Undergraduate Research Mentor Award

Geoscience Division
Council on Undergraduate Research

2013 Award Winner
Mary Savina, Carleton College

The Geoscience Division of CUR annually recognizes an individual who serves as a role model for productive and transformative student-faculty mentoring relationships and for maintaining a sustained and innovative approach to the enterprise of undergraduate research.

Evidence of transformative student-faculty mentoring relationships include: leadership in fostering and sustaining the undergraduate research enterprise, student-mentor collaborations culminating in presentations at national or regional meetings and/or publication with student co-authors in peer-reviewed journals, and innovative approaches to involving undergraduates in research experiences incorporating research activities into the classroom and service learning.

The 2013 Undergraduate Research Mentor Award is presented Mary Savina, Charles L. Denison Professor of Geology at Carleton College. Mary Savina has been involved in research and mentoring undergraduate students for the last thirty-five years. She has been effective at reaching underrepresented students and has incorporated service learning elements into the projects long before the current trends. Her longstanding excellence in creative undergraduate research mentoring was defined by a nominator as “deeply thoughtful and helpful, and nurturing.” She has discovered a potent formula for a “powerful pedagogy,” one in which her students have ownership of ideas, mastery of content, and are often informers for civic decision makers. As another nominee stated she has “a passion for undergraduate teaching and commitment to providing students with authentic and meaningful research experiences.”

Savina’s guidance does not end on graduation day; one nominator explained the importance of their mentoring relationship continuing after graduation, highlighting how she acted as trusted guide navigating a complex professional landscape. “After leaving Carleton, Mary continued to be one of the people I most trusted when I needed to make important professional decisions – where (and if) to go to graduate school, how to cope in an academic job, and how to be an effective teacher in different settings.” This service as a mentor and supporter of undergraduate students is critical to the success of the next generation.