OUT OF THE BOX:

EXPLORING PURDUE THROUGH UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

The snapshots in this section describe research projects that explore the university's institutional data to investigate some aspect of Purdue. In different ways, each of the projects described below aims to better understand and improve Purdue's ability to educate students, discover knowledge, or foster engagement promoting the common good. These projects were all part of the Undergraduate Institutional Research Fellow Program offered by the Honors College and the Office for Institutional Research, Assessment and Effectiveness (OIRAE). The Research Fellow program was the brainchild of Ben Wiles, formerly Director of Institutional Effectiveness in OIRAE. Wiles's vision was to empower members of the Purdue community to explore questions they have related to the university. Wiles explains: "At the heart of the project was the idea to democratize data so that students and faculty could engage in scholarly activities to understand and improve, from their vantage points, their own local academic community."

In fall 2017, the students in the Research Fellow program took a one-credit Honors course, the Undergraduate Institutional Research Fellows Seminar. Purdue administrators from various areas of the university, such as the Provost's Office and Information Technology, visited the class to talk about the "big questions" facing higher education. Students in the course also learned about research methods that could be used to analyze institutional data, completing assignments focused on developing research questions, outlining a research plan, completing the

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) research ethics training certification, and creating an Institutional Research Board (IRB) proposal.

The following semester the students were paired with faculty mentors and staff members from OIRAE, who guided them in the research process. Working together, each team generated a research proposal, obtained approval through the IRB, acquired appropriate institutional datasets, and analyzed the data to produce findings. The resulting projects, which you will read about in this section, analyze institutional data to investigate a range of topics relevant to the Purdue community. The projects share a keen interest in understanding efforts that foster student success, such as active learning, information literacy, or responding to incoming students' anticipated educational needs.

The Undergraduate Institutional Research Fellow Program brings together students, faculty, and staff to engage in rich conversations about what it means to study, live, and work at Purdue. The findings from each project inform our work as a community. The Research Fellow Program reveals how research can aid us, as a community, in understanding and improving the university.

– CLARENCE MAYBEE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
AND INFORMATION LITERACY SPECIALIST,
PURDUE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES