EDITORIAL

Letter from Jay T. Akridge, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Diversity

Studies have shown that students who participate in experiential learning through research gain academic, professional, and personal benefits that will last a lifetime. These students develop critical-thinking skills and the ability to apply theory to practice. They strengthen

their oral and written communication skills, deepen their understanding of their disciplines, and even clarify their career goals. Self-confidence grows as they advance new knowledge and master the process of clearly communicating what they have learned. If that makes you wonder why all of Purdue's undergraduates aren't participating in research, I couldn't agree more. And that's why we are encouraging even more of our students to get involved.

The Office of Undergraduate Research was formed to serve as a central resource to promote and expand undergraduate research experiences. Working with skilled faculty and staff mentors, students are asked to think independently and creatively to solve problems—problems without known answers. In the process, they become proficient in research approaches and techniques directly related to their disciplines and interests. And they learn to tell compelling stories through careful analysis of the data they have collected or generated.

With results in hand, students have a number of opportunities to share their findings. Those who participate in the publishing process learn to develop well-defined conclusions and turn those conclusions

into concise scholarly papers. This discipline of clear, logical, objective writing will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

One important outlet is the *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research*, a professional academic publication designed to feature student work. *JPUR* is student-run, with outstanding support from members of the Purdue University Press, Libraries and School of Information Studies, the Online Writing Lab, and Marketing and Media. My thanks and congratulations to everyone involved in this exceptional ninth edition.

Sharing research results at conferences helps students practice and improve their presentation skills, network with the broader research community, and reflect on the role research might play in their professional endeavors. Since it was formed two years ago, the Office of Undergraduate Research has nearly quadrupled its research support to help students disseminate their research findings at conferences throughout the country.

A common thread through any research experience is collaboration. Today's grand challenges are impacting citizens around the world—whether it's food insecurity, the need for alternative energy sources, the causes and implications of climate change, or the many other challenges facing today's global citizens. We will need great minds to come together from a broad array of disciplines if we are to find effective solutions.

At Purdue, we will continue to encourage and support our undergraduate researchers because the benefits to our students are so great, and because the solutions to some of our world's most difficult challenges will come from these talented minds one day.

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