

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

November 20, 2026

WELCOME



Welcome to the Fall 2026 Undergraduate Research Conference! Today we celebrate students from across Texas State and the curiosity and creativity that have motivated their research. The projects presented today began in many places: faculty laboratories, studios, archives, courses, and individual imaginations. Mentors and advisors helped the students turn budding ideas into projects.

Many of the students here have received support from the Undergraduate Research Fellowship and are on their way to the Honors Medallion or IDEA Center credit. All are contributing to the creation of knowledge and culture that defines Texas State's work as an emerging R1 university. Honors helped organize today's events, and we are grateful to the faculty mentors, staff, and colleagues across the University who made them possible.

Guests, please take time to talk with these students about their work. Students, talk with each other too. You will learn what we already know: undergraduate researchers at Texas State exceed our expectations and surprise us in the best possible ways.

Sincerely,

Kathy J. Cooke
Dean
Honors College

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Each panel includes 3 - 4 student presentations

Session 1 (9:00AM - 10:15AM)

Panel titles:

- Setting the Scene: Lighting Design, Visual Novels, and Music Videos — *LAMP 501*
- Justice in Practice: Police Cameras, Language Barriers, Labor Trafficking, and True Crime — *LAMP 502B*
- Designed for People: Websites, Virtual Reality, and Illustrated Science — *ASBN 353*

Session 2 (10:30AM - 11:45AM)

Panel titles:

- Finding a Voice: Stories of Experience, Identity, and Healing — *LAMP 501*
- Bakeries, Thrift Stores, and Town Centers: Planning for Local Vitality — *LAMP 502B*
- From LAs to AI: Investigating Student Success in the College Classroom — *ASBN 353*

Session 3 (12:30PM - 1:45PM)

Panel titles:

- Campus Under Pressure: Body Image, Alcohol, and Anxiety — *LAMP 501*
- Contested Histories: Museums, Monuments, and the Promise of Equal Rights — *LAMP 502B*
- Written in Stone and Bone: Reconstructing Ancient Lives — *ASBN 353*
- Proteins in Action: Structure, Expression, and Function — *OM 201*
- Code at Work: Supercomputers, Virtual Networks, and Web Applications — *OM 232*

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Session 4 (2:00PM - 3:15PM)

Panel titles:

- The Social Balancing Act: Attraction, White Lies, and Camouflaging — *LAMP 501*
- Culture in Context: Black Fantasy, Hip-Hop Lyrics, and Japanese Screens — *LAMP 502B*
- Bicycles, Tubing, and Tampons: Managing San Marcos Streets and Streams — *ASBN 353*
- Under Stress: How Plants and Fish Respond to Environmental Change — *OM 201*
- Testing Predictive Models: From Software Performance to Election Forecasts — *OM 232*

Session 5 (3:30PM - 4:45PM)

Panel titles:

- Understanding Disability: Educational Support and Institutional Responsibility — *LAMP 501*
- Understanding Violence: Extremist Recruitment, Christian Nationalism, and Gun Policy — *LAMP 502B*
- The Promises and Perils of AI and Social Media — *ASBN 353*
- Studying Biodiversity: From DNA to Databases to Documentaries — *OM 201*
- Peanuts, Mercury, and Concussions: Evidence for Better Health Decisions — *OM 232*

SESSION 1 9:00AM - 10:15AM

LAMP 501

Setting the Scene: Lighting Design, Visual Novels, and Music Videos

Panel chair: Matthew Clark Webb, School of Theatre, Dance, & Film

Presentations:

Mars Carter	Demystifying Design: Shedding Light on the Lighting Design Process
Andelucia Ballard	KINGDOM OF REQUIEM Asset and Game Demo Showcase
Liz Olaribigbe	Discovering Me

LAMP 502B

Justice in Practice: Police Cameras, Language Barriers, Labor Trafficking, and True Crime

Panel chair: Dr. Melanie Soderstrom, School of Criminal Justice & Criminology

Presentations:

Olivia Jacob	Body-Worn Cameras and Police Accountability: Evaluating the Impact on Officer Behavior and the Use of Force
Faruq Fakory	Investigating Translation Gaps in Courtrooms for Non-Native English Speakers
Gabriela Trejo	Hidden Labor
Karina Zepeda	Where Do We Go When We Die? A Qualitative Content Analysis of True Crime Entertainment and the Reality of Death Investigations

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SESSION 1 9:00AM - 10:15AM

ASBN 353

Designed for People: Websites, Virtual Reality, and Illustrated Science

Panel chair: Grayson B Lawrence, School of Art and Design

Presentations:

Isla Shih	UX Case Study: Texas State Honors College Website
Giovanna Gati Lima Neri	Evaluating the Quality of 360-Degree Immersive Video Using Virtual Reality
Emily Owen	Know Your Bones? An Illustrated Guide to Siding Bones Like a Forensic Anthropologist

SESSION 2 10:30AM - 11:45AM

LAMP 501

Finding a Voice: Stories of Experience, Identity, and Healing

Panel chair: Dr. Naomi Medina, Dept. of Psychology

Presentations:

Lain Lowery	Inferno: The Pedestrian Nature of Orange
Christina Rich	Little Girl Stay: A Story of Healing for the Hurting Child
Abby Myers	The Power in Having No Power: The Hierarchy of Higher Education

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LAMP 502B

Bakeries, Thrift Stores, and Town Centers: Planning for Local Vitality

Panel chair: Dr. Peter Tschirhart, Honors College

Presentations:

Madeline Carpenter	Bobcat Thrift
Tessa Gonzalez	Passion Is Nothing Without Planning: Creating a Plan for a Small Bakery Business
John Adams	Can Policy Recreate What History Produced? A Comparative Study of Frederick, Maryland, and Carmel, Indiana

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SESSION 2 10:30AM - 11:45AM

ASBN 353

From LAs to AI: Investigating Student Success in the College Classroom

Panel chair: Dr. Jonathan Vontsteen, IDEA Center

Presentations:

Amelia Friedman	The Human Element of Chemistry: How Student Perceptions, Confidence, and Study Habits Shape Chemistry Success
Meagan Selman	Impact of LAs on Student Performance in Introductory STEM Classes
Jeremiah Reno	The Influence of Faculty Perception of Generative AI on Teacher-Student Relationships

SESSION 3 12:30PM - 1:45PM

LAMP 501

Campus Under Pressure: Body Image, Alcohol, and Anxiety

Panel chair: Dr. Michelle Lynn Edwards, Dept. of Sociology

Presentations:

Molly Myers	Injecting Insecurity? Exploring How Undergraduate Women at Texas State University Make Sense of GLP-1 Discourse Online and Offline
Jade Scott	From Intention to Action: Alcohol Use, Drinking Motives, and Protective Sexual Behavior Among College Students
Katharina Reyling	Stress, Worry, and Body Signals

LAMP 502B

Contested Histories: Museums, Monuments, and the Promise of Equal Rights

Panel chair: Dr. Nancy Kay Berlage, College of Liberal Arts

Presentations:

Cassandra Browning	Fight for the Museums: Understanding Trump and the Smithsonian Through a Historian's Lens
Elena Fisher	Confronting Oblivion: The Evolution of Spanish Historical Memory Policy and the Silenced Memories of Francoism
Kyra Josephs	The Illusion of Rights in 21st Century America Through the Lenses of Fascism, Systemic Racism, Hateful Rhetoric, and Trumpism

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SESSION 3 12:30PM - 1:45PM

ASBN 353

Written in Stone and Bone: Reconstructing Ancient Lives

Panel chair: Dr. Michelle Hamilton, Dept. of Anthropology

Presentations:

Abigail Langston	Lithics in Context: Comparing Ordovician and Cretaceous Chert Nodules in Central Texas
Abbey Mitchell	Central Texas Chert and Lithic Artifact Geochemistry
Harper Boyd	Utilizing Our ReSources: Dietary Reconstruction of Mitrou and Tragana Agia Triada in Bronze Age Greece
Sarah Bell	“A Plague of Leprosy”: An Analysis of the Bioarcheological Evidence of Hansen’s Disease in Medieval England

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OM 232

Code at Work: Supercomputers, Virtual Networks, and Web Applications

Panel chair: Dr. Ted Lehr, Dept. of Computer Science

Presentations:

Aaditya Baniya	From Sequential to Hybrid: Evaluating Parallel Programming Models Across CPUs, GPUs, and Distributed Systems
Aaron Espinoza	Paying Less for L2 Bridging: veb(4) Development for FreeBSD
Anuska Dhital	Library Management System

SESSION 3 12:30PM - 1:45PM

OM 201

Proteins in Action: Structure, Expression, and Function

Panel chair: Dr. Karen Lewis, Dept. of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Presentations:

Yamika Menon	Sequence-Based Identification of Pathogenic Hotspots in Folded Protein Domains
Emilyn Ramos	Investigating the Effects of Proline Mutations on Human LARP6 Structure and RNA Binding
Alan Vargas	Investigating the Effect of the P182A Mutation on Human LARP6 RNA Binding
Jerry Rodriguez	Effect of IPTG Induction on Recombinant Plant Protein Expression in E. coli BL21(DE3)

SESSION 4 2:00PM - 3:15PM

LAMP 501

The Social Balancing Act: Attraction, White Lies, and Camouflaging

Panel chair: Dr. Randall Osborne, Dept. of Psychology

Presentations:

Alexzandra Lopez	Beyond the Familiar: Tolerance for Ambiguity and Romantic Attraction
Elsie Keizer	The His and Hers of Lying: Gender Differences in Telling and Responding to Prosocial Lies in Naturalistic Contexts
Nyx Schexnayder	Prevalence and Correlates of Social Camouflaging Compared in Autistic, ADHD, and AuDHD Adults

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LAMP 502B

Culture in Context: Black Fantasy, Hip-Hop Lyrics, and Japanese Screens

Panel chair: Dr. Andrew Hsin Chen, School of Art and Design

Presentations:

Jayla Chukwu	Looking Beyond the Pages: Analyzing Depictions of the Black Experience in Fantasy Novels
Isabel Kenney	Controversies in Concert: Eminem, Ye, and the Politics of Derogatory Language
Savannah Gallegos	A Narrative on Why Framing Folding Screens as Uniquely Japanese Is Essential to the Art Historical Canon

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SESSION 4 2:00PM - 3:15PM

ASBN 353

Bicycles, Tubing, and Tampons: Managing San Marcos Streets and Streams

Panel chair: Dr. Christina Wright Lopez, Meadows Ctr for Water & the Environment

Presentations:

Madi Roberts	Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress in San Marcos, Texas
Zoe Cooper	Riverine Sustainable Recreational Capacity: Case Study of the San Marcos River in Central Texas
Devin Parente	Using Tampons to Track Water Pollution: A Community Science Approach in Central Texas

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OM 201

Under Stress: How Plants and Fish Respond to Environmental Change

Panel chair: Dr. Sunethra Dharmasiri, Dept. of Biology

Presentations:

Claire Taylor	Elucidating the Molecular Mechanism: The Role of Arabidopsis EIN4 Ethylene Receptor in Plant Stress Response
Rylie Bendel	Interactive Effects of Ultraviolet Radiation and Cold on Stress Physiology, Behavior, and Growth in Gambusia affinis
Sam Dunphy-Miller	Quantifying Relationships of Standard Water Quality Parameters with Glucocorticoid Levels in Juvenile Bluegill (Lepomis macrochirus) in Central Texas Streams

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SESSION 4 2:00PM - 3:15PM

OM 232

Testing Predictive Models: From Software Performance to Election Forecasts

Panel chair: Dr. Heena Rathore, Dept. of Computer Science

Presentations:

Prashansa Dotel	Are LLM-Extracted Program Features More Effective Than Raw Code Embeddings or Traditional Compiler-Level Static Attributes for Performance Prediction Tasks?
Connor Lopez	Comparing Large Language Models and Machine Learning for Image Corruption Detection
Jonathan Hebler	Market Mania: Analyzing Whether Prediction Markets Function as Effective Election Forecasting Tools When Compared to Election Polling in National Elections Outside of the US

SESSION 5 3:30PM - 4:45PM

LAMP 501

Understanding Disability: Educational Support and Institutional Responsibility

Panel chair: Dr. Jennifer Ahrens, Dept. of Health & Human Performance

Presentations:

Noah Fry	Teaching Students with Tourette Syndrome: Information and Classroom Management Strategies for the Secondary Educator
Sunshine Flores	Strategies for Collaborative and Interprofessional Practice Between Speech-Language Pathologists and Educators: A Scoping Review
Chrispy Polanco	Are Parents with Disabilities Overrepresented in Cases Investigated by Child Protective Services in Texas?

LAMP 502B

Understanding Violence: Extremist Recruitment, Christian Nationalism, and Gun Policy

Panel chair: Dr. H Jaymi Michell Elsass, School of Criminal Justice & Criminology

Presentations:

Olivia Cabral	Terrorists and Cults: A Comparative Analysis of Recruitment Strategies
Selena Molinari	White Christian Nationalism as a Predictor of Support for Political Violence
Amelie Juarez	U.S. Gun Policy and Its Social Impacts

SESSION 5 3:30PM - 4:45PM

ASBN 353

The Promises and Perils of AI and Social Media

Panel chair: Mark Manuel Hernandez, Dept. of English

Presentations:

Isabel Houle	Using Art to Interpret the Detrimental Impacts of AI to College Students
Sophia Bergsli-Chavez	Analysis of Shifting Public Perceptions of Social Media Addiction After the Meta and Google Verdict
Meidad Troper	SpeechEase: Enhancing Public Speaking and Interview Competence Through Multimodal and Machine Learning Feedback

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OM 201

Studying Biodiversity: From DNA to Databases to Documentaries

Panel chair: Analisa Shields-Estrada, Dept. of Biology

Presentations:

David Leal Ochoa	Assessing Data Source Reliability: A Comparison of iNaturalist and Wildlife Insights for Detecting Colombian Terrestrial Mammals Across Body Mass
Alejandro Febres Morales	Uncovering the Mitogenome of Amphibian-Parasitizing Acari Mites in Central Texas
Abhiraame Karuppasamy	PyCatfish: A Python Interface for Eschmeyer's Catalog of Fishes
Isis Lindley	Beyond the Bite: Cognitive and Affective Framing of Sharks in Television Documentaries

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SESSION 5 3:30PM - 4:45PM

OM 232

Peanuts, Mercury, and Concussions: Evidence for Better Health Decisions

Panel chair: Dr. Denise Gobert, Dept. of Physical Therapy

Presentations:

Leslie Herrera Nunez	Do Peanuts Make a Difference? A Scoping Review of Peanut Consumption and Glycemic Outcomes in Adults
Alexandra Stentz	Gender-Specific Persistent Post-Concussion Symptoms Screening Questionnaire (GPPCS-SQ)
Taylor Rutherford	Mercury Concentrations in Red Snapper (Lutjanus campechanus) in the Northwestern Gulf of Mexico

THANK YOU FACULTY MENTORS

Dept. of Anthropology
Dr. Elaine Chu
Dr. Nicholas Herrmann
Dr. Michelle Hamilton

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Dr. Sunethra Dharmasiri
Dr. Caitlin Gabor
Dr. Ivan Castro Arellano
Dr. David Rodriguez
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Dr. Jessica Dutton

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Jon Zmikly

School of Theatre, Dance, and Film
Matthew Webb
Deonte Warren

EXPRESSING OUR GRATITUDE

Faculty mentors, undergraduate research depends on you. Thank you for all you do. Special thanks also go to the Undergraduate Research team in the Honors College, including Jeremy White and Jonathan Vontsteen at the Alkek IDEA Center and Ron Haas, Jordan Morille, and John Carranza in Lampasas, for supporting student research from initial ideas through presentation and publication.

Many of the projects presented at today's Undergraduate Research Conference are supported by the Undergraduate Research Fellowship (URF) program, which provides competitive funding for students to pursue original research and creative projects. The process of awarding these fellowships relies on the difficult and often overlooked work of faculty reviewers — we recognize your contributions and are grateful.

We also thank the staff of the Honors College for their hard work making this event happen, including Gwen Heng, Amy Gillis, Kerstin Colon, Melanie Liddle, Michelle Sotolongo, Kathryn McDaniel, and Peter Tschirhart, as well as our student coordinators Sydney, Rhianna, Riley, Olivia, and Aspen. Their dedication, organization, and attention to countless details make this conference possible.

Our thanks go as well to our panel chairs for keeping the sessions running smoothly.

This event, and the undergraduate research it celebrates, would not be possible without the generous support and partnership of the Honors College, the IDEA Center, the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Science and Engineering, the Division of Research, Tri-M, and the Provost's Office.

Finally, and most of all, thank you to our student presenters and to their families, friends, and supporters! Your curiosity, creativity, and hard work are what bring us together today.

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