



Undergraduate Summer Research Academy

Project Details

Project 1

Research Project Title: Preferred Pronouns in Practice: Analyzing the Intersection of Legislation and Workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives—A Case of Preferred Pronouns

Research Professor: **Dr. Jasmin Lin**, Management Department, RSBUS

Project 2

Research Project Title: Design Considerations and Prototyping of an Animatronic "Worry Monster" as a Therapeutic Tool for Children with Anxiety.

Research Professor: **Dr. Benjamin Campbell**, Engineering Department, SEMS

Project 3

Research Project Title: Can Elite Athletes be Effective in Sports Diplomacy? Studying the Soft Power Use of Individual Athletes

Research Professor: **Dr. Judit Trunkos**, Social Sciences Department, SIHSS

Application Deadline
March 25, 2024



Project 1 of 3

uR@RMU

Research Project Title: Preferred Pronouns in Practice: Analyzing the Intersection of Legislation and Workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives—A Case of Preferred Pronouns

Research Project Summary: The use of preferred pronouns in school settings and the workplace has been a topic of controversy. Regulations vary between states, and the federal government has yet to regulate pronoun use in the workplace. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has provided guidance stating that "intentionally and repeatedly using the wrong name and pronouns to refer to a transgender employee could contribute to an unlawful hostile work environment" and violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Following this guidance and the implementation of Pronoun Misuse Policies in the private sector, some individuals have been terminated. However, recent lawsuits have seen courts protecting individuals' freedom of speech under the First Amendment, as seen in the case of Meriwether v. Hartop (March 26, 2021).

State-level approaches to the usage of preferred pronouns also vary. Seven states have enacted laws prohibiting schools from requiring teