Every spring, thousands of University of Washington students, faculty, and staff participate in the Undergraduate Research Symposium, a celebratory and informative event where undergraduates present original research projects. The presenters at this year's symposium on May 20th included 17 political science majors. Our students presented research on a wide range of topics including political participation among youth, racial segregation, voter disenfranchisement, and trends in undocumented migration.

The political science students who took part offered unique perspectives on pressing policy issues that we are facing today, using research skills learned in the classroom to address real problems and offer policy recommendations. Michelle Lock, a senior in political science with a minor in entrepreneurship, researched Australian asylum seeker policies. “I came across several articles about asylum seekers arriving in Australia and being turned away, and decided to research further into why they were being turned away and what the policies were.” Lock felt the symposium was a great learning experience. It provided her the opportunity to present research on an interesting topic that not many people are knowledgeable about.

Peter Paul Camacho, a junior in political science, chose a topic more personal to him. His research was about federal voting rights denied to approximately four million United States citizens living in US territories. “I chose this topic because I am an American from the Northern Marianas islands, a territory. Many other Americans like myself cannot vote for the president of the United States, yet we are under federal law in the territories.” He explained that he wanted to research something bigger than himself. “This is for my people.”

Professor Rebecca Thorpe, who directs the CAPPP Undergraduate Fellows program in the Department of Political Science, believes that the symposium empowers student participants. Thorpe noted that it “both provides an outlet for them to discuss months of intensive scholarly research and challenges them to communicate their contribution based on professional disciplinary standards.”

Symposium participants are paired with a faculty mentor who supports and guides them in the research process. Mentors help students conceptualize and focus their research. Professors Michael McCann and Kirstine Taylor served as Daniel Keum's mentors. Keum, a double major in political science and Law, Societies and Justice, described their mentorship as “phenomenal.” He credits the success of his honors thesis to their
Undergraduate research does not necessarily stop after graduation. Students will continue to use their research skills in future careers and in graduate school. For example, Camacho hopes to expand his research by looking into how Hawaii and Alaska were incorporated into the union as states, unlike other territories like Puerto Rico. Daniel Keum stated that he would like to continue his line of research in his career as a lawyer.

The UW also recognizes and celebrates undergraduate research with the Library Research Award for Undergraduates. This award is granted annually and recognizes undergraduate students who have authored superb research projects demonstrating a creative use of scholarly materials. Winners of this award receive $1,000 and University-wide recognition. This year two political science students, Chelsea Clayton and Daniel Keum, were among the eleven students who received this recognition. Clayton's research was on the “The Forest for the Trees: A Comparative Analysis of Urban Forestry Regimes in Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon.” Keum researched, “Wavering into Capitalism: The Politics of Sustenance in North Korea.” Keum plans to use his prize money towards funding a trip to Washington D.C. this summer, where he will work to pressure the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to pass Senate Bill S.2657. “This bill encourages the US government to provide a formal mechanism to facilitate family reunifications between Korean-American families and their North Korean kin who were separated after the Korean War.”