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An Interview with Anne Baldwin

Quinten Seskin

Anne Baldwin, PhD, is the current Director of Sponsored Research here at SUNY Geneseo

How would you describe the importance of undergraduate research? Do you have any comments about the opportunities available to current students?

I think that undergraduate research is tremendously important. I benefited from it when I was an undergraduate student, and countless people do as well. Research, or involvement in scholarly activities, comes with the typical benefits like learning skills but it does more intangible things for students—it can build self-confidence, it can build a sense of community, a sense of self-worth, and it can help clarify career goals. In fact, I did not originally intend to go to graduate school, however, doing research put me in touch with numerous people who became my closest friends. That experience clarified for me the career path that I wanted to take, and influenced me to apply to graduate school. It takes a while to get to that point, but I truly believe that involvement in undergraduate research is very important.

What grants does SUNY Geneseo provide to students for conducting research in their respective fields?

SUNY Geneseo started funding undergraduate research and travel grants, which are now known as track grants, in 1988—back then it was just a few awards for a total of \$3,000, but over the years that has grown tremendously. These last few years have been atypical because we can't travel, but in a typical year the research council awards more than 200 track grants. For instance, in 1920 we awarded 244 track grants for a total of \$121,946. The research council is the body that reviews and votes on all of the internal research funding programs at the college for students and faculty. Thus, the track grants are reviewed by the student grants sub-committee of the research council; and that has faculty members and students on it. And the track grants are funded by the student association and the Geneseo foundation—which comes from donations to the college from alumni and other donors, so the students see the value in it as does the college. It's our largest program, we have other programs for students, and we have many programs for our faculty too, but it is our largest in a normal year. This year, in 2021, we only voted 109 compared to the 244, and the dollar amount was only \$31,925 because we couldn't travel.

Are there any sponsored works that have been funded by SUNY Geneseo that you remember?

They're all so good, I'd be hard-put to identify a single one, but there are projects going on in all departments, and as a result, it varies. The majority of the track grants for research come from the stem departments, and that's often because there are costs involved for chemicals, test kits, and other scientific equipment. However, we also have students going into archives, so I wouldn't want to pick out one because they're all incredibly well done and they all have the potential to make an impact.