



The CURL Experience: A Trajectory for Careers in Academia and Community

"The time at CURL not only helped me understand how a research center works, but also it helped me gain the skills and contacts to advance to my current positions and beyond. I learned technical skills for analysis, but also I learned how to apply these skills to the social problems I have so long tried to alleviate. My time at CURL strengthened me as an academic social policy researcher and concerned citizen."

Christopher Giangreco, (Sociology, Graduate Fellow 2000-2002)
Currently GIS Technician, Center for Neighborhood Technology and
Graduate Fellow, Chief Data Collection Analyst, United Way of Chicago

To better understand how the CURL experience translates into improving the research skills and social justice sensitivities of CURL Graduate Fellows as they begin academic or non-academic careers, a survey of former and current fellows was completed. CURL Graduate Fellow, Chiara Sabina, Ph.D. candidate in Applied Social Psychology, has provided a preliminary data analysis, which illustrates how fellows have regarded their experience at CURL, especially in relation to further study or jobs.

The survey found that 20 of the 32 graduate fellows are currently employed. Of those who have worked since being a graduate fellow, 50% indicated "a collaborative community approach similar to CURL." Employment is varied, ranging from positions in secondary and higher education to research/evaluation and social service positions. The total of 45 positions over the years since leaving CURL could be categorized into the following groups: other graduate student positions (N=4), teaching positions (N=13), research positions (N=9), coordinator/director of research projects (N=8), therapy/nursing positions (N=3), program evaluation/consultant positions (N=3), and other (N=5).

Nelson Portillo (Applied Social Psychology, Graduate Fellow 2000-2002) is an example of a former fellow who finds himself utilizing the collaborative community approach to evaluation. Nelson has taken a position as the Program Evaluator at Working in the Schools (WITS), a non-profit organization that provides tutoring and mentoring programs linking businesses to children in the Chicago Public Schools. Nelson was hired by WITS as a result of his CURL work on the large BP-funded community evaluation project. In addition, he is a volunteer evaluator for the Evanston Northwestern Hospital (ENH) School-based Pediatric Asthma Research in Chicago, which measures the racial disparities among asthmatic children. Nelson reports, my job keeps me constantly in the research world since I have to design new and sound methods to measure change and outcomes in our programs. I also prepare manuscripts for publication based on our evaluation results. At ENH, I am in charge of conducting statistical analyses and writing manuscripts for publications, too."

¹ This preliminary analysis is based on 32 responses, representing a 57% response rate to date. The direct quotes and specific information regarding employment were garnered from a separate request for general information from the same group. A final report by Chiara Sabina will be forthcoming.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The current newsletter reflects on CURL's experience in providing non-traditional educational experiences to both graduate and undergraduate students. Our collaborative university:community research approach is already different from most university-based "urban research" centers. Bringing community partners into the research process from conceptualization of issues to the design and completion of research distinguishes our approach from conventional research centers.

However, the active involvement of students in our research teams also differentiates us from many centers. CURL Graduate Fellows are not relegated to just doing the "grunt work" in research. They often become the critical coordinators of the research team. In addition to their leadership role, they learn that research is not just "crunching numbers," collecting survey data, or keeping track of interview files. Graduate fellows gain an understanding that research is about coming up with new ideas, discovering new approaches through listening to the ideas of community partners, faculty members, and fellow students.

CURL undergraduate fellows and students from the Urban Studies seminar have made impressive contributions to the work at CURL at the same time as they are learning research skills. Many of our fellows start the year a bit fuzzy about what we mean by research at CURL. Community needs do not come neatly described in an outline in chapter 5 of a community research text book. We often struggle with our

community partners in defining issues and developing research methodologies that will collect the needed information. Student participation in meetings where research issues come into focus, as well as their involvement in the successes and frustration of data collection and analysis, provides an education about the complexities of community-based research.

In essence we have taken learning outside of the box of the classroom. For each of our research projects there is no syllabus, and there is no text book. Yes, we use existing knowledge; yes, we use past research; and yes, we use recognized methodologies. But at the same time, we function in an environment of pressing community needs: the need to stop domestic violence, the need to provide more affordable housing, or the need to improve the quality of early childhood education to low-income families.

