

# Institutionalizing Undergraduate Research at California State University San Marcos



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## Abstract

California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) is a comprehensive regional undergraduate university with approximately 8000 students, located in north San Diego County. At less than 20 years old, CSUSM is at a very early stage of development; thus there is a significant opportunity to have an impact on the campus culture as the institution matures. The Committee for Undergraduate Research (CUGR) was established to move CSUSM toward institutionalizing undergraduate research campus-wide. Our long-term goal is to become a campus where undergraduate research is a priority and where faculty and students involved in research are supported and recognized by the university. Early successes include official recognition and support from the Provost and recruitment of an interdisciplinary team of faculty to join CUGR. We will report details on our action plan, anticipated challenges we will likely face, and opportunities for success.

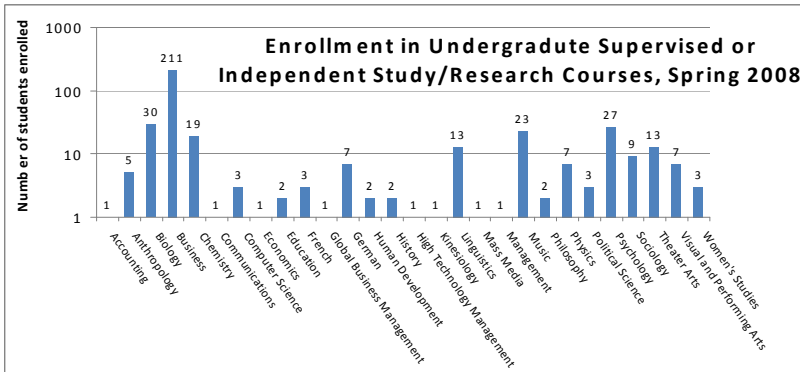


Craven Hall, CSUSM. Photo credit: David Gatley, 2000.

## Progress to date

**Towards fulfilling our short-term goals, we have:**

- Established the Committee on Undergraduate Research (CUGR), which is a steering committee for implementing our goal of institutionalizing undergraduate research at CSUSM. The committee is currently composed of seven faculty members representing various colleges on campus. The task of this committee is to identify faculty already active in undergraduate research and to inventory these activities.
- Met with department chairs and developed an informational document to disseminate to academic departments to describe the role of CUGR. The goal of this activity was to inform and foster dialogue amongst faculty.
- Made plans our first all-faculty "Town Hall" meeting to inform faculty of CUGR and our goal of institutionalizing undergraduate research at CSUSM. This "Town Hall" meeting will be held in the fall 2008 semester.
- Conducted a search of undergraduate independent study research activities conducted by department during the spring 2008 semester. In total there were 399 students enrolled in undergraduate independent study research projects across 28 degree programs (see figure below).



Biology student conducting independent field research on the CSUSM campus. Photo credit: G. Vourlitis.

## Future activities

**Intermediate Goals (within 2-5 years):**

- Develop a system to link faculty and undergraduate students in research activities.
- Strengthen our campus administrative and organizational infrastructure for faculty-mentored undergraduate student research, such as establishing a centralized office for undergraduate research (OUGR).
- Identify external resources to support undergraduate research.
- Implement a research-supportive undergraduate curriculum.
- Recognize faculty and student research through celebration of achievements.
- Initiate assessment of undergraduate research outcomes via faculty consultation.



Student finalists, 2008 CSUSM Student Research Competition. Photo credit: Linda Collins.

**Long-term goals (within 5-10 years):**

- Marshal internal resources and administrative support to sustain undergraduate research, such as faculty professional development and research facilities.
- Provide stipends, travel grants, and fellowships for undergraduate students to conduct supervised research including honors research.
- Create summer research programs for undergraduate students to collaborate on faculty-mentored research projects.
- Clarify faculty retention, tenure, and promotion guidelines to advance undergraduate research.
- Conduct ongoing assessment of undergraduate research outcomes.



A CSUSM College of Business (CoBA) Senior Experience student team. Over 4,000 students have participated in over 1,000 Senior Experience projects in the past 15 years. Photo credit: Jim Hamerly.