

## Script for New Faculty Orientation: Office of Undergraduate Research

**Suzanne:** Hello, my name is Suzanne Rocheleau, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research

**Jaya:** And I am Jaya Mohan, the Associate Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research. Today, we are speaking to you about programs in the Office of Undergraduate Research and how you, as new faculty, can become involved.

**Suzanne:** In the Office of Undergraduate Research, we administer programs and initiatives to support the culture of research, scholarship and creative work at Drexel University. Specifically, we manage the STAR Scholars Program, Drexel's signature early undergraduate research program for high-achieving first year students. In addition to that, we manage the Discover portal to connect faculty and students interested in undergraduate research, we provide resources and funding for students to present their work at discipline-specific and undergraduate research conferences, and we run the High School Scholars Program, which allows high school students to take classes at Drexel at no cost to their families. Although we are administratively located within the Pennoni Honors College, ALL Drexel students are eligible to participate in programs managed by the Office of Undergraduate Research.

**Jaya:** As an institution, Drexel fosters a culture of undergraduate research in many ways and views undergraduate research as a priority, as seen in the University Strategic Plan and the implementation of the Drexel Student Learning Priorities, one of which is "Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work"—the belief that every Drexel graduate should and does have the ability to

make meaningful contributions to his or her field. In addition, participating in undergraduate research also supports other Drexel Student Learning priorities such as Communication, Creative and Critical Thinking, Information Literacy and Self-Directed Learning.

**Suzanne:** We know, from experience and through research, that students who participate in undergraduate research gain important research skills, learn to work independently and in teams, increase their communication skills, and are able to immerse themselves deeply into their chosen disciplines.

But it's not only students who benefit from participating in undergraduate research; their faculty mentors do, as well. Faculty at Drexel have indicated benefits of participating as mentors to undergraduate researchers such as engaging in a deeper teaching practice by combining classroom teaching and research, working with motivated students who bring fresh insight and energy to the research agenda, and giving back to the academic community by training the next generation of scholars.

For new faculty in particular, undergraduate researchers can often provide intelligent and inexpensive research assistants who bring energy and enthusiasm to their work. And, for all faculty, participating in undergraduate research can better connect you to your department and college.

**Jaya:** There are many ways faculty can get involved as mentors to undergraduate researchers here at Drexel. First, you can hire students with work/study funding to participate in research as ALL faculty-mentored activity is considered work/study eligible. Work/study provides a way for students to get involved in your research at no cost to you, your department or the University.

You can also choose to mentor students in research co-ops which provide students with six months of full-time experience. For further information, please consult the Steinbright Career Development Center.

And, for students beyond freshman year, you can provide academic credit to students who are conducting research or scholarly work. More information about these three ways of getting involved can be found at the end of our Power Point Presentation.

**Suzanne:** We hope that all of you will consider participating in the STAR Scholars Program as a STAR mentor. The STAR (Students Tackling Advanced Research) Scholars Program enables high-achieving first-year students to conduct faculty-mentored research, scholarship or creative work during the summer between freshman and sophomore year. This program is funded by the University and is managed by the Office of Undergraduate Research; students receive a stipend and free on-campus housing for the summer and are expected to complete 400 hours of mentored activity during the summer, write an abstract and present a research poster at our end-of-summer presentation.

**Jaya:** 2014-2015 marks the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the STAR Scholars Program. Over the past twelve years, we have served over 1,000 students, many of whom have gone on to graduate or professional school and have garnered significant fellowships and awards. In Summer 2015, we anticipate having 155 STAR Scholars from all colleges and disciplines. All STAR Scholars receive permanent recognition in their Drexel University student record.

**Suzanne:** Students are admitted into the STAR Scholars Program in two phases: first, prior to enrollment during which time we work with Admissions to identify and invite high-achieving students

already-accepted to Drexel to participate in the program and second, through an application process in the Winter Term of each year when all freshmen who meet our eligibility requirements are invited to apply to fill the remaining slots in the cohort. The application period for 2014-2015 will be from Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup> until Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. Should you encounter any high-achieving freshmen interested in research during the Fall Term, please encourage them to consider applying for the STAR Scholars Program.

The STAR Scholars Program is highly selective; we usually receive between 200 and 300 applications in phase 2 and the selection process can take a month or more. Although applications are evaluated holistically, students with a 3.6 cumulative GPA or better and strong faculty recommendations have a better chance of being selected.

Jaya

Once accepted into the program, we expect our STAR Scholars to maintain a minimum 3.4 cumulative GPA through their freshman year; to secure their own faculty mentor; to complete all necessary paperwork related to hiring, housing and the program itself; to complete 400 hours of faculty-mentored activity during the summer; and to complete and submit a written abstract and research poster to present at the STAR Summer Showcase.

Although we meet with each student and advise them about potential faculty mentors, all students must show leadership and initiate contact with their potential mentors. All final matches between STAR Scholars and faculty mentors are completed using the Discover website.

Suzanne:

Just as we have expectations of our students, we also have expectations of our STAR mentors. All STAR Mentors are asked to post available research positions on the Discover portal, to

provide a hands-on learning environment for their students, to give students opportunities for independent work while also providing timely feedback and guidance, and to be on campus and available to STAR Scholars for the duration of the summer term.

Jaya:

In 2012, the iSTAR Scholars Program was established to provide STAR-eligible students with an international research experience designed to teach important cultural skills to prepare them for work in a global environment. A limited number of iSTAR positions are located in sites that have been identified through faculty collaboration or faculty work and are only available at the present time to students in specific majors.

Suzanne:

In Summer 2014 we were able to send 13 students, (primarily in engineering and science disciplines) total, to three different sites: Monteverde, Costa Rica, Saarbrücken, Germany and Oulu, Finland. We expect to add one new international site and one new domestic site (Los Angeles for students from the College of Media Arts & Design) for Summer 2015. If you have international collaborations that might be appropriate for an iSTAR site, please let us know as we are looking to expand the international reach of the program.

Jaya:

Part of our role in the Office of Undergraduate Research is not only to administer programs but also to advise and manage the ways in which students can find like-minded faculty with whom they can conduct research. We do this through meeting with students, as well as through managing the Discover portal. Discover is a secure online database for faculty to post open research, scholarship or creative opportunities and for students to search and apply for those positions. The portal, accessible through the Office of Undergraduate Research website and

at [www.drexel.edu/discover](http://www.drexel.edu/discover), is an actively perused resource by our students and enables faculty to expand their pool of interested candidates in their scholarly projects beyond those students they may meet in their classrooms.

**Suzanne:** Additionally, we provide financial support for students to present their work at discipline-specific and undergraduate research conferences. Any students with whom you work (they do NOT have to be STAR Scholars or Honors students) who are accepted to present work and discipline-specific conferences or meetings would be eligible to receive up to \$250 for domestic travel and up to \$500 for international travel. We also encourage students to apply for a number of undergraduate research conferences, such as CUR Posters on the Hill, NCUR, and the National Collegiate Research Conference at Harvard, for which we cover all costs.

**Jaya:** Lastly, we also administer the High School Scholars Program, which provides high-achieving high school students with an opportunity to take Drexel courses for credit at no cost to their families. This program enables students to experience college-level courses and, specifically, to experience the type of fast-paced and engaging education that Drexel provides. Many of you may encounter High School Scholars within your introductory classes. These students are operating under the same expectations and deadlines as any other Drexel student. Over the past several years, the High School Scholars program has proven to be an effective recruitment tool for high ability students from the Philadelphia area.

**Suzanne:** This has been a brief overview of the programs administered by the Office of Undergraduate Research. We hope to be a resource to you and are always available to speak with you about your interest in working with undergraduate students. If you have any

*questions about our programs and initiatives, please visit us at the New Faculty Orientation Resource Fair or in our office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of MacAlister Hall. Thanks for taking the time to learn about us. We look forward to working with you as you begin your career as a Drexel faculty member.*