

HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY
THE PREMIER LIFE SKILLS UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Research and Creative Works

SPOTLIGHT

The Official Newsletter for Undergraduate Research & Creative Works



MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Works mission is to bring together undergraduate students and faculty members for the purpose of creating unique and collaborative projects. By fostering an imaginative research experience, we hope to promote the development of new competencies, encourage critical thinking skills, inspire students to add to the global sum of human knowledge, and help students develop the skills to be competitive in the marketplace.

WHAT'S
INSIDE:

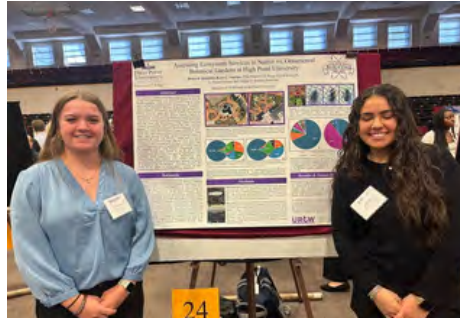
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WRAPPING UP WITH
GRATITUDE AND GREATNESS

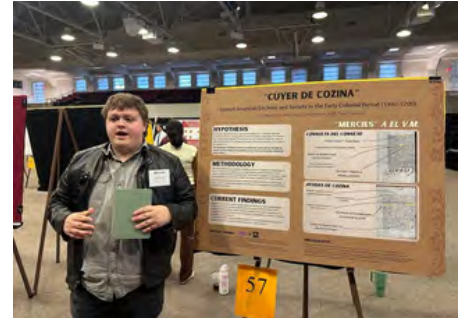
As we wrap up the fall 2025 semester, the November issue of *Spotlight* celebrates our students' achievements from the past month and shares important updates to help you prepare for an exciting 2026. This issue features the impressive research and creative works of our students, and in the spirit of the season, URCW can't help but express our gratitude for each of you who gives our office countless opportunities to highlight the incredible work happening here. Wishing you Happy Holidays from URCW!

HPU STUDENTS SHINE AT SNCURCS

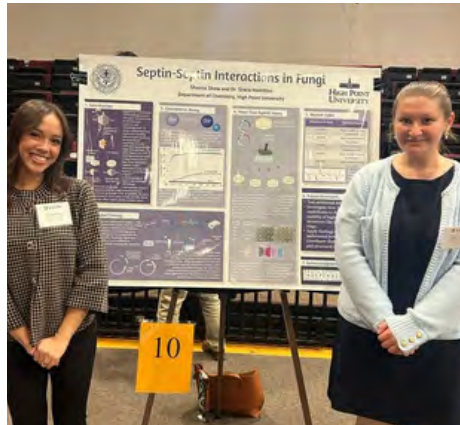
On November 15th, 2025, 13 students involved in research and creative works represented High Point University at the State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium (SNCURCS) held at Elon University. The students designed posters and prepared presentations to showcase their research across a wide range of different disciplines. They were accompanied by Dr. Altman, Dr. Perincherry, and URCW program coordinator Ms. Whitesides. In addition, 33 current Research Rookies attended and gained firsthand exposure to a large-scale academic conference, experiencing an invaluable opportunity to learn, network, and prepare for their own future research endeavors.



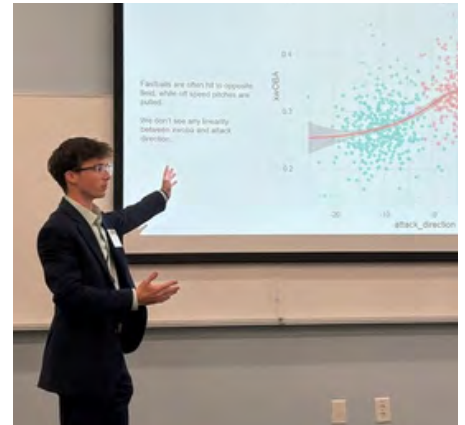
Kara Vaartjes and Ellie Ratta



Colt Marion



Shauna Skow and Lily Cristini



Braedyn Jacobson

RESEARCH ROOKIE REFLECTIONS FROM SNCURCS

Research Rookies who attended SNCURCS this year described the experience as inspiring, educational, confidence-building, and motivational. Watching presenters model strong audience engagement made the idea of presenting feel realistic and exciting. These Rookies are now looking forward to future opportunities to present their own research and creative works after attending SNCURCS 2025!

“ Seeing other students present at SNCURCS made presenting feel less frightening and more achievable. ”

- Research Rookie

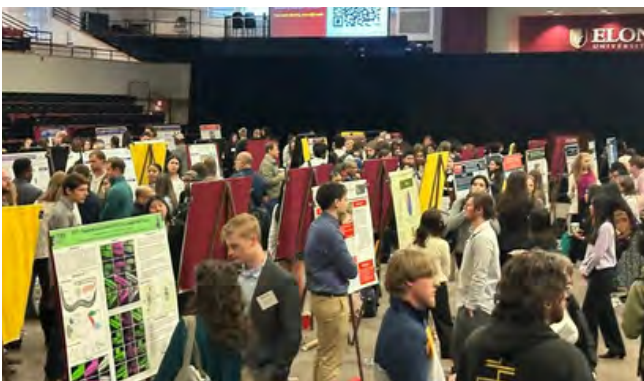
“ I learned how to effectively communicate my research through balancing technical details with accessibility and using storytelling or visuals to maintain interest. ”

- Research Rookie



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2025 SNCURCS PRESENTERS!

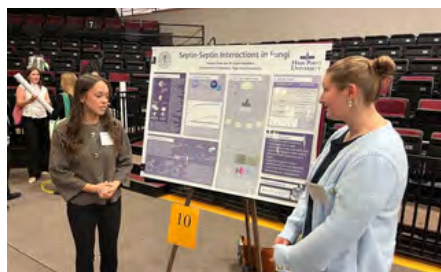
Jake Ankrum, Kayla Castillo, Max Chisholm, Lily Cristini, Abby Fort, Braedyn Jacobson, Holley Lowe, Colt Marion, Ryan Nash, Ellie Ratta, Nick Sheridan, Shauna Skow, Kara Vaartjes



CELEBRATING SNCURCS RELATED AWARDS

NCICU Recipients

The North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) Undergraduate Research Program provides funding to students conducting research in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, encouraging them to pursue advanced study and careers in these fields. This year, the grant was awarded to 11 upper-classmen across private institutions in North Carolina, and three of those recipients were from HPU! URCW extends our congratulations to **Lily Cristini**, **Shauna Skow** (mentored by Dr. Hamilton), and **Jake Ankrum** (mentored by Dr. Fogarty) for receiving this honor!



Jake Ankrum (pictured left), Shauna Skow, and Lily Cristini (pictured right) give poster presentations of their research at the 2025 State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium.

Barthalmus Undergraduate Research Award Recipients

The Barthalmus Undergraduate Research Award provides sophomore students with funding to support their proposed research projects. Recipients are required to present their work at the following year's State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium. This year, out of the five total awardees from across the state, three HPU sophomores earned this prestigious award. Congratulations to **Sawyer Harrold**, **Jadyn Kuenzel**, (mentored by Dr. Nagy), and **Anna Venditti** (mentored by Dr. Hindo) on this outstanding achievement!



WHAT DOES RECEIVING THIS GRANT MEAN TO YOU?

JADYN KUENZEL



"I am so excited to be a recipient of this grant because it allows me the ability to conduct my first research study. The study examines which therapeutic coping strategy for self-critical thoughts best increases heart rate variability as an indication of reduced stress. We will use heart rate monitors purchased with the grant to compare mindfulness and cognitive-therapy-based interventions."

SAWYER HARROLD



"I'm planning to pursue a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, so receiving a grant to spearhead my own project in Dr. Nagy's clinical lab is a huge step towards my future goals. The study will be investigating how affirmative/ negative feedback from human/AI agents may differentially affect self-criticism in people, which is currently unknown!"

