With the generous support of the University of Alberta’s Centre for Teaching & Learning’s undergraduate student award, I had the valuable opportunity to research ways to build an introductory social science course for University of Alberta Augustana. My project divided into three main parts. First, I researched eighteen primarily undergraduate universities across Canada and the United States for their political science programs. I assessed what each program requires and how it compares to our institution’s requirements. Second, I analysed sixteen of Augustana’s introductory social science courses to see where a new social science course would fit. Lastly, I conducted a literature review on the foundations of the new proposed political studies program. In the course of the literature review, I focused on the following topics: student engagement, high impact learning practices, student success courses, pedagogy in introductory political science courses, and pedagogy in capstone courses. My findings would be an aid in reshaping the political studies program at Augustana.

The experience of undergraduate research allowed me to develop skills that will be crucial for the remainder of my academic career. Throughout the summer, my ability to process information and produce various kinds of reports such as charts and literature reviews strengthened substantially. In the past four months, I have learned more effective research methods and had opportunities to use a more diverse range of databases and materials than my program traditionally requires. Having been a researcher, I am now much more confident in my research skills and writing ability.