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# UNH Undergraduate Researchers Convene for Conference

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# UNH Undergraduate Researchers Convene for Conference

## Event highlights the extensive work of hundreds of students

By [Lori Gula](#)  
UNH News Bureau

April 22, 2002

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Hundreds of undergraduate students at the University of New Hampshire will connect real life to their academic pursuits when they present their undergraduate research projects at the Undergraduate Research Conference 2002 May 2-4 at the Durham and Manchester campuses.

"Undergraduate research begins with a real question that requires a real answer. Finding that answer can make a student into a good citizen, and underscore in a young life what education is really *for*," says Georgeann Murphy, coordinator of the International Research Opportunities Program (IROP).

In its third year, the conference has grown steadily since 2000 and has become an annual spring tradition. Last year, more than 200 students presented their scholarly and artistic achievements.

Between 150 and 200 students will participate in this year's event, with the theme, "Discovery Will Change Your Life." The conference is open to the public. Honors students and their parents, and groups of guidance counselors and teachers from across the state also have been invited. The conference gives students participating in UNH's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and IROP an opportunity to showcase their research. Both programs provide guidance and funding for students who want to work on research projects. The final step of the research project is the presentation of results.

In pursuing research, students learn independence and responsibility, Murphy says, and education becomes a practical business, not an academic exercise.

"Students connect to the intellectual community in ways even an inspiring class or professor cannot alone ensure, largely because the research asks so much of the student. In return, students do extraordinary things,' she says. "When challenged to perform as smart, contributing members of society, most do just that. That project -- getting students connected with the real world of ideas that serve others -- is thrilling for all involved."

Kurk Dorsey, an associate professor of history, mentored student Andrew Case, whom he met when Case took Dorsey's American environmental history class.

With Dorsey's support and encouragement as a faculty adviser, Case was awarded a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) to do the research for his thesis, "Threading a Needle Through the Notch: An Environmental History of Construction of Interstate 93 in Franconia Notch, New Hampshire." The stipend allowed him to spend nine weeks in archives around the state, focused on his research and not trying to hold down a summer job, too.

"I would have endeavored to complete this project even without funding from SURF," Case says, "but I can say with confidence that without the fellowship, the depth and complexity of my work would have been significantly compromised." Case describes the process as "the most demanding and rewarding experience of my undergraduate career," but it also doesn't hurt that Dorsey believes Case has the start of a doctoral dissertation if he chooses graduate school.

"These kinds of programs are indispensable," Dorsey stresses. "Andrew has not only distinguished himself in any pool of graduate applicants, but now he has a professor who can really convince someone he's able to do good work."

### **Schedule information**

All students will present their work during scheduled university-wide sessions at the Manchester campus

Thursday, May 2, and in Durham May 3, between 9 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. in the Memorial Union Building (MUB). The College of Life Sciences and Agriculture (COLSA) holds its annual research conference Saturday, May 4, also in the MUB. The following departments, programs, or schools/colleges will sponsor research presentation sessions Friday afternoon, May 3.

WSBE Paul J. Holloway Jr. Prize Business Plan Competition  
SHHS Grimes Award Competition  
English Department Undergraduate Honors Conference  
Sociology Department Student Presentations  
History Department  
Psychology Dept's Haslerud Undergrad Research Conference  
Electrical Engineering Senior Project Presentations  
Civil and Environmental Engineering Department  
International Affairs/IROP  
IROP - UROP - SURF - Honors - McNair Faire  
Mechanical Engineering Project Presentations  
COLSA Undergraduate Research Conference (Sat., May 4)

**Contact Julie Williams, conference coordinator, at 603-862-5055, for more information on departmental competitions.**

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