

## A message from the Dean

Dear Participants and Guests,

Welcome to UMBC's 21st Annual Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Day (URCAD)! This, one might say, is the year in which URCAD attains a certain kind of maturity. It is thrilling to see that as it comes of age, it retains the brawling, restless energy that has always made it so special. URCAD's contributors are doing serious, hard labor on important issues, but they do it with such spirit and vigor and joy that there is clearly a kind of intellectual intoxication at work as well.

This is the happy day on which we witness and celebrate what that famous American polymath, Zora Neale Hurston, called "formalized curiosity ... poking and prying with a purpose."<sup>[1]</sup> This was how she described what she was setting out to do when she left Barnard College for the south to do six months of fieldwork on folklore. URCAD assembles the work of more than 250 UMBC students, who have been purposefully poking and prodding over the past months and years at questions chemical and agricultural, economic and medical, musical and mechanical, political and biological and, like some of Hurston's, anthropological. Their curiosity, just as much supported and encouraged as formalized by their mentors, has produced this year's bounty of posters, presentations, exhibits, and performances- so many that you could not possibly get to everything. Nonetheless, please try! You are as likely to find yourself enlightened and informed as puzzled and surprised- but you will not be unmoved.

In Hurston's most famous work, the narrator notes that "[t]here are years that ask questions and years that answer."<sup>[2]</sup> Their URCAD years may mostly be the years for UMBC's students of asking questions. But it is because they are asking them now, so early, that we all stand such a good chance of seeing their questions, both today's and so many more, answered in the years to come.

Welcome to URCAD, and enjoy the day,

Simon Stacey, Ph.D.

Interim Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education

[1] Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 143.

[2] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York, HarperCollins, 2006), p. 21.