For Brooke Sullateskee-Rincon, a senior at UW Bothell majoring in community psychology, getting involved in undergraduate research marked a crucial turning point in her education.

“Before I got involved in the research I was kind of just getting my degree to get it,” she says. But diving into a rich, real-world experience gave her a sense of purpose and meaning. “Now I’m taking little things here and there from every single class that I take, and I can see how it can be molded into a future career,” she says. “The research has helped me narrow down exactly what I want to do.”
Like Sullateskee-Rincon, many students benefit from participating in undergraduate research at UW Bothell. It is estimated that at least 75 percent of the faculty include students in their scholarship, research or creative activities. The school places a high emphasis on connecting students with faculty research initiatives. Throughout the school year, UW Bothell invites students to participate in and showcase ongoing research projects. Carolyn Brennan, assistant vice chancellor for research, says that undergraduate research enhances learning and builds community. “Undergraduate research can enliven any course of study and set a student on a path to success,” she says. “Our job is to show students how undergraduate research, scholarship and creative activities can open up new worlds.” Undergraduate research can also serve as the foundation for graduate school applications or job searches for students after they graduate.

STUDENT RESEARCHERS WINNING AWARDS

The growing initiative is showing tangible signs of success. This fall a record five UW Bothell students won Mary Gates Research Scholarships, a prestigious award given through University of Washington that provides financial support and resources to undergraduates engaged in research that is guided by a professor.

Among the winners is Brooke Sullateskee-Rincon for her work on finding efficient health care for high-risk youth in juvenile detention facilities. Other winners include Brendan Korn for his research on myeloid leukemia cells; Dan Lombardo for his work on the seasonal wetland crow roost, Anthony Stillman, a biology major who teamed up with a business faculty member to look at healthcare issues, and Jessica Manfredi for her research on gender identities of Mexican and Caribbean
FOUNDE <FOUNDER>WELLS FELLOWS AWARDS

UW Bothell also offers scholarships to encourage and recognize undergraduate research on campus.

THIS YEAR’S WINNERS INCLUDE:

- Taylor Frazier, majoring in law, economics & public policy, for her research on a program model of successful development for children with disabilities.
- Keith Rawson, majoring in computing & software systems, for his work developing computational approaches to discover genome dynamics.
- Jiansheng (Jarvis) Xu, majoring in Business Administration, for his research on team disruptions.
- Colin Feng, majoring in biology, for his research analyzing genotype frequencies in an evolved syntrophic co-culture.
- Tiarra Fentress, a pre-major School of IAS, for her work on retention of African American women in higher education.

RESEARCH AMBITIONS LEAD TO UNEXPECTED PATHWAYS

Long before all the prizes and presentations, undergraduate research at UW Bothell begins with professors and students posing questions and generating new knowledge together. “Our UW Bothell faculty go the extra mile to integrate their research into their teaching, which provides undergraduates with opportunities to learn right alongside them,” says Brennan. Students get involved in original scholarship, literature searches, water quality studies in the wetlands, and much more. “There are almost as many avenues to get involved in undergraduate research as there are students.”

Events on campus throughout the year highlight these myriad avenues. In the fall, the school hosts an undergraduate research fair in which faculty display posters describing their projects and recruit students to participate. Brennan says that the undergraduate research fair is not only for students who know they want a research experience, but is really targeted to first year and pre-major students who may not realize that undergraduate research is for them. She says students can find their passion in academia through these projects. “These research, scholarship and creative activities can connect students to an academic pursuit and to the campus itself,” she says. “It’s what we call a high impact practice.”

Mahala Lettvin, a graduate student in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (IAS), focused her undergraduate research at UW Bothell on Latin American revolutions and resistance and women’s involvement in that resistance. She says this experience solidified her commitment to higher education. “Going out on my own with a mentor but making my own methods, developing them and researching on my own was really crucial in my continued love of academia,” she says. “In doing that I realized I wanted to go to graduate school, that I wanted to pursue other research.”

She adds that following her own interests and taking charge of her learning felt more meaningful than simply doing the assigned work to get a good grade in a class. “It was really about the passion that was behind it,” she says. “I don’t think I would have gone to graduate school if I didn’t have the undergraduate research experience. That really gave me a taste of the options that I had.”

Lettvin’s undergraduate research not only gave her direction for the future, but it also helped her be successful in achieving her goals. “All the skills they were looking for in a graduate school applicant I derived from my undergraduate research experience both in my research interests, and also the way I was able to keep myself accountable and present my research at the symposia,” she says.
Her final research paper served as a writing sample in her application and now has been revised to be a chapter in a book that is being edited by her mentor professor, Julie Shayne.

Keith Rawson, a senior majoring in computer science and software engineering, says that getting involved with undergraduate research helped to shape his focus and enhance his learning. He was invited by his professor, Wooyoung Kim, to participate in a research project to develop a computer program that would help another UW Bothell biology professor analyze genomic data. “It really strengthened my programming skills, and it increased my interest in the field,” he says. “The more I use some of these tools to pre-process and analyze the data, the more it increases my respect for those who write these programs as well as the tools themselves. It makes me want to pursue that and help develop some tools that other people can use down the road.”

As he anticipates graduation in the spring, Rawson is applying for jobs in the field of genome sequencing analysis. And he continues to work on his undergraduate research project. “We are also going to be writing a research paper to talk about our results and what we produced,” he says. “We’re hoping to submit it for a conference and along with that it would be published in a journal.”

Brennan is quick to note that undergraduate research is not just for the top students at the school. “I think undergraduate research can provide a pathway to graduation for all students,” she says. “It can have its greatest impact on students who may be struggling a little bit by providing the context for textbook learning that will spur a student on to greater success in school and in life.”

Ronnie Thibault graduated from UW Bothell two years ago and now is a graduate student in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences in cultural studies program. When she came to UW Bothell, she was a returning student after 15 years of working in the communications field and raising a family. She applied her life experience to her studies, examining the representation of autistic people in the media. She says thanks to undergraduate research, her studies have gone much farther than she could have imagined.

Her mentor professor, Ben Gardner, encouraged her to apply for the Mary Gates Scholarship, which she won. Now as a graduate student, she presents at conferences in her field. “Never in a million years would I have thought any of that possible,” she says. “It’s just uncanny the level of support and encouragement and involvement that you get at UW Bothell.”

Brooke Sullateskee-Rincon also needed some encouragement from her mentor professor, Wadiya Udell. She says Udell suggested that she too apply for the Mary Gates Scholarship. “I’d never seen myself as high potential as she has seen me,” says Sullateskee-Rincon. “With her help, I have seen how I can make myself stand out and the potential that I do have.”

“Undergraduate research can enliven any course of study and set a student on a path to success.”

CAROLYN BRENnan, ASSISTANT VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH