Graduate Research and Presentation (RAP) Grant Program

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research provides research grants, up to $500, to help graduate students develop research and scholarly projects with faculty supervisors and present their projects at various conferences and meetings. The program enables students to receive recognition for their work and provides networking opportunities and professional development in their field of study.

There Is No “Out of Class” Activity: Community as the Classroom

Geralyn Adams, English

Adams is attending the annual Associated Writers and Writing Programs conference to engage with professionals who utilize community-engagement pedagogy within their courses and who will deliver panels and seminars on various aspects of community-engagement theories and practices. Community-engagement pedagogy often results in more meaningful writing experiences for students in which the importance of their curriculum and class requirements transcend requirements and have applicability in the context in which they live and work. Adams is particularly interested in how the literary arts can engage with the community and how writing students can further develop their writing skills while working within the community to address local issues. Ultimately, what Adams gains from this conference will inform her teaching and curriculum development for a community-engagement unit for the first-year writing program at Salisbury University.

Investigating Reading Capital in Rural Literacy Learning Contexts

Frederick Briggs & Christine Craddock, Education

This research investigates the role of reading capital (Compton-Lilly, 2007) in a rural education context. Current educational reform initiatives often overlook the realities of diverse rural education contexts, though economic and achievement data points to sustained inequalities that impact students in these areas. Drawing on the work of Pahl and Rowsell (2012), doctoral students who are teachers and administrators in rural schools are conducting case studies (Alemian, 1988) to document and problematize the reading capital of 12 students in elementary, middle, and high school. Data includes interviews with students and at least one adult family member, documents from both school and community contexts, and classroom participant observations. Findings from the study will be presented at the International Federation of Teachers of English/Conference on English Education meeting in July 2015. The presentation focuses specifically on implications for teacher educators, particularly as rural districts find it difficult to recruit and retain teachers.

Re-Learning: An Autoethnography on Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Kuan-Yin Chen, English

Autoethnography recently has been used as a way to study oneself in the field of teacher education. Being a new practitioner in the educational field, especially in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, Chen is going through different stages of learning to teach a foreign language, including observing different teaching methods, taking theoretical course and processing different kinds of feedback from her advisor and students. Chen explored the different stages of becoming a Chinese teacher, including her feelings, values, beliefs and approaches in teaching. Such a project helps similar new teachers better understand the learning process, reduce prejudice (Ellis, 2002a, 2009) and grow as teachers. To collect data, Chen kept weekly reflective journals, engaged in recorded reflective oral sessions, and analyzed teaching-related documents in the form of materials, handouts, lesson plans, training documents, books, etc. She analyzed the data using qualitative content analysis procedures by reading, re-reading and annotating the data in order to find emerging patterns and themes across the data. Four themes emerged: satisfaction and insecurity, teaching methods favored, teaching and learning background, and sociocultural background.

Differential Survival in Two Color Morphs of the Red-Backed Salamander, Plethodon cinereus

Alexa Grant, Biology

Color polymorphism is common in many species and morph frequency may be affected by differences in ecological and evolutionary pressures on each morph. Plethodon cinereus, the red-backed salamander, has two common color morphs, striped and unstriped, that vary in frequency among populations. Grant tested the hypothesis that differential predation of the striped and unstriped color morphs occurs in Plethodon cinereus. She determined the effect of color on survival of P. cinereus using two and a half years of mark-recapture data and used clay models to test for potential differences of attack by two types of predators, birds and mammals, on replicas of the striped and unstriped morphs. Grant found that the frequency of striped salamanders drastically changed between juveniles and adults, with lower frequencies of striped adults. She also found that there was greater predation on the striped clay model morph by avian predators, but not mammals. Overall, these results supported the hypothesis that there is differential predation in Plethodon cinereus, with lower survival in the striped morph. Grant is currently expanding the clay model study to several locations across the Eastern Shore to assess predation pressures on populations with varying frequencies of each color morph.

Creating a Synergistic Relationship Between Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring

Kevin Knudsen, Education (presented with Carrianne Cicero)

This research project investigated the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts of the Supplemental Instruction (SI) and tutoring programs at Salisbury University. Throughout the fall 2014 academic semester, the program coordinators held joint in-service trainings to allow both groups of peer leaders to share experiences and investigate best practices. The presenters gave an overview of the history of SU’s Center for Student Achievement and explained why the collaborative efforts began. They then explained the mutual training requirements put into practice based on the College Reading and Learning Association. Finally, they described the results of an anonymous survey distributed to the SI leaders and tutors. The presenters found overall satisfaction with the training structure and implications for future practice.

Biodiversity of Ants in Two Coastal Bays Forest Ecosystems

Hunter Mann, Biology (presented with Emily Rowe)

Ants (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) are a critically important indicator taxa inhabiting a vast number of ecosystems and climates. Their ecological importance as both scavengers and predators, combined with their incredible biomass suggest that they are too important to be overlooked. However, in many cases, data pertaining to their biodiversity in many regions of the world is lacking and the records of what species inhabit which areas are incomplete. Mann’s research aims to determine the ant species richness and diversity in two Coastal Bays Forests of the Maryland’s Eastern Shore (Shoellf Conservation Forest and E.A. Vaughn Wildlife Management Area). Collections will occur in spring, summer and fall 2015 using three collection methods, including pitfall traps, leaf litter collections and hand collections. This