

2012

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### Recommended Citation

Fernandez, Timothy (2012) "Nick Bieser: UAB's new Coordinator of Undergraduate Research," *Inquire, the UAB undergraduate science research journal*: Vol. 2012: No. 6, Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/inquire/vol2012/iss6/11>

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# faculty spotlight

## Nick Bieser: UAB's new Coordinator of Undergraduate Research

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Interested in studying biochemical pathways? Or is observing the life cycle of sea turtles more up your alley? Whatever your desired experience, the newly designed Office for Academic Engagement and Global Citizenship should be your destination. The office comprises three branches: the Office of Study Away, the Office of Service Learning, and the Office of Undergraduate Research. The Office of Undergraduate Research provides the information and tools necessary to educate students about research and creative activities, helps them find and engage in fulfilling research and creative activity opportunities, and assists them in communicating their findings. Under the direction of Nick Bieser, the new Coordinator of Undergraduate Research, this office helps pair students with mentors in the UAB and Birmingham communities.

Bieser received his bachelor's degree in conservation zoology from Auburn University and earned his master's degree in biology from Purdue University in Indiana. He has a passion for reptiles and amphibians and studied herpetology in particular. Prior to his undertaking at UAB, he was the Conservation Land Manager for Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve in Birmingham as well as the Director of Conservation for the Alabama Reptile Rescue Sanctuary. During his time at Ruffner, he oversaw interns and students in many undergraduate ecological research projects, such as sampling chytrid fungus and performing botanical surveys. Bieser has always had a passion for helping students succeed in a research setting. The goal of the Office for Student Academic Engagement



"It's important to make students aware of the expectations in a lab before they enter into a relationship with a mentor," says Bieser. "The Office for Student Academic Engagement is here to help make the transition smoother so that both the student and the mentor are prepared for that relationship and make the experience beneficial for both."

Bieser encourages undergraduates currently seeking a research or creative opportunity to stop by his office. "The best advice that I give to students is that they should have a genuine interest in their area of study, even if it is outside of their major. Having a real curiosity will make the entire experience that much more rewarding," he says. "It's important to get to know the people in their areas of interest and talk to them. From that, students will get a better understanding of what it's like to be a research scientist."

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and Global Citizenship is to increase undergraduates' experiences in real world, hands-on involvement through study away, service learning, and undergraduate research. By getting students active in these areas, the office hopes that it will make them more academically engaged outside of the classroom.

Bieser hopes to increase awareness of the office because he wants to make it easier for students to find opportunities and to increase their research training. In order to help students secure spots in research labs, he emphasizes the dynamic of the student/mentor relationship.

Bieser emphasizes, "Whether it is [through] undergraduate research, service learning, or study away, a student will be a better citizen and will have a better perspective of the world. These experiences will give you valuable skills later in life no matter what career path you choose."

If you would like more information about getting involved in undergraduate research, feel free to contact Nick Bieser at [nbieser@uab.edu](mailto:nbieser@uab.edu) or visit his office in room 527 of Heritage Hall on the UAB campus.