ANNA VENDITTI



"We work on enhancing chemistry education by developing hands-on laboratories that integrate biodiesel synthesis into general chemistry and organic chemistry techniques. This grant is meaningful to me because of the ability we now have to expand our research. It will aid in perfecting procedure in labs and even implementation into other realms outside of general chemistry."

SAVE THE DATE: HIGH-PURCS 2026

HPU undergraduate students from all disciplines on campus are invited to participate in HPU's 14th annual Research and Creativity Symposium (High-PURCS) on **April 14th, 2026** from 8am to 2pm! This event will showcase student scholarship in a supportive environment that models a professional venue. Students may choose to present their work as a poster, oral presentation, brief performance, or exhibit. Last year's symposium welcomed 419 presenters from 31 different disciplines, 241 exhibited projects, and 90 faculty mentors—don't miss your opportunity to be a part of next year's impressive crew! The updated website and application for High-PURCS will open in January.



**April 14th, 2026
8am – 2pm
Qubein Arena**

SUMMER RESEARCH STARTS SOON!

Planning for Summer 2026? Explore URCW's summer research programs! URCW offers three research opportunities each summer, giving you the chance to gain experience in your field, learn new skills, and build meaningful connections with mentors and fellow researchers. Participants spend 8 weeks on campus and receive free housing, meals, and a small stipend. Keep an eye out—**applications open in January!**



SuRI

SuRI is open to undergraduates in all disciplines. Students must identify a faculty mentor who will actively guide them and outline the project goal, method, and timeline. The program runs during June and July. Specific dates and hours are arranged with your mentor, and all participants are expected to meet the program's minimum requirements.

SuRPS

SuRPS is a competitive program for research positions with faculty in biology, chemistry, or physics on predetermined projects. Students should review projects and indicate their top three choices on the application. Participants are expected to work 40 hours per week and commit to the program as their sole activity during this time.

SuRF

CHSH-SuRF is a competitive program for research assistant positions with faculty in the Health Sciences. Students who attend SuRF will work on hands-on research projects in various fields, including physical therapy, exercise science, athletic training, and related areas, gaining valuable research experience and professional skills.

STUDENT RECIPIENTS OF GRANTS FROM URCW

URCW is proud to award grants to students and faculty mentors who plan to present their research and creative works at disciplinary conferences, as well as to students who are continuing to develop their current projects alongside their mentor. Congratulations to all of the grant recipients listed below—we are excited to see your impact through these experiences within your fields and beyond!

