



FALL 2023

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

What is the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program?

The Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) is an initiative that was developed and launched on campus in Fall 2021 as a retention model to keep underrepresented students engaged in university life by supporting them in research, scholarship, and creative activity early in their academic journey. The program incorporates a cohort model where students receive multi-level support via dedicated peer and faculty mentorship, a two-semester, 4-unit curriculum, and opportunities to engage in several professional development and enrichment activities throughout the academic year. UROP promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue across campus and helps expand SJSU's diverse and exciting research culture. Graduates from the program have gone on to engage in further research endeavors to become McNair Scholars, enroll in study abroad programs and graduate school, participate in CSU-wide research competitions, among other accolades.

Message from our Director



Dr. Andrew Carter

Assistant Professor
Department of Public Health and Recreation

As I reflect on the end of the fall semester, it is hard for me to believe that UROP is already halfway through its third year on campus. The program, which started over a series of impassioned Zoom conversations in fall of 2019, has grown consistently over the past three years to foster multiple fruitful research partnerships and student and faculty successes across campus and in the community.

This year, over 80 faculty submitted research proposals to our project database during the open enrollment period in August, demonstrating our faculty's passion and commitment to mentoring and empowering the next generation of SJSU researchers.

Our 2023-24 UROP cohort comprises 31 students and 29 faculty, representing the largest number of participants since the program's inception in 2021. Building on the success from last year—which saw 16 UROP students present their faculty-led research at the annual SJSU Celebration of Research event—we are excited to see the creative scope of projects that this year's cohort brings forth. Also, it brings me great pleasure to announce that UROP has received a second year of Student Success, Excellence & Technology Fee (SSETF) funding to help sustain our efforts in supporting students working with their faculty mentors.

Collectively, UROP receives wide-ranging support across campus, including key partners such as the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Lurie College of Education, Peer Connections, Research and Innovation, Career Center, and the McNair Scholars Program. This support has been integral as we seek to build the program and expand SJSU's diverse and exciting research culture. Stay tuned for more as we have some great things in the pipeline!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'al'.

Meet the UROP Team

Program Leadership



Dr. Patience Bryant
Partners Coordinator



Jahmal Williams
Program Founder



Felicia Mckee-Fegans
Programs Coordinator

Program Staff



Wendy Siguenza
Graduate Assistant



Valeria Foxworthy-Gonzalez
Peer Mentor

Welcome 2023-24 UROP Cohort

Student

Danyal Bawani, public health
Pav Chhina, comm. disorders & sciences
Zayn Dmeiri, business administration
Emily Foreman, physics
Eliot Hall, computer science
Kayla Hamilton, liberal studies
Ayesha Haroon, behavioral science
Casey Huynh, business administration
Kemi Kaka, chemistry
Jeffrey Kaspro, political science
Lailani Kenoly, physics
Yadanar Khin, biological science
Kim Martinez, psychology
Michael Nawa, mechanical engineering
Hennessey Marquina, psychology
Arya Parekh, environmental studies
Nicole Parziale, data science
Arya Patel, business administration
Bhavdeep Singh, computer science
Pedro Sanvee, mechanical engineering
Vivega Prabhu, business administration
Tai Shih, business administration
Joana Sierra, business administration
Marina Silva, biomedical engineering
Terrington Slatten, chemistry
Toure Smith, electrical engineering
Lilian Tran, public health
Amogh Upadhy, engineering tech
Devontae Williams, computer engineering
Piero Miranda, applied mathematics
Theresa Godines, sociology

Faculty Mentor

Dr. Patrick Journey
Dr. Eduardo Europa
Dr. Yanika Schneider
Dr. Curtis Asplund
Dr. Vishnu Pendyala
Dr. Veniece Guillory-Lacy
Carli Lowe
Dr. Kezban Yagci Sokat
Dr. Laura Miller Conrad
Dr. Sara Benson
Dr. Aaron Romanowsky
Dr. Bree Grillo Hill
Dr. Robert Marx
Dr. Anand Ramasubramanian
Dr. Harit Agroia
Dr. Nathaniel Bogie
Dr. Michael Ashley
Dr. Asbjorn Osland
Dr. Hilary Hurst
Dr. Gaojian Huang
Dr. Salman Tahsin
Dr. Shilpa Gupta
Dr. Carolus Boekema
Dr. Katie Wilkinson
Dr. Harit Agroia
Moheb Mohammed
Dr. Marie Haverfield
Dr. Jun Liu
Dr. Behin Elahi
Dr. Shilpa Gupta
Dr. Megan Thiele Strong

Student Alumni Spotlight



Rahel Adebabay
Major: Global Studies
UROP year 21-22

Rahel joined UROP during her freshman campaign as a part of the program's inaugural cohort, where she worked with Dr. Michael Fisher on his project exploring policy ramifications of mixed-income housing in high-poverty neighborhoods. Since graduating from UROP, she has excelled in diverse research endeavors, such as serving as a research assistant in the Department of African-American Studies and McNair Scholars fellow. Rahel's passion for global studies also led to her studying abroad for one year at University College Dublin in Ireland. Rahel now serves as a global ambassador and Gilman scholar to promote intercultural dialogue and address disparities in study abroad participation among students of color. She saw her time in UROP as integral to building a sense of belonging and purpose on campus. "I feel like UROP was the first domino to my success...it was the first moment that I really needed to instill values of confidence, that I could do anything, and that I belong at this school, I've earned my spot at this institution." Rahel is considering several exciting career pathways, including a career in global diplomacy and applying to law school at the University of Melbourne in Australia.

Yama joined the 2022-23 UROP cohort as an incoming freshman with a strong motivation to try something new, and research was an unexplored frontier for him to delve into. Over the course of the academic year, Yama became exposed to a wide variety of research-related experiences, which catapulted him into an exciting arc of professional and academic opportunities. He worked with Dr. Nathaniel Lupton on his project exploring associations between the US Renewable Energy Investment Tax Credit and increased innovation in low-emission energy sectors. Yama credits his experience in Dr. Lupton's lab as central to landing his current position as economic research analyst intern with the US Department of Agriculture. "A lot of the research that I worked on, a lot of the expertise that Dr. Lupton helped me build up as part of the project was incredibly instrumental." Yama also co-founded the San Jose Consulting Group, an SJSU student-led organization that provides business and marketing solutions to small companies and non-profits, in addition to networking events supporting the next generation of student consultants. Yama's advice for prospective students on the fence about engaging in research is simple. "A very brilliant person once said 'opportunities are multiplied as they are seized.' And UROP is one of those opportunities. Let my example be a case study as to why you should join the program, and just go for it!"



Yama Sekander
Major: Economics
UROP year 22-23



Sara Nayeem
Major: Molecular Biology
UROP year 22-23

Sara came to UROP in 2022 with a deep curiosity about how to do research. As a student research mentee, she worked with Dr. Marie Haverfield on her project exploring communication strategies nurses employ to forge connections with caregivers. Since graduating from UROP, she has flourished as a budding researcher, taking up several leadership positions across campus and in the community. Sara is the student body representative on the SJSU Research Foundation Board of Directors, where she helps oversee the University's strategy and vision around research and innovation. Earlier this year, she was awarded the highly competitive SJSU Student RSCA Fellowship, where she is working with her faculty mentor Dr. Sonia Singhal on a project exploring how viruses adapt to increasing temperatures in the context of climate change. Sara appreciated how UROP helped her feel comfortable to seek out new opportunities and challenge herself. "For me, UROP was a very uplifting platform, just the class environment and how it helped boost confidence, and looking at my other UROP classmates doing research motivated me to be the best version of myself." She is excited to continue doing research while at SJSU, and is currently looking at graduate programs in molecular biology to study CRISPR technology.

Faculty Highlights

Faculty Spotlight



Dr. Charles Park **Department of Public Health and Recreation**

Dr. Park joined SJSU in the fall of 2020 and has been driven by his passion for mentoring undergraduates early on in their academic journey from the moment he arrived on campus. He has served as a UROP faculty mentor over the past two years, working with students from diverse backgrounds and academic disciplines. During his time in the program, Dr. Park has witnessed firsthand SJSU's undergraduate students' unique assets and motivation to learn when it comes to research. "They are really motivated to learn new things. I see the attitude and mindset that is open to anything from the undergraduate students. They have really great potential to become great researchers in the future."

Dr. Park's research focuses on minority and immigrant health. As a faculty mentor, he worked collaboratively with student mentees from two different UROP cohorts on a project exploring how language proficiency and language identity is related to mental health among immigrant populations in the United States. Students participated in a variety of research-related tasks, including submitting an Institutional Review Board proposal, completing human-subjects research [CITI] training, writing a systematic literature, designing a qualitative question guide, and interviewing participants to provide them exposure to various stages of the research process. This collective work resulted in multiple student co-authored manuscripts under review in various academic journals.

Overall, Dr. Park sees UROP as a way for SJSU students to get a head start on professional development and gain exposure to the myriad career options available to them. "UROP provides a wonderful opportunity for students to develop their preparation for their future career. For example, help them to write their CV, how to communicate with faculty effectively, and have a good interview. All of these processes are really unique for undergraduate students who are engaging in UROP." Dr. Park is a valued member in the UROP family, and we look forward to his continued collaboration and mentorship with our students.

Fall Events

UROP Fall Social

On December 7th, UROP hosted its annual fall social event in the MLK Library. The event brought together current students and faculty from the 2023-24 cohort in addition to program alumni and leadership from the Office of Research and Innovation to connect and engage in community building. Those in attendance celebrated the exciting diversity of partnerships and early successes of our current students in addition to the impactful work being done by program alums. The event was catered by Spartan Eats, who put together a delicious taco bar. We look forward to seeing the scope of projects our students develop in the spring!



Other Program Updates

UROP Website

The UROP website will officially launch later this month at sjsu.edu/urop. The website is a repository where you can access all program-related content. Resources are available for current and prospective students and faculty.

UROP on Social Media

Follow UROP on Instagram [@urop_sjsu](https://www.instagram.com/urop_sjsu).

Celebration of Research

Each year, UROP students participate in the campus-wide Celebration of Research event, where they share the work from their year-long faculty partnership. This year's Celebration of Research will take place during SJSU Research Week on April 15-19 2024.

2024-25 Cohort Application Information

Interested in joining UROP for the 2024-25 academic year? The open enrollment period will begin in mid-April. Follow our social media and website for more specific details. You can fill out an [interest form](#) to receive program updates and get notified when applications go live. For program inquiries, please send an email to urop@sjsu.edu.

UROP at the Spring Orientation Resource Fair

UROP will participate in the 2024 Spring Orientation Resource Fair. The orientation sessions are Friday, January 12 (transfer students only) and January 17 (frosh and transfers). Both events will take place in the Student Union. Stop by to say hello and learn more about the program.

