

Survey Brief

Undergraduate Research Participation

Part 2: Undergraduate Research Symposium

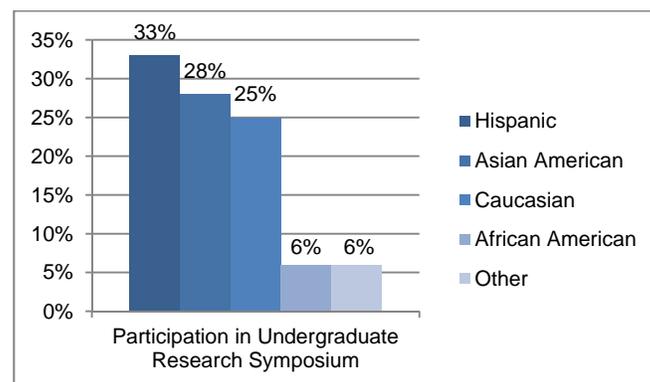
Undergraduate student participation in research opportunities are valuable experiences for most undergraduates interested in gaining a deeper understanding of subject matter. In our last brief, we highlighted students that participate in research and creative activities. In this brief, we will highlight the students who participated in the annual UC Riverside Undergraduate Research Symposium. We conclude with suggestions for faculty to encourage student participation in research and creative activities.

Each spring quarter, UC Riverside provides opportunities for students participating in research and creative activities to present their work in the annual Undergraduate Research Symposium and through submission to the Undergraduate Research Journal. This year, 141 students in 40 majors from 26 departments presented research through oral and poster presentations at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Students must submit an abstract to the Undergraduate Research Symposium with the support of at least one faculty member. This year's symposium participants were supported by 86 faculty members representing 28 departments. This shows that some students are engaged in interdisciplinary work and are familiarizing themselves with faculty and peers outside of their department and major.

This year students who presented at the Symposium came from all class levels, with most being juniors (43%) or seniors (35%). Sophomores (16%) and freshman (4%) were represented less often. Sixty-one first-generation college students (43%) and 68 low income students (48%) presented at the symposium. As in the case of research participation generally, women (54%) were more likely to present than men (45%). The chart below shows the diverse ethnic representation at this year's symposium. Hispanic students comprised one-third of our presenters followed by Asian American (28%) and White students (25%). This distribution is similar to that of our undergraduate population, though Hispanic and White

students presented in the symposium at higher rates than their overall campus representation and Asian Americans at a lower rate.



More than one-quarter of presenters came from psychology and biology (13% each). Students from mechanical engineering (9%) and bioengineering (8%) were the next most likely to present.

Students participating in the Undergraduate Research Symposium tend to be high achieving students. The average cumulative GPA for students participating in the symposium was 3.29, significantly higher than the average UCR undergraduate GPA of 2.77.

Faculty-mentored research and creative activity leverages one of the great strengths of the university, the commitment of its faculty to the creation of new knowledge. Some majors — including those in engineering, business, the arts, and University Honors — require senior capstone experiences. These experiences help students see more deeply into the worlds of scholarship and research and are a valuable culmination of the undergraduate career. If carefully chosen, undergraduate researchers have the motivation and ability to contribute significantly to faculty research. Such experiences give undergraduates an important taste of the research process and can in some cases transform students' lives. Next year UE will pilot an Undergraduate Research Registry to help match students with faculty-mentored research opportunities.