

April 12-13
2021

CURO ^[virtual] Symposium

highlighting UGA's undergraduate research



2020 CURO Research Mentoring Awards

The Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost and the Honors Program established the CURO Research Mentoring Awards, formerly the EURM awards, in 2001. These awards recognize outstanding faculty who consistently engage undergraduate researchers through CURO programming (courses, the Symposium, summer fellows, theses, etc.) and enhance the learning experience of undergraduate researchers at the University of Georgia. Award recipients have provided superior research opportunities and mentoring and have collaborated with undergraduate researchers on publications and presentations at professional conferences.

The 2021 recipients are Dr. Cheryl T. Gomillion, *Assistant Professor, School of Chemical, Materials, and Biomedical Engineering, College of Engineering*, and Dr. Walter K Schmidt, *Professor and Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences*.

Previous recipients of the last four years are listed below. To view a complete list of recipients, visit http://curo.uga.edu/faculty/research_mentoring_awards.html.

2020 recipients

- **Dr. Jamie Cooper**, *Associate Professor, Department of Foods and Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences*
- **Dr. David Cotten**, *Research Scientist, Department of Geography, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences*

2019 recipients

- **Dr. Vanessa Ezenwa**, *Professor, Odum School of Ecology, and Department of Infectious Diseases, College of Veterinary Medicine*
- **Dr. Michelle vanDellen**, *Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences*

2018 recipients

- **Dr. Michael Terns**, *Distinguished Research Professor, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences*
- **Dr. Sarah Shannon**, *Assistant Professor, Sociology, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences*

2017 recipients

- **Dr. Kevin McCully**, *Professor of Kinesiology, Director of the Exercise Muscle Physiology Laboratory, College of Education*
- **Dr. Brenda Cude**, *Professor, Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics, College of Family and Consumer Sciences*

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Dr. Cheryl T. Gomillion

Assistant Professor, School of Chemical, Materials, and Biomedical Engineering, College of Engineering.

CURO is honored to recognize **Dr. Cheryl Gomillion**, Assistant Professor in the School of Chemical, Materials, and Biomedical Engineering in the College of Engineering, with the 2021 CURO Research Mentoring Award. Dr. Gomillion's lab, which contributes to her research in tissue engineering and regenerative medicine, has fostered and encouraged undergraduate students to pursue their own successful careers in private industry, graduate and professional school, and medical school.

Dr. Gomillion receives this award because of her exceptional commitment to undergraduate research at UGA. She has supervised over twenty-five undergraduate researchers: thirteen of her students participated in CURO, and twelve were awardees of the CURO Research Assistantship. Dr. Gomillion's focus on recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in STEM creates a diverse and engaging lab environment that encourages conversation and collaboration. According to one student, "Dr. Gomillion has founded a diverse and inclusive lab environment that intentionally brings together members of different backgrounds, confronting strong imbalances in racial, ethnic, and gender representation across scientific fields." Dr. Gomillion makes collaboration the focus of these diverse labs, so that "within the Gomillion lab, students work much how scientists would in the real work: as a collective." Her focus on the collective success of the lab is balanced by a commitment to personal attention for each student which generates confidence and ownership over project. As one student summarized, "she made me feel confident in my work ... I have been able to learn so much in the past two years and barely recognize a time in my life when things like ... thawing cells didn't feel like second nature."

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Dr. Walter K Schmidt

Professor and Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences.

CURO is honored to recognize **Dr. Walter Schmidt**, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences and Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar, with the 2021 CURO Research Mentoring Award. Over his career at UGA, Dr. Schmidt has mentored fifty-nine undergraduate students in his lab; many of his students go on to co-author publications, enroll in graduate and professional school, pursue careers in the private- and government-sector, and attend medical school.

Dr. Schmidt receives this award because of his outstanding devotion to encouraging students to find joy in new discovery, and to critically engage with every step of the scientific method. As one student described "Dr. Schmidt involves students in every aspect of the scientific process from formulation of a question, to experiment design, to activities of experiment, to analysis and discussion." Adopting a Socratic teaching method with collaborative and individual attention, Dr. Schmidt encourages students to develop critical thinking skills while processing the practical aspects of lab work: "Rather than leaving me to wallow in frustration ... Dr. Schmidt encouraged me to think critically about my failures and apply the scientific method ... to my smaller question." Dr. Schmidt allows students room to make mistakes, "by acknowledging that I could learn and showing grace, Dr. Schmidt subtly permitted me to feel comfortable about not knowing something and asking honest questions in the future." Dr. Schmidt's commitment to fostering confidence in his students, to finding the joy in scientific discovery, and the habit of asking questions enables his students to find success outside of his lab: "The time he dedicated to ensure I understood the process of conducting our experiments and, more importantly, the underlying theories that dictated those processes has made me the scientist I am today."