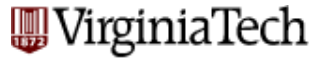


# Undergraduate Research Institute

*A University Exemplary Department*



## Summer Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research Program 2009

*A collaboration between the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS) and the College of Science (COS).*

*Funded by a grant from the Virginia Tech Institute of Society, Culture, and Environment (ISCE)*

*with contributions from participating departments and their respective Dean's offices.*

Initiated by the CLAHS Undergraduate Research Institute, the Summer Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research Program is a pilot project that will lay a foundation for applying to the National Science Foundation's REU (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) program. Diana Ridgwell, director of the Undergraduate Research Institute, indicates that "an NSF grant that helps bring together STEM fields with the liberal arts and human sciences can lead to innovative new practices that recognize the need to approach problems from multiple perspectives."

### About the Program

In summer 2009 the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and the College of Science at Virginia Tech teamed up to give students an interdisciplinary research experience. Six students, two from English, two from Psychology, and two from Human Development worked with faculty members Clare Dannenburg (English), Julie Dunsmore (Psychology), Cynthia Smith (Human Development), and Director of the CLAHS Undergraduate Research Institute, Diana Ridgwell, to get hands-on research experience. Students worked in groups of two, assigned to the professor corresponding with their field of study for the primary project but were rotated throughout the other projects. **Students performed tasks such as data collection, behavioral coding, transcribing, and variable extraction, learning both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research.**



### Topics

With two topics, Parental Socialization of Children's Emotional Development and Cultural Significance of Gender-Neutral Job Titles Over Time, students worked on a primary project in-depth but also had the opportunity to help on the other project periodically; experiencing a different method of research.

### Research Interests

Students were asked to discuss areas of future potential research inspired by their work over the summer:

**Charles:** Dialects in sports cultures

**Leah:** How foreign families assimilate to the United States

**Anne-Randolph:** How media affects young people's body image

**Jenn:** How certain foods affect brain structures and functions

**Meghan:** Unmarried parents who live together: The impact on children



### Class

Students ranged from being experienced research assistants to beginners. In a class setting each week, they reflected on their experiences, learned more about the concept of research, discussed their own ideas for research and how an interdisciplinary approach could add to the project, and heard from guest speakers about research as a career. In addition, reading groups led by the faculty exposed students to research articles from the fields represented in the studies, giving them a broader view of work in those disciplines.

*"What I realized in working with these faculty members this summer is that they LOVE their work and that in fact, research is not really work to them, it is fun, motivating, and rewarding."*  
-student participant

*"I enjoyed hearing about everyone's experiences. Things did not always go the way we wanted but I found out that is how the research process works. It is all a learning process."*

-student participant

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