

News

A Look Back at CSA Day for Its 20th Anniversary

By Olivia Slack, Co-Editor in Chief

Celebrating Student Achievement (CSA) Day is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The first CSA Day was held on April 24, 2003, and it has since been a day where students, faculty and staff come together to discuss student achievements in research, performance and art.

According to the April 30, 2003 edition of *The Meredith Herald*, college administration decided to begin CSA Day in order to celebrate college-wide and departmental awards on the same day. The first-ever CSA Day included a "fun run and ramble" where members of the Meredith community were encouraged to "walk or run on a course set up around the campus."

Dr. Rhonda Zingraff, direc-

tor of the Undergraduate Research Program at the time, told *The Herald* in 2003 that in previous years when student research was highlighted during a conference that took place on a normal school day, students "struggle[d] to attend [research] sessions... while classes were going on."

In 2004, *The Herald* noted that a "Fun and Fitness Kick-off"



Image courtesy of the Meredith College Archives

started CSA Day, and there was even a breakfast. The May 3, 2006 edition of *The Herald* included a story about why CSA Day should be included in students' definition of important Meredith traditions.

Also in the May

2006 edition of *The Herald* is a story about the behind-the-scenes of presenting on CSA Day. In this story, writer Sarah Jackson discussed bringing a presentation CD to her session, which current students will note is a far technological cry from this year's pre-recorded presentations that will not only be shown in live sessions but also posted on YouTube.

In 2020 and 2021, CSA Day went virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, on the 20th anniversary of CSA Day, there will be over 60 individual, group and class presentations as well as honor society inductions, college and departmental awards and other events.

How to Get Involved in CSA Day

By Freya Dahlgren, Opinion Editor, and Rachel Van Horne, Associate Editor

Celebrating Student Achievement (CSA) Day occurs yearly in April. On this day students from all departments of Meredith come together to present their undergraduate research. *The Meredith Herald* interviewed Director of Undergraduate Research Dr. Carolina Perez-Heydrich and two of last year's participants.

For students who want to be involved this year but are not presenting, they can plan to attend oral presentations, the poster presentation session and performances. A schedule of this year's CSA Day events will be available on the Undergraduate Research Program CSA website.

Students interested in participating next year can start planning their research topics and looking for an advisor now. Dr. Perez-Heydrich said, "Talk to your professors about research

opportunities you might be able to participate in during the academic year...and then enroll in a 499 class in your discipline to work with a faculty member."

Dr. Perez-Heydrich said that good questions to consider include "what projects are [faculty] currently working on? What are their research interests? Are there ways you can get involved in any existing projects?"

Past participants Hannah Porter, '22, and Amyia Gorham, '22, completed research together in child development and presented their findings at CSA Day in 2021. When asked what was most important about being successful in undergraduate research, Gorham said, "It is important to communicate with your advisor if you have an idea for research as early as possible. It can never hurt to start early!"

Porter said that it is important "to research a topic that you are passionate about [and] finding a supportive and available research advisor is huge. I could not have done my thesis without the advisor that I had."

Gorham and Porter both said that they recommend everyone try undergraduate research and that there is no harm in trying it.

"If you are unsure about CSA Day and undergraduate research, try to volunteer to work CSA Day this year so that you can see more of what it's about,"

Gorham said. "Also, don't be afraid to ask alumni about their undergraduate research experiences."



Photo by Elinor Shelp-Peck

Faculty Comment on CSA Day

By Molly Perry, Features Editor

In addition to Meredith students anticipating Celebrating Student Achievement (CSA) Day, Meredith faculty look forward to CSA Day as a way to support student success and interact with faculty across various departments.

Dr. Jason Andrus, Department Head for Biology, said, "CSA Day represents the culmination of our students' educational experience, putting their training, knowledge, creativity and experience into practice. Taking a day to recognize the efforts of not only our students, but our colleagues as well, is energizing and inspiring."

Dr. Jeffrey Martinson, Associate Professor of Political Science, added that CSA Day is important because "people need

to restlessly interrogate what they 'think they know' in pursuit of deeper, more accurate truths...this research brings us to a better grasp on reality."

"I love CSA Day because we get to see so many varieties of knowledge, skills and talents on display," Dr. Shannon Grimes, Department Head for Religious and Ethical Studies, stated.

Dr. Andrus said he also enjoys seeing the work that has been done across campus disciplines. "[I] makes me reflective about my own work and how I can connect with my colleagues across campus," he explained.

When asked what he is most excited for, Dr. Karthik Agorham, Professor of Biological

Sciences and Director of the Pre-Health Post Baccalaureate Program, shared that he is most looking forward to the poster session. "It is a great way to learn about many projects in a short period of time," he said.

Cathy Rodgers, Professor of Theatre, said, "It is so rewarding to see the growth in my students as a faculty research mentor." Steven Roten, Professor of Theatre, added that he has "only pride for the hard work and vision of [his] students."

For students interested in conducting undergraduate research or participating in CSA Day, Dr. Pamela Norcross, Assistant Professor of Child Development, emphasized, "A good research project takes time, so make sure you give

yourself enough time to complete a thorough project."

Dr. Jeff Langenderfer, Associate Professor of Marketing and Law, reiterated the importance of starting early. Dr. Langenderfer stated that, ideally, research for CSA Day begins during the summer prior.

To emphasize the importance of undergraduate research, Dr. Anne York, Professor of Economics, added that "undergraduate research projects are a way to 'get your hands dirty' to see how new knowledge is created."

For more information about undergraduate research, students can contact Dr. Carolina Perez-Heydrich, Director of Undergraduate Research, by email.