The Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) was started in 1988 as an innovative program to improve the retention and academic success of diverse students by enabling first- and second-year students to participate in faculty research. Today, we provide 1,300 first- and second-year students and community college transfer students each year with the opportunity to engage in cutting-edge research projects alongside faculty, research scientists, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students in all academic disciplines and all U-M schools and colleges. Undergraduate research as a pedagogy engages students in immersive, engaged learning while integrating the teaching and research missions of the University to enhance undergraduate education. The program will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2013 and plans to enhance its existing work and develop new programs for both entering students and more advanced students in all fields.
THE OPPORTUNITIES

UROP is dedicated to creating valuable and memorable research experiences for undergraduate students. The demand for student research experiences continues to grow each year, and many students clamor to be part of our exciting research community. UROP also assists students with travel to a national or international research conference, summer research fellowships, access to specialized workshop training programs, and small research grants for student initiated projects. Studies show that undergraduates exposed to intensive research experiences learn valuable research skills, gain mentors and role models, and clarify their academic and professional goals, which serves them well in any career they choose to pursue.

THE IMPACT

UROP needs continued funding for innovative programs that will give more students opportunities for research and experiential learning. Gifts for a community-based research program would enable more students to experience working in a non-profit or entrepreneurial setting that focuses on community development, thereby giving them hands-on experience and new perspective on career goals. Also, support is needed to advance our curriculum through special mini-courses and courses in conjunction with local research projects in Detroit and surrounding Michigan communities.

UNDERGRADUATE SUMMER RESEARCH INITIATIVE

$300,000 annually/$5,000 per student

Although participating in undergraduate research during the academic year is a wonderful opportunity for students, time is limited to develop an independent project that can lead to publication, thesis work, or other outcomes. Also, there are students who are not able to take time during the academic year to conduct research. Summer research allows students to immerse themselves in a project, to benefit from more consistent faculty mentorship without distractions, and to get a glimpse of the life of the scholar researcher. Gifts to support summer research would also enable us to support more international research opportunities, either through existing exchange programs or new program models. Funding would support 50 to 60 students to conduct full-time summer research either at the University of Michigan or with U-M faculty collaborators around the world. The ability for students to experience intense and sustained academic engagement could lead to a wide range of outcomes, from more students completing honors theses to publication in peer reviewed journals to global research experiences and also clarification of interest in and goals for future graduate work.

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROGRAM

$150,000 to $200,000 annually

Funding for this program would enable us to develop new curricular initiatives to link classroom learning with community-based research opportunities in multiple sectors, including non-profits, governmental organizations, and even entrepreneurial ventures focused on community economic development. Working in collaboration with our community partners, we could enhance this program by developing courses and workshops to provide students with additional skills and knowledge that could be applied to their work in the community and also enhance their academic course work. Funds would be used for both course development to engage our community partners, housing stipends to enable students to reside in Detroit, and stipends for 25–30 students annually to conduct full-time summer research for community-based organizations in southeast Michigan, with a special focus on Detroit. Through these engaged learning opportunities, students would learn to apply and develop research skills in a real world context, conduct critical research to help non-profit community-based organizations and other organizations better serve their constituents, expose students to professional needs and opportunities, integrate these experiences with their academic work, and explore future academic and professional pathways.
MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

$150,000 annually

Although many talented Michigan students begin their education at community colleges, the number transferring to U-M to complete their degrees remains low. Funding for summer research fellowships for community college students would help us to increase the number of students who transfer to U-M and complete their education successfully. Students in this group include individuals seeking training for new careers, veterans, first-generation college students, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This program would provide opportunities for Michigan community college students to conduct research on the U-M campus up to one year prior to transferring, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will transfer and be successful at U-M. Funds would support housing and stipends for 30 students, as well as programmatic and staff support for peer advisors who are successful community college transfer students.

MINI-COURSES ON COMPLEX RESEARCH PROBLEMS

$50,000 to $100,000 annually

We know that undergraduate research can have a significant positive impact on student academic engagement, retention of diverse students, and pathways to graduate and professional school. However, many students, and especially those from diverse backgrounds, often are not initially interested in research or see it as relevant to their long-term goals. Therefore, we plan to develop a series of research-based mini-courses focused on topics of interest to diverse student populations. The proposed courses would focus on topics such as obesity, poverty, economic development, urban issues, mental health, African and Latino Studies, and health care disparities, and would introduce students to researchers from across campus who are working in these areas. For example, the topic of obesity has been of great interest to UROP student researchers—24 of whom are conducting research on topics ranging from Exercise and Vascular Complications (Kinesiology), Health Care Policy Innovations (Economics), Cognitive Control and Decision-making (Psychology), Unraveling the Mystery of Childhood Obesity (Pediatrics), Adhesion Molecules in Obesity and Atherosclerosis (Medical School and MCDB). By helping students see the connection between research and community issues, they will become engaged in research and explore fields they may not have considered.

WAYS TO FUND YOUR GIFT

Your gifts of cash, pledges, or appreciated securities change lives. Wills, estate, and planned gifts allow you to create a lasting legacy that will enable the best and brightest minds to experience a liberal arts education, solve problems in a changing world, and yield ideas and innovations that will make a difference in Michigan and around the globe.