Rensselaer

UGED BUZZ

Spring 2021

Undergraduate Research Program Updates

Rensselaer's Undergraduate Research Program (URP) provides real-world, hands-on research experience available to undergrad students in all five schools. This unique program offers the opportunity to work directly with a faculty member on a bona fide research project while earning course credit or as a paid research assistant. Over 400 undergrads participate in the URP during the academic terms.

Some recent examples of projects students have been involved in during the fall 2020 semester include:

- Examples of Model-Coronavirus on Lung Surfactant Hydrodynamics
- CISL VirBELA Research & Chatbot Design
- Deep Learning for Trust in Cybersecurity
- Energy Modeling and Compliance Web Portal
- Telescope

Junior Recognition Luncheon

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the Annual Junior Academic Recognition Luncheon unfortunately needed to be cancelled this year. Although we didn't gather in person to celebrate, the Office of Undergraduate Education sent out 691 e-certificates to every senior who has earned a GPA of 3.5 or higher. UGE thanks every one of you for being an integral part of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Community and contributing to the institute's success.

A big thank you to all of the students who completed their fall 2020 end of term course evaluations. We received a response rate of 52%. Your feedback is valuable and contributes to the improvement and success of our programs.

Fall 2020 Academic Citations

A system of Academic Citations was established in response to a recommendation of the Faculty Senate to recognize that occasionally a student is so outstanding that an "A" is simply not sufficient reward. A citation is intended to provide special recognition for that rare situation in which a student singularly distinguishes her/himself in a course and may be recommended by the instructor to the Dean of Undergraduate Education. This year we recognized 8 students for their extraordinary efforts in their course. Congratulations to the following students:

- Eris Balic
- Alexander Deans-Rowe
- Jasmine Filawo
- Arielle Gott
- Zachary Orris
- Taylor Zahirnyi
- Zachary Hall
- Sandor Magya

News from the Advising and Learning Assistance Center (ALAC)

Degree Works Update

Degree Works is the degree audit program that tracks students' degree progress and ensures that all students and advisors know exactly what is needed for students to fulfill graduation requirements. It is an overlay of our Banner student information system. It is managed through the Registrar's office. If you haven't been on Degree Works lately there are a few new changes to how it looks.

A New Look

Degree Works has a new look but all of the same information is still present.

- There is still an overall profile of the student with information near the top of the degree audit. It shows when a student started, who their advisor(s) is and what the students major is. There is no longer a "degree progress bar graph" but information is present to specify how many credits a student has finished and how much still needs to be accomplished.

- There are still content blocks such as Communication Intensive, Math and Science Core and Major Requirements, etc. listed so that students and advisors can see what specific courses or elective courses are needed.

- Due to a break with Adobe, Degree Works no longer offers the option to save a record in PDF mode to be printed or saved electronically. But there is still a print function on the degree audit page.

- There is still a color coded legend but it is a little more subtle. The coding is Complete = Green; Incomplete = Red; and In Progress = Blue but now the color is only on the far left of the course listing.

- The GPA Calculator, Class History (transcript view), Petitions and Notes areas are still available but now are found at the top right where there are 3 vertical dots designating a pull down menu.

Overall it is a simpler, more efficient look and we are looking forward to even more upgrades like HASS pathways being included as well as ARCH listed as a graduation requirement.

The Registrar hopes to make greater use of the petition or substitution functionality and also eventually use batch queries for Degree Clearance.

ALAC will be working to set up trainings with HUB managers and faculty advisors that need an introduction or a refresher to Degree Works new and improved look.

Teaching and Learning Collaboratory

2020 Rensselaer's Studio Challenge Winner

The studio challenge is supported by the Lemelson Foundation and in honor of the late Professor Burt Swersey. The details of the project and student/faculty team awarded are below:

Project: Starving for Soc!al Interactions

Student Team Members

- Yue Chen, Cognitive Science major
- Chuizheng Kong, Mechanical Engineering major
- Tiffani Szeto, Neuroscience and Psychological Science dual major

Faculty Members

- Dr. Alexander Ma, Chemistry Department
- Dr. Alicia Walf, Cognitive Science Department

Executive Summary

The outbreak of COVID-19 has changed our daily life. While the RPI community has responded with celerity in constructing a safe environment for studying and learning, an unprecedented challenge for the first year students have been forming social bonds with social distancing. As a former lead resident assistant and one of our team members, Tiffani Szeto, has witnessed the impact of the stress caused by isolation and fear of contracting the virus on first year students at RPI. Our team is thus motivated to design a new system for students to build supportive connections now during this unprecedented time as well as in future.

Built on top of the ideas of existing friend-making and socializing apps, our new system incorporates the concept of an adaptation period, reward system, and shared goal with artificial intelligence to help our users expand their social circles safely in the time of the pandemic. We are planning to implement this system as a web application by the end of Spring 2021 semester.

AEFIS Implementation Update

Team members from UGED, OIRA, and DotCIO continue to work on the implementation of AEFIS features. AEFIS hosts our syllabi, course evaluations, assessment and accreditation processes and practices on campus. In Fall of 2020, the Syllabus tool was successfully implemented and is a welcome addition to the AEFIS course evaluations which were integrated last summer. Looking ahead the focus will be on the assessment tools for institute, accreditation, program, and course outcomes. We are grateful to everyone for attending trainings, offering valuable feedback, and displaying patience through the transition of change as we strive to make AEFIS the best it can be for our Institute.

Office of International Programs

Fall 2020 was a unique semester for study abroad. Like many institutions worldwide, Rensselaer suspended student travel, and study abroad and exchange programs were put on a temporary pause. However, that did not stop Rensselaer undergraduates from looking ahead to a time when international travel will once again be possible. Students attended the many virtual information sessions and events that the Office of International Programs hosted. These included the events of International Education Week, an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. This annual joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education strives to prepare Americans for a global environment and to attract future leaders from abroad to study, learn, and exchange experiences. The Office of International Programs hosted multiple events to promote the international opportunities available to Rensselaer undergraduates, as well as to highlight the accomplishments of Rensselaer students who have studied abroad.

Rensselaer returnees are also showcased in the *Why Study Abroad?* video created by the OIP during the fall semester. *Why Study Abroad?* includes the perspectives of three undergraduates who spent a semester abroad in Australia, Singapore and France respectively, as well as photos of the travels of additional Rensselaer students who studied in Australia, Italy, England, South Africa, New Zealand, Denmark and Singapore. Enjoy the video here.

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