1. **Brenna Endom** and **Charity Franklin** to present at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists (ABRCMS) by the American Society for Microbiology in San Antonio, Texas mentored by Dr. Tahl Zimmerman.
2. **Helia Osareh** to present at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts mentored by Dr. Melike Kahya.
3. **Laura Marra** to aid her research for her project “Effects of Repeated Forest Fires on Soil Chemistry and pH at Pilot Mountain, NC” mentored by Dr. Dane Kuppinger.
4. **David Caivano, Catherine Gallagher, Paris Glover, Haley Hedrick, Jardeleza Mae Javier, Gavin Klueg, Sydney Litwiller, Ashlyn Long, Jessamina Piazza, Paige Osche, Christian Quaye, Rowan Trietley, Lauren Vossen, and Andrea Zaglin** to present at the 2025 National Collegiate Honors Council Conference in San Diego, California accompanied by Dr. Timothy O’Keefe, Dr. Pamela Lundin, Dr. Stacy Lipowski, Dr. Nathan Hedman, and Dr. Briana Fiser.
5. **Gianna Aiello-Willaims, Nicole Amorocho, Natalee Balestra, Addison Clary, Maryna Crawford, Kailtyn DeGraw, Toni Frost, Catherine Gallagher, Ava Griswold, Catrina Gromley, Monica Kepins, Annabella Laden, Kendall McDowell, Jessamina Piazza, Emerson Schmidt, Genevieve Schultz, Cassidy Spencer, Devlin Turner, and Madison Walsh** to present at the American College Dance Association Conference at Ohio University accompanied by Emily Crofford.
6. **Katelyn Combs, Madison Danser, and Johan Schwartz** to present at the American Heart Association: Epidemiology and Prevention | Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health in Boston, Massachusetts mentored by Dr. Colin Carriker.
7. **Alexa Klein, Kipton Travis, and John Michael Zimmerman** to aid their research for their project “Effect of Pan-PPAR Agonism on BCAA Metabolism and Mitochondrial Function in Cultured Myotubes” mentored by Dr. Roger Vaughan.
8. **Riley Verner** to aid her research for her project “Effects of *Bacillus thuringiensis* and the gerE Protein Deletion on *Vanessa cardui* Caterpillars” mentored by Dr. Dinene Crater.
9. **Natalee Balestra, Elizabeth Devine, Mia Geter, Jessica Hagenbuch, Sophie Hanks, Monica Kepins, Kendall McDowell, Laura Ryann Perry, Mina Piazza, and Devlin Turner** to present at Future Artist/Still Inspired in Chicago, Illinois mentored by Lindsey Howie.
10. **Alexa Beck, Quinn Fergusson, Dani Hoecker, Tessa Lamb, Victoria Lavargna, Ella Marron, Ashley Mullens, Madeleine Rubino, Gabriella Vitelli, Alyssa Vogt, and Hailey White** to present at the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) at UNC Charlotte mentored by Jaclyn Surso.
11. **Jake Ankrum, Lucas Arciola, Burton Brewer, Sarah Czuba, Chase Dillon, BriAnna Doll, Macie Fox, Callie Freeman, Webb Garrett, Lilian Gray, Bryce Grier, Maggy Henkel, Imogen Irons, Kaley LeFevre, Izzie Marshall, Caitlin McCray, Evan Mills, Renee Monge, Parker Nyboer, Gabriella Orecchio, Daniel Sapozhnikov, Shauna Skow, Lexi Topping, Gabriel Valenzano, Lillie Wilson, and Westyn Woodard** to present at the American Chemical Society Spring 2026 National Meeting & Expo in Atlanta, Georgia accompanied by Dr. Meghan Blackledge, Dr. Keir Fogarty, and Dr. Kelsey Kean.
12. **Meredith Day, Abby Fort, Samantha Gartner, Kat Karwoski, Sophie Macdonald, Harper Melnick, Dillon Phoebe, Tory Puharic, Ashley Rodriguez, Laney Schener, Brianna Tyler, and Lauren Yaroma** to present at Southeastern Psychological Association in New Orleans, Louisiana accompanied by Dr. Kelly Curtis, Dr. Daniel Krenzer, and Dr. Kirsten Li-Barber.

PROJECTS IN PROFILE

Introducing “Projects in Profile,” a new section of *Spotlight* where we’re featuring a group of students who are doing phenomenal work in research or creative works that deserve to be HYPED! This month, we’re highlighting Dr. Daniel Krenzer’s group of student researchers who are exploring how the brain, body, and behavior interact in the daily lives of college students and athletes.

Sophie Macdonald and **Kat Karwoski** are examining cognitive and academic functioning among athletes in contact and non-contact sports. Their work focuses on the often-unrecognized cognitive effects of traumatic brain injuries, using EEG and HRV data to study how these injuries influence everyday tasks, attention, and brain activity in real time.

Tory Puharic, **Samantha Gartner**, and **Eva Richardson** are investigating differences in stress, cognition, and brain activity among college students with and without ADHD. By analyzing EEG and HRV patterns, they aim to understand physiological markers that can support more accurate monitoring, diagnosis, and personalized strategies for students managing ADHD-related challenges.

Lauren Yaroma is exploring how physical activity relates to self-esteem, stress, and body image in college students, and is collaborating with Clemson University and Appalachian State University to expand the impact of the team’s work.

Together, these students are helping advance research that can meaningfully improve student health and performance through several innovative approaches. URCW is proud of this group’s dedication and is grateful for the inspiring example they are setting on campus and beyond!



Back row (from left to right): Kathryn Karowski, Lauren Yaroma, Samantha Gartner, Eva Richardson, Dr. Daniel Krenzer

Front row (from left to right): Tory Puharic, Sophie Macdonald

WANT YOUR RESEARCH HYPED?



Would you like to see your research team featured in an upcoming issue of *Spotlight*? Simply scan the QR code to the left and complete the short form to share details about your project and your team. We’d love the opportunity to highlight your work and celebrate the impact you’re making, so don’t hesitate to reach out!

What excites you most about the research you’re doing now?

SOPHIE MACDONALD

Class of 2026

Psychology Major, Pre-PT Track

“What most excites me is the ability to question the why. We might not realize an experience’s significance in the moment, and therefore being able to extract these smaller factors and apply them to tasks is something I truly have a passion for as a researcher.”

TORY PUHARIC

Class of 2026

Biology Major, Psychology Minor

“I am passionate about learning new ways to help people, and this project allows me to connect science with care by examining how biofeedback can improve monitoring, diagnosis, and treatment plans.”

EVA J. RICHARDSON

Class of 2029

Criminal Justice and Philosophy Major, Forensic Science Minor

“I am most excited about our involvement of biofeedback in the project, because I think it will help us obtain some new insights into how ADHD can affect college students and their academic performances.”

LAUREN YAROMA

Class of 2027

Psychology Major, Health Education Minor

“I’m most excited about collaborating with Clemson University and Appalachian State University to examine the relationships among physical activity, self-esteem, stress, and body image in college students.”

KAT KARWOSKI

Class of 2028

Psychology Major, Spanish Minor

“Getting to use EEG and HRV data to better understand how traumatic brain injuries affect the brain in real time excites me most about the research I’m doing now. Knowing that this work can help improve outcomes and safety for athletes makes it incredibly meaningful.”

RESEARCH ROOKIES OF THE MONTH: JAYDEN MICAELA JAVIER & ANGEL BELL

With the November issue of *Spotlight* being the last of the semester, we're closing the year with two Research Rookies of the Month instead of one! We're excited to announce that **Jayden Micaela Javier** and **Angel Bell** are the Research Rookies of the Month for the months of November and December! Jayden is a freshman Pre-Pharmacy Major, and Angel is a freshman Biology (Health Sciences) Major on the Pre-Med track. Read below to learn what has made their time as Research Rookies so meaningful, how they've grown through their experience, and what being part of the program has meant to them!



**JAYDEN MICAELA
JAVIER**

"Research Rookies gave me the chance to explore new ideas, learn research fundamentals, and develop confidence in my work. It was a meaningful introduction to the process of conducting research."



ANGEL BELL

"Research Rookies has been an extraordinary experience as well as a success tool for me! I've gained so much from this program, developing critical thinking, gaining confidence in myself, and the ability to document material appropriately—a very valuable tool as a person who's interested in going into the medical field. This program has helped me build a foundation for my undergrad education, but also for my medical journey in the future!"

RESEARCH ROOKIE INTEREST MEETING: DECEMBER 5TH @ 8:30AM



Did you miss the first-semester deadline for the Research Rookies program? No worries—there's still time to get involved this spring! If you think Research Rookies might be a good fit for you, or you're just curious to learn more, scan the QR code to the left to RSVP for the interest meeting on **December 5th from 8:30–9:30am in Couch 206.**

APPLY FOR THE SIRG GRANT!

Applications are now being accepted for the URCW Scholarly Interdisciplinary Research Grant (SIRG). The award is up to \$1000 and can be used for research or creative works supplies and/or travel for fieldwork. **Applications are due by February, 2026.** Scan the QR code to visit our website, learn more, and apply today!



LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!



urcw@highpoint.edu



highpoint.edu/urcw



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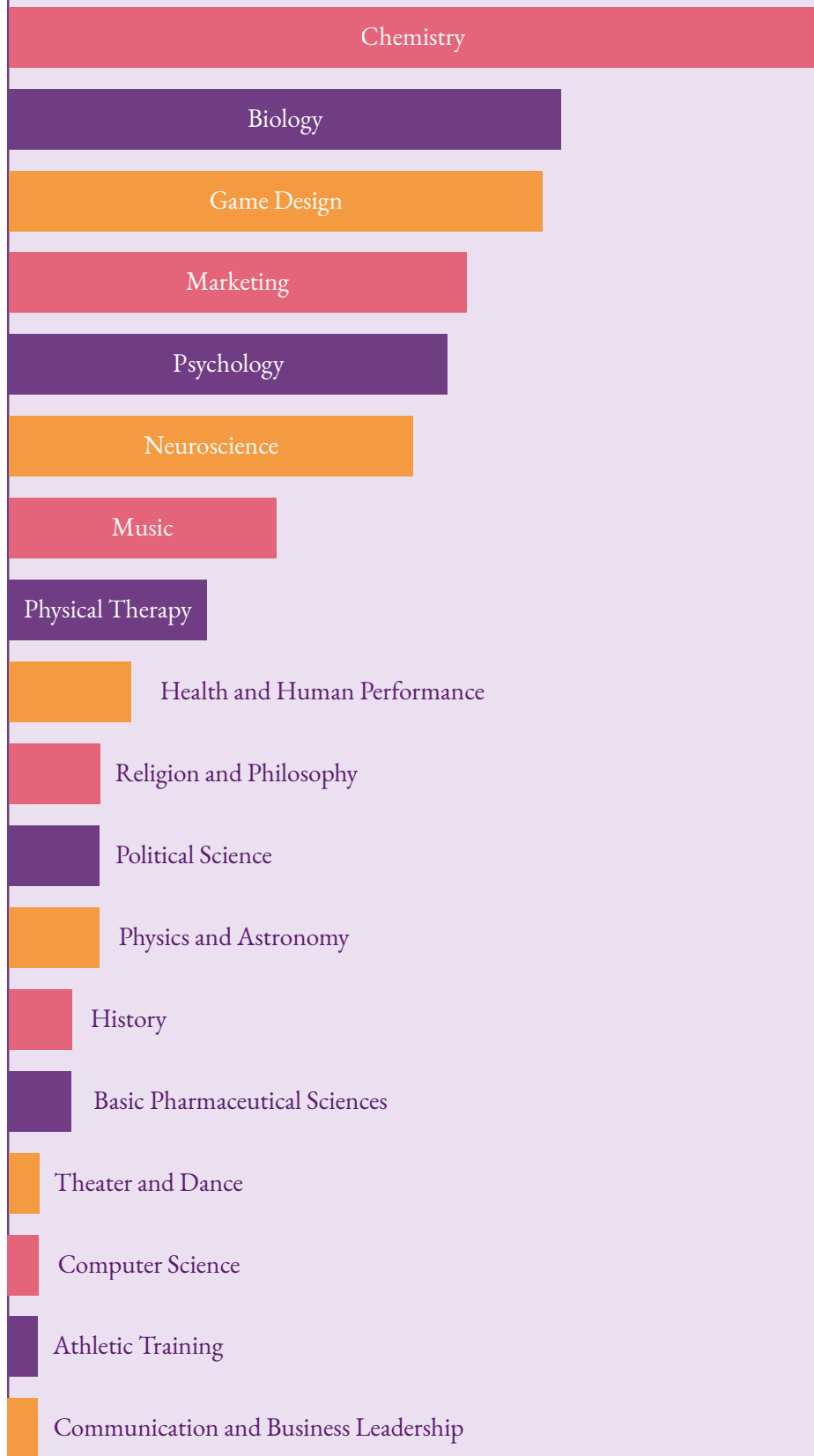


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STUDENTS IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORKS

From the URCW Registry



ARE YOU COUNTED?

URCW tracks the number of students who are undertaking new research and creative projects across all disciplines at High Point University. By registering your work with URCW, you not only contribute to highlighting the achievements of your department, but also help us record the diverse creative works happening on campus. This allows us to reach out with valuable resources relevant to your goals and endeavors! Sign up on the registry if you are:

1. Collaborating or assisting with faculty members' academic research or creative work
2. Pursuing your own independent projects that are mentored by a faculty member
3. Further developing research or creative work done in class into a presentation or exhibit for a broader audience

Scan the QR Code below to register your research and creative works!

