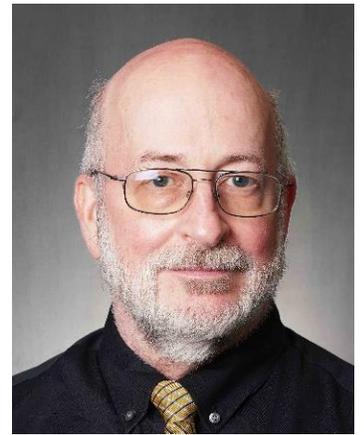


AJRSA Inaugural Launch Statement

Dr. Bob Stwalley, Purdue University

Assistant Clinical Professor of Agricultural & Biological Engineering



It is with great pleasure that the Rising Scholars team at Purdue University brings you the inaugural issue of the *American Journal of Rising Scholar Activities*. 'Rising Scholars' has become the unofficial moniker of persistent, low socioeconomic status collegiate students in STEM-based majors, and this journal is intended to provide a vehicle for them to tell their stories. Our journey to this point has been long and hard, but it is of little consequence when compared to the road travelled by some of these talented young men and women getting themselves into technical collegiate majors. When one analyzes the subtle, yet nearly insurmountable, challenges that some of these students have persevered against, it becomes very obvious that these Rising Scholars are very special people. Getting to know these outstanding young individuals and joining their network of supporters has been a tremendous honor for all of us on the Purdue Rising Scholars team.

The Purdue team's journey began with the concepts of Mr. Derek Peterson of the Institute for Community & Adolescent Resiliency – Unifying Solutions (ICAR-US). Peterson was speaking at a national conference on K-12 public school issues about his work demonstrating that the strongest correlated factor for successful academic and life skills performance in youth was the number of positive adult role models within that young person's life. According to his data, if an individual had five adults able to hold them accountable for their grades, they were almost always successful at transitioning from school into adult life. This result is nearly so obvious that when people hear the proposition for the first time, they invariably say, 'Well, that just make sense.' It does, and it corroborates with what higher education faculty have understood about the mentoring process for years. If a student can cultivate good counselors, they will receive better advice and progress faster in their professional career.

The Purdue team selected incoming students that appeared to show an implicit understanding of this basic principle, and the program was designed to place these students in experiential situations that provided them with opportunities to meet numerous other successful professionals that, over time, might become additional mentors and support network members. Rising Scholar students participated in an academic boot camp for college-bound STEM-major pre-freshmen, joined an on-going research project in a faculty member's lab, directed their own research projects, and participated in corporate internships. These activities have allowed the Rising Scholar students to interact with faculty, university staff, industry professionals, and graduate students, along with their fellow undergraduates. Additionally, follow-on reflective seminar classes provided the students with opportunities to review and more fully understand their work experiences. These papers about the students' experiential activities published in this journal were crafted, peer-edited, and polished during these seminars by our Rising Scholars students, during their sophomore and junior years, and they represent a snapshot of these amazing young students growing into technical professionals.