Discovery Undergraduate Research Internships (DURI)

INITIATIVE

When students participate directly in real-world experiences, professional possibilities are more manifest. In order to provide such enriching experiences for STEM students, the Discovery Learning Research Center created the Discovery Undergraduate Research Internship (DURI) program in 2005 with support from Lilly Endowment. The program goals are twofold: engage undergraduate students in cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research projects conducted within Discovery Park, and encourage students to continue their studies in graduate school and pursue careers in research. Students apply the diverse skills they learn in school while gaining professional experience, hands-on practice in research, and acquaintance with research-related opportunities. Class work is prescribed and predictable, while research is often challenging due to its open-ended nature. DURI students have the opportunity to practice classroom learning in the research setting, using knowledge and skills in applied and novel methods. DURI provides 50 part-time internships during each academic semester and up to 25 full-time internships during the summer.

IMPACT

- 878 students representing all of Purdue’s ten undergraduate academic units have participated since fall 2005.
- More than 125 faculty representing all ten undergraduate colleges and schools have coordinated DURI projects.
- Of the 47 students who graduated from Purdue in the first five years, 34 have enrolled in graduate school programs.
- 76 percent of DURI students report that it has influenced their career decisions.
- 37 percent report that they have published or plan to publish their research findings.
- 44 percent report that they have presented or plan to present their research findings.

Student responses:

“This was an opportunity of a lifetime. Through this experience, I was definitely able to learn my strengths and weaknesses. I was surrounded by people who were really passionate about what they wanted to do in life.”

“This is a great program that allows students to have a head start in their chosen field of research.” “The DURI program has opened my mind to interdisciplinary careers and entrepreneurship because of the creative individuals involved, the lectures and the research involving multiple disciplines.”

Faculty responses:

“[My intern] has been a gem; bright, quick to learn and immediately productive. [She] is headed toward becoming a first class researcher. She is now readying her applications to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D., beginning next year.”

[Female student], from Pharmacy, worked in our project and that research gained worldwide scholarly attention. [Now] several students have shown interest in this research. [Male student], from Food Science, also produced some interesting results and will be published soon. I sincerely thank DURI for giving me highly talented and focused students.”