Project Title: Undergraduate Research Blogs in Linguistics

Faculty Fellows Project Report
Kira Hall, Department of Linguistics
Submitted May 2018

- Title and brief description of your project

  This project strove to promote more undergraduate student involvement in the Department of Linguistics through the institutionalization of "undergraduate research blogs" based on projects, papers, or ideas nominated by instructors for one of our new Linguistics Undergraduate Research Awards. The awards are contingent on the student's successful submission of a 500-1000 word blog describing the research that inspired the student's nomination. Students work with their nominating faculty members, GPTIs, or TAs to produce a synopsis of the research idea that is both informative and accessible to a wider readership. All of the students nominated for the award after the conclusion of the Fall 2017 semester successfully submitted an instructor-approved blog by the spring deadline and received the award. We released the first round of 14 undergraduate research blogs shortly before the Spring 2018 graduation, available for viewing on the Department of Linguistics website. Since students can be nominated by instructors of introductory as well as advanced courses, the blog project showcases the innovative work being conducted in linguistics at all levels of undergraduate coursework. The blog project received enthusiastic support from undergraduate students, TAs, GPTIs, and faculty.

- Describe the challenge you addressed in your department with this project.

  The greatest challenge we faced when implementing this project is that the Department of Linguistics has only recently begun to turn attention to our undergraduate students. We have a very large MA program for a department of our size, which also sponsors two Professional MA Programs. Many of our faculty therefore teach a majority of their courses at the graduate level and do not have the opportunity to develop relationships with undergraduate students. In fact, the Department of Linguistics established the position of Associate Chair of Undergraduate Studies only two years ago (I am the first to hold this position). Although we are working to encourage faculty engagement with undergraduate research at more advanced levels through UROP grants, the majority of undergraduates who take our courses do not have a strong relationship with the Department of Linguistics or the faculty, GPTIs, and TAs who teach within it. We wanted to change this relationship. We are pleased to report that the undergraduate blog project not only enhanced the department climate for many of our undergraduate students, it also constituted a major step forward in inspiring undergraduate involvement in the major and in the discipline.

- Describe desired result

  The undergraduate blog project advertises our linguistics courses while showcasing the work of our students to the university community and to the

public. We could not have asked for a better result than this. Our undergraduate students are given the opportunity to work with a mentor and share their ideas as burgeoning researchers on a university-based public forum (the benefits of which extend far beyond the award itself). In addition, we believe that our archiving of these blog posts will prove valuable to students even after graduation—for instance, when they refer back to their university experiences in order to establish themselves professionally. Finally, from the point of view of the Department of Linguistics, this project brought faculty, GPTIs, TAs, and students together in ways we have not experienced before, and we are excited to continue this tradition in future semesters.

- Describe the project. What did you do?

  I have outlined the basics of the project above, but I am happy to provide more details regarding strategies and timelines if requested.

- Describe the outcome. What worked, what didn't work, lessons learned.

  The best decision we made when setting up this project was to make the Linguistics Undergraduate Research Award *contingent* upon the successful submission of the 500-1000 word blog post. This secured that our nominated student authors would not only work hard on their blogs but also complete them by the deadline. A second important decision we made was to require students to get their blogs approved by the nominating faculty member or instructor. In some cases, this facilitated very valuable beyond-class interactions between students and advisors. These interactions also improved the quality of the blog posts, making my job, as editor, a bit easier. Finally, the development of the website design was time-consuming (which we created with technical assistance from linguistics PhD student Kevin Stowe), but now that it is completed, it should be quite easy to incorporate new blogs into this web design in the future.

- Reflect on your experience in the Faculty Fellows program and working on your project.

  The idea for this project was inspired by comments made by Andy Martin and Amanda McAndrew in the Faculty Fellows program seminar in Spring 2017. Especially valuable was Andy's discussion of the social, intellectual, and professional importance of creating an online archive for undergraduate students, and the many discussions I had with other Faculty Fellows regarding this idea. Amanda consulted with me extensively throughout the fall semester on how I might turn the blog post idea into a project and later provided essential feedback regarding design options for the website. In sum, the ASSETT Faculty Fellows experience got me thinking about undergraduate education in new and innovative ways, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate.

- If appropriate, please include other artifacts and visuals (data, weblinks, pictures, write-ups)

  The undergraduate research blogs can be found on our departmental website at the following link: https://www.colorado.edu/linguistics/undergraduate-

program/undergraduate-research-blogs-linguistics. Below is a screenshot of the opening blog page. I invite you to take a closer look!

Emoji Prediction

Can you tell from a text whether the writer is happy? Angry? Disappointed? Can you... Read more

Pragmatic Skills in Individuals with Down Syndrome

Children with Down syndrome demonstrate an intricate profile of strengths and limitations in pragmatic aspects... Read more

Gender without Bodies

I have loved the film Her since I first saw it in the winter of... Read more

Vowel Quality and Singing Style

Have you ever listened to a musician singing and then been surprised by their accent... Read more

Does Our Perspective on Time Influence the Memories we Recall?

English speakers take two perspectives on time, which are reflected in how we talk about... Read more

Nasalization of Vowels in French Second Language English

French speakers of English are often perceived as having very nasal speech when they speak... Read more

Height and Dating: A Critique of Inexact Statistics

Though data-driven academics often insist that the heart of science is raw numbers, the truth... Read more

Racial Stereotypes in my Childhood Film

As children, we often do not notice how we are socialized into ideologies of race... Read more

Orange Caligula and Euphemism

Euphemism is a linguistic tool used to communicate with indirect means, generally around a topic... Read more