For students, CURL provides an exciting educational environment where what has been learned in the classroom can be used in addressing pressing community problems in city neighborhoods. The confidence gained in helping to shape the right question to ask is invaluable. Students' sense of accomplishment in participating in a project, and sometimes even having their name listed as a co-author on a final report, can help to shape careers after leaving Loyola. This is participation not only in the completion of research reports but also involvement in producing research reports that are used by community partners to improve the quality of life in local communities. This gives particular meaning to the educational experience that undergraduate and graduate students take away from their months or years at CURL.

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Ninety percent of respondents felt that working at CURL increased the value they placed on applied collaborative research that deals with community issues. Some stated that it made them more committed to doing meaningful research; others focused on the applied approach of CURL. Many mentioned that they would like to work in places that foster change such as non-profit organizations or they would like to be involved in research topics that have social influence such as racial inequalities or intervention for at-risk families.

Lawrence Benito (Social Work, 1997-1998) has pursued the kind of work that has social consequences. He is currently the Director of Newcomer Initiatives at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. In that position he has utilized skills perfected at CURL to conduct a recent statewide immigrant needs assessment. "In my current position, I do a variety of things. It is a mixture of policy analysis, advocacy, organizing, and research." He concludes that the CURL experience gave him the tools to do applied research within a community

context. He says, "I gained an understanding of how surveys are designed. I was exposed to the challenges of collecting useful data and supervising students, a helpful skill in conducting the statewide needs assessment."

It was found that CURL Fellows remained at CURL an average of 1.5 years. Of the 19 respondents only 2 responded that CURL did not influence their career choices. An interesting comparison can be drawn between the perceived skill levels and knowledge at the beginning and the end of the fellow's time at CURL. At the beginning, fellows gauged skill levels as poor (6%), somewhat poor (16%), moderate (56%), somewhat strong (19%), and strong (3%). At the end, the skill levels were perceived as moderate (25%), somewhat strong (38%), and strong (38%). Fellows perceived levels of knowledge at the beginning of their time at CURL as follows: poor (3%), somewhat poor (22%), moderate (34%), somewhat strong (34%), and strong (6%). At the end, the knowledge levels were perceived as moderate (16%), somewhat strong (56%), and strong (28%).

A corollary to academic enrichment understands the link

between academic theory and practice and community research. Fellows responded that they better understand the link after being at CURL. Fifty three percent strongly agreed, forty percent agreed, and only 6 percent disagreed. One fellow, Nicole Rousseau (Sociology, 1999-2001) has moved on to complete her Ph.D. at Howard University. She reflects on her years at CURL very positively, recalling, "my education experience has been colored by my experience at CURL. From knowledge of the research process, to budget writing, to community action, to public speaking, to supervising undergrads, all came from CURL." She was drawn into CURL by the opportunity "to build on scholar activism." She recalls how gratifying it was to prepare her "girls," the teens from Bethany Brethren Community Center with whom she worked, to present at a Friday Morning Seminar. That was the kind of recognition of hands-on research that she values.

One of the important findings was improvement to the fellows personally and professionally. A combined 96.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they improved as a person and professionally while at CURL. David Katz (Sociology, 1997-1998) states, "My experience at CURL continues to be invaluable to my academic and professional career. CURL provided me experiences in carrying out applied research and program evaluations that were valuable assets in attaining my current position. More than that, CURL fosters an ethic of service to community that continues to enrich my work and life."

Number of CURL Undergraduate Fellows Grows

The Fall 2002 semester saw a marked increase in the number of undergraduate fellows at CURL. Twelve undergraduates began in the fall, up from the number of previous semesters. Thirteen new fellows will be joining us for the Fall 2003 semester. Like CURL graduate fellows, undergraduate fellows represent a range of academic programs within the university, such as Spanish, psychology, political science, biology, history, anthropology, sociology, Black World Studies, and Women's Studies. Each undergraduate receives a stipend of \$1000 per semester.

Undergraduate fellows are important to CURL's collaborative research teams model, which blend the knowledge and skills of faculty, students, and community partners. The research team, composed of Loyola faculty or CURL staff, community partners, CURL graduate fellows, and, undergraduate fellows or undergraduates in the Urban Studies seminar, is the environment for teaching and learning that attracts students to CURL.

The undergraduate fellowships grew out of the Urban Studies, the undergraduate class and seminar jointly sponsored by CURL and the College of Arts and Sciences. The Urban Studies class began in 1997. As part of the class requirements, students were assigned to assist in the research of a current CURL

collaborative project. The value of undergraduate participation became apparent, thus sparking a move to offer undergraduate fellowships to students not participating in the Urban Studies.

The merits of fellowships are numerous. First, undergraduates are exposed to hands-on research by working with the team at a given point in a project. Learning in this environment is not a one-way matter. In addition to learning from other team members, undergraduates also contribute, getting to apply research skills learned in Loyola classrooms. Sometimes their own family and community experience become assets in understanding aspects of CURL's solution oriented research. Through their close work with graduate and professional students undergraduates also gain useful insights into educational "life after college." Finally, since few undergraduates have the opportunity to work on such research teams, the CURL experience distinguishes fellows as they apply to graduate school, professional school, or jobs after graduating.

The following are summary statements from a number of students about their experiences as CURL undergraduate fellows. Each reflects on how the fellowship fit into their undergraduate education and how working on teams altered their perspective about research.

Heather Edl (Senior, Psychology)

Research: Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) Childcare Project in Rogers Park and Edgewater
 "CURL lets you get involved with projects that seek to improve local neighborhoods and better the lives of the people in those communities. I am interested in research and have a desire to work with minority populations. Working with graduates has given me a perspective I did not already have. It is interesting to hear other people's views."

Megan Frawley (Sophomore, Biology/Premed)

Research: McCormick Tribune Child Care Project
 "As a biology/premed major, I felt that by doing research at CURL I would gain a better understanding of the community and its needs. Especially with my aspirations to become a doctor, it is important to take into consideration the social and psychological components that contribute to one's behavior. Through the fellowship, I apply the knowledge I gain from the classroom. Knowledge is only useful when it can be used in the real world."

Liz Nyden (Sophomore, Political Science)

Research: United Power Supportive Services Demonstration Project

"After I decided to be a political science major, I thought that the opportunity to learn how groups in the community are able to influence public policy would complement my course work. I volunteered as a fellow this past year. This experience shows how the abstract concepts and ideas that I have learned in class

become more concrete and applicable in the real world. It also familiarizes me with research and helps me discover Chicago's unique communities."

Elisha Peterson (Junior, Biology/Psychology)

Research: Chicago Human Relations Foundations project to measure the disparities between racial and ethnic populations in Chicago

"CURL interested me because of its focus on working with community partners. The fellowship brings a bigger picture to my undergrad experience. I can listen to what others are doing in Chicago in terms of projects and policies. I am no longer looking at hypothetical and theoretical constructs, but actual policy, projects, and hard results. These are affecting real people, and I like being able to be a part of something that helps."

Alison Szopinski (Sophomore, Anthropology/Black World Studies)

Research: Chicago Human Relations Foundation project to measure the disparities between racial and ethnic populations in Chicago

"I first became interested in CURL because it is a unique program. As an undergraduate fellow, I have been able to work with and learn from Loyola faculty, graduate students, fellow undergraduates, and community members. I have increased my research skills and learned more about important urban issues in both Chicago and the United States. Working at CURL has been a rewarding opportunity and has definitely enhanced my experience as an undergraduate at Loyola."

Emily Tapia (Senior, Political Science/Spanish Literature)

Research: Youth Voices in Policy (YouthVIP) and COPC Childcare Project in Rogers Park and Edgewater

"Traditional classroom settings often bring about the risk of falling into the routine of continuity, book work, and strict rules. Learning in an open classroom where the traditional meets the applied, however, is the best way to capture the learned knowledge and see its role in the 'real world.' This was the experience awaiting me at CURL. CURL challenges your ability to see outside the box and open your eyes to reality. My experience here continues to challenge my own determination to understand my world and expand the limits once beyond my reach."

Carrie Tarasuk (Senior, History/Communication)

Research: Looking Backward to Move Forward, a project to recover Chicago's West Side Black history. Transcription of videotapes in the Special Collections Division, Chicago Public Library

"I applied for the CURL undergraduate fellowship as a way to gain hands-on experience in the field of history. In my experience working on the Looking Backward to Move Forward archival materials, I learned more about my strengths and weak-

nesses, what I would like to do, and what I prefer not to do in my field. Now I bring to the table much more knowledge and a better background that has prepared me for the future."

Sarah Veele (Senior, Sociology/Peace Studies/Black World Studies)



Research: Chicago Human Relations Foundations project to measure the disparities between racial and ethnic populations in Chicago

"After completing Urban Studies my sophomore years, I was aware that CURL provided an outlet for me to foster my interest in community research and activism. As an undergraduate fellow, I have learned to apply the research techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, that I have learned as sociology major. My work at CURL has improved my writing skills from editing and writing reports, quantitative skills from creating and analyzing SPSS data sets, and qualitative skills from transcribing and analyzing linguistic data. Attending conferences and speaking at meetings has made me more familiar and comfortable within such settings, one that has a future academic, I am likely to spend a good deal of time in. I believe that all of the work I have done has prepared me well for graduate study and continued research."

Kathy Wilmot (Junior, History)

Research: Looking Backward to Move Forward, a project to recover Chicago's West Side Black history.

"I decided to apply to work on the Looking Backward to Move Forward project because it focuses on making significant West Side African American oral history interviews available to the public for research. These interviews contain a wealth of information about life on Chicago's West Side during the late 19th and early 20th century. This fellowship has afforded me the rare opportunity to work in my field of interest before completing my undergraduate course work. I have learned about the importance of oral histories, the process of preserving them, and the dedication of historians who initiate community-based projects like this one."

Graduate Fellows at CURL

Since the founding of CURL in 1996, 75 students from multiple academic departments and professional schools across the university have become CURL Graduate Fellows. The disciplines have included business, history, law, nursing, organizational development, political science, psychology, social work, sociology, and theology. Graduate Fellows are attracted to CURL because of its collaborative model of teaching, learning, and research. This model puts into practice the University's commitment to social justice and knowledge in service to others.

CURL distinguishes itself from traditional urban research centers by involving community partners in the conceptualization, planning, and completion of research evaluation. CURL graduate fellows are positioned to facilitate the ongoing research of a particular community-based project, acting as the coordinator of the research team.

Learning from the CURL Fellowship Experience

Past CURL graduate fellows report how important their CURL experience has been to their subsequent work and careers (see accompanying article, "The CURL Experience: a Trajectory for Careers in Academia and Community").

Michelle Fugate (Sociology, Graduate Fellow 1998-1999), the Coordinator of Research and Evaluation, City of Chicago Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence, reports that her experience at CURL "helped to prepare me for working with a variety of stakeholders and gave me experience conducting research in the community."

Similarly, in her position as Assistant Director for Community Service at DePaul University's University Ministry, *Siobhan O'Donoghue* (Institute for Pastoral Studies, 1998-1999) says, "I frequently draw upon my experience at CURL when working with women who are on welfare, both in the classroom setting and on service trips, particularly when we are trying to understand the reality of being a person who is existing on the margins."

As a teacher of theology at Mount Carmel High School on Chicago South Side, *Peter Shaughnessy* (Theology, 1998-1999) reflects upon his time at CURL and the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG, CURL's sister organization housed at Loyola) where he was the managing editor of *PRAGmatics*. He says, "The opportunity at CURL/PRAG helped me to broaden my understanding of basic justice issues affecting Chicago and the rest of society. Moreover, working with people from the community helped me to understand the communities from which my students come. I cultivated valuable skills that have allowed me to become a better educator."

Denise Rose (Sociology, 1996-1997) feels that the CURL fellowship was the highlight of her years at Loyola. "It brought together three main threads of what I sought from my graduate education: enhanced theoretical and empirical knowledge on society's most pressing social problems, preparation for teaching at the university level, and making a contribution toward the creation of a more socially just world." As a graduate fellow, Denise coordinated a welfare reform project and recalls, "This opportunity allowed me to develop skills in teaching and mentoring and it enhanced my understanding of the contributory factors leading to individual and family poverty and the strategies needed to help move people toward economic self-sufficiency."

While many fellows are in the working world, others are continuing their education. Asma Ali (Sociology, 1998-1999) is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Since leaving CURL, she

worked at National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and now works at the University of Illinois Chicago Center for Urban Economic Development. She says of the CURL experience, "It was helpful to both my personal and professional life. I learned how to work with people of different backgrounds, how to be a project manager, and how to do survey research."

Lessons Learned from the Community

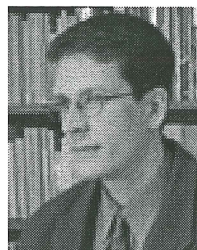
In the collaborative university:community research process, the normal intricacies and complexities of research are compounded by the necessity to accommodate diverse stakeholders in the partnership. But, that is the point. This kind of "messy" research results in solid research, and good learning experiences formed by multiple perspectives. Siobhan is clear on this when she says, "Research is messy! The needs and voices of the community must come first if service/justice work can ever hope to be effective and change can be sustained."

Many can speak to lessons they have learned working with community partners. Michelle has vivid memories of trying to convince the community partner of the importance of pilot testing. She says, "It was only after conducting a pilot focus group and experiencing all the problems with the method and instrument that she saw why the time and energy must be directed to a pilot test." An important lesson for Denise was gaining the understanding that the collaborative relationship is "key to maximizing the potential impact of action-oriented research. By utilizing the knowledge and potential advocacy that community-based organizations can bring to the table, academic researchers can partner with residents to carry out studies that will more effectively serve the needs of community constituencies."

Graduate Fellows Reflections

Three CURL Graduate Fellows, each representing different periods in CURL's seven-year history, reflect here on their experiences at CURL. In an interview each spoke to the impact on graduate education and career plans, the relationships with community partners, the lessons learned from working with community partners, the use of CURL research on master's thesis or dissertation topics, and the attraction of CURL to graduate students.

Trevor Bechtel (Theology, 1996-1998)



Present Position: Visiting Instructor of Theology and Ethics, Seabury-Western Seminary, Evanston, IL

Trevor Bechtel was one of the first two CURL Graduate Fellows who joined the fledgling center in the summer of 1996. As a theology student skilled in computer technology, Trevor was attracted to CURL because of his long-held commitment to community impact and

capacity building. "The timing was significant," he says. It was at a point in mid-90s, at a point when computers were becoming available for broader community usage. He saw an opportunity at CURL "to work out how technology could facilitate interaction between community and the university."

Trevor's computer proficiency was instrumental in many projects. He collaborated on a project which was initiated by the United Way of Chicago to create a database for people to identify volunteer opportunities within the metropolitan Chicago area, he set up CURL's first Web page, and he assisted in formatting the 1997 *Social Service Directory for Rogers Park, Edgewater, and Uptown* as well as numerous reports and publications.

Trevor was able to make a clear connection between his study of theology and the applied research at CURL. "As I took courses, I was impressed by the need for sociology to inform theological endeavor." Since his department did not have the opportunity for hands-on experience, it was appealing to work "practically" with CURL. Trevor relates that his most valuable educational growth experience while at CURL was "seeing personal models of integration of church, relationships, and society."

Reflecting on his own experience, Trevor identified several attractions for graduate students. Among several, he noted the chance to do applied work, to connect with community, and to be involved in partnerships. Most important was the chance to be part of the kind of community that CURL is. For Trevor, it is a place of "boldness. . . where you can attempt to go toward Utopia."

Carolyn Johnson (Nursing, 1997-1999)



Present Position: Assistant Director, Proviso East School-based Health Clinic
Director, Healthy Teens

Recent Award: Honored at the National Black Nurses Day Celebration, February 7, 2003

Carolyn Johnson is a dedicated community activist who sought an advanced degree and higher training so that she might better serve her community. Through her tireless community work, she was a central figure in the conceptualization, planning, formation, and installation of a new school-based health clinic at Proviso East High School, which opened in 2001 where she is currently the Assistant Director. While a CURL Graduate Fellow, she graduated from the Niehoff School of Nursing at Loyola with a Master's Degree in Nursing Administration.

As a registered nurse and resident of the western suburb of Maywood, Carolyn served as the coordinator of "Healthy Teens for the Year 2000, In 2000, For 2000," a program to recruit and train teens to become peer mentors and health advocates. Healthy Teens was funded in 1993 by a grant obtained by the Loyola School of Nursing. The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the

Rockefeller Foundation, made the grant funds available through a consortium call Health of the Public.

As the funding cycle for Healthy Teens concluded in 1997, there were discussions of further health initiatives in the community. Carolyn was intent upon continuing her work with teens, she was open to an advanced degree, and her community advisory board supported the idea of the Proviso principal that a school-based health center would be invaluable. Conversations between the School of Nursing and CURL resulted in fellowship support for Carolyn that allowed her to continue work with Healthy Teens while becoming a full-time student in the nursing program. During this two-year period, the many community and university partners in the collaboration began the arduous tasks that led to the successful opening and operation of the clinic.

Carolyn says, "My involvement with CURL is rather unique." As she met each week at CURL for the regular Friday seminar, she began to connect her community experience with the research of other fellows. "I began to get the picture of how things work. I came from a hospital setting, a medical model where directives were followed without much input into the workability of a program or procedure. Although those of us working on the ground knew the fallacies of a protocol, we had no impact into the correction. The kind of research done at CURL helped me understand the practicality of data gathering. This kind of research was an eye opener for me."

In February, Carolyn's devotion to her work and community was recognized at the National Black Nurses Day Celebration held at Provident Hospital, the historic African American hospital located on the South Side. Carolyn was honored for her contributions as an African American nurse working in public health, community health, and social services.

Chiara Sabina (Applied Social Psychology and Women's Studies concentration, 2000-present)



"I came to Loyola to work at CURL."

In her search following graduation from the University of Delaware, Chiara Sabina sought a graduate program that would match "who I was and what interested me." Upon discovering the description of CURL's philosophy and approach to research on the Web, she "connected" and made her way to Chicago and Loyola's Applied Social Psychology program and to CURL.

Her "connection" to CURL has been very real, for she finds here the way "to deal with societal issues and respond to community need." She describes her work over the past two years as being the testing ground for the skills she is learning in her program. She says, "Here, the course work and CURL experiences feed into each other. I learn to apply techniques I learn in the classroom, and, conversely, the CURL experiences provide a different lens for my theoretical psychology courses. The appli-

education shapes my academic understanding, and my academic training allows me to better fulfill the goals of community research.” She is sure that her future plans include collaborative research at a university or in a community setting.

Chiara can name several valuable growth areas. First, is report writing. She has gained a great respect for incorporating data and making it accessible in usable form. Second, she has learned what it means to supervise a research project, to oversee a group of students so they stay focused. She understands how to mentor students who have less research experience and will not be intimidated by research teams in the future. Third, she has a greater appreciation for working with community researchers to make sure that research stays concrete and focused while respecting community opinion and knowledge. “Cooperative skills are so

necessary at every level of interaction.”

The most valuable lesson she has learned relates to “understanding how Chicago functions.” She credits community partners with sharing their expertise. She believes that their sharing enriches her, both personally and academically.

Chiara’s dissertation will build upon a relationship she has developed with Apna Ghar, an advocacy and service organization for South Asian immigrant women with whom CURL has worked. As a trained volunteer for Apna Ghar’s domestic violence hotline, Chiara has learned a great deal about the issues faced by women with few resources and systems of support. She will work with staff and department faculty to propose a dissertation topic in the near future.

As a capstone to her CURL experience, Chiara was been awarded CURL’s second University:Community Research Coordinator pre-doc position. For the next year she will be working on all facets of CURL’s collaborative work from proposal development to writing research reports.

Urban Studies Develops Undergrad Fellows



Urban Studies students, Fall 2003.

The undergraduate fellowships grew out of Urban Studies, the undergraduate class and seminar jointly sponsored by CURL and the College of Arts and Sciences. The Urban Studies class began in 1997. As part of the class requirements, students were assigned to assist in the research of a current CURL collaborative project.

The value of undergraduate participation became apparent, thus sparking a move to offer undergraduate fellowships to students not participating in the Urban Studies. Fellowships are supported by income from CURL’s endowment. Initiated in 2000, CURL awards ten to 15 undergraduate fellowships annually. Each undergraduate receives a stipend of \$1,000 per semester and works one day a week on a team research project.

Students come to us from a variety of majors including anthropology, biology, Black World studies, communication, criminal justice, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, Spanish, and women’s studies.

Over the past six years, 152 different students have participated in the Urban Studies class and seminar.

Fond Farewell to Lin

It was with great sadness that we bid farewell to our colleague, Lin von Dreele. Five years of grant funding for the Associate Director position came to an end last year. Lin’s invaluable contributions to CURL will be greatly missed.

When CURL began its work in 1996, Lin was there. She brought a wealth of community experience from her work at places like Bethel New Life and Partners in Community Development. CURL clearly benefited from her wisdom as it started and strengthened its collaborative partnerships with organizations from around Chicago.

Lin was a key member of many of CURL’s research projects including being the lead researcher on projects such as *Its Okay Here: A History of Deborah’s Place*. She carefully crafted CURL’s Friday Morning Seminars year after year. Additionally, she helped to graciously guide many of CURL’s behind the scene administrative activities that allow the Center to do its work.

It is impossible to fully recount Lin’s contribution to CURL’s research and teaching. We will miss her and we wish her well as she continues to work for the betterment of Chicago’s communities and people.

Friday Mornings at CURL

Informal seminars are held regularly on Friday mornings during the fall and spring semesters from 10:30 until noon in the CURL classroom, Lewis Towers-Room 1030. Loyola faculty, students, community activists, and guests are welcome. Please see <http://www.luc.edu/curl/programs/seminars/> for topic details.

Aparna Sharma Fills New Position



As a way to provide research opportunities for advanced Loyola graduate students and recent graduates, a new University:Community Research Coordinator position has been created at CURL. It serves as a pre-doc(ABD) or post-doc fellowship opportunity. The first recipient has been Aparna Sharma,

a Ph.D. candidate in the Applied Social Psychology program. She joined the staff in September 2002 following her three years as a CURL graduate fellow.

In her new role as a pre-doctoral student, Aparna supervises the work of newly-awarded CURL graduate fellows, as well as that of undergraduates. Aparna sees her role as providing support for those new to the collaborative university:community research process. She says, "I have lots of stories to share. I understand what it is like to manage a project, to balance the need to apply the basic principles of research methodology within the community context. I have learned the process and can share my experience, based not only on what I learned in class, but also in the application of appropriate methodology in the community."

While her University of Toronto undergraduate neuroscience degree prepared her for the rigors of research, her interest in social justice ultimately drew her to CURL's collaborative research model. She was quickly immersed in a complex, citywide, multi-agency participatory evaluation project with Dr. Suarez-Balcazar, then a faculty member in the Psychology Department. Aparna admits there was a steep learning curve for the project. This undertaking demonstrated for her how the university could use its resources to benefit the programs of numerous community-based and citywide organizations.

This experience and subsequent collaborative research have helped Aparna define her career goals. She intends to work "to blur the community:university boundary" and "to push the envelope to bring resources into the community for the benefit of both the community and the university." Additionally, her work at CURL has been the basis for her master's thesis and has been the conduit through which she will work to complete her dissertation. Through CURL's association with Apna Ghar, an Uptown advocacy and service organization for South Asian immigrant women, Aparna has developed a relationship that will result in research on the cultural competency and service delivery system to

immigrant women. Her dissertation will probe the issues South Asian immigrant women face, a topic of great interest since her undergraduate days. She will explore religion, family, economic dependency, immigrant status, and other relevant issues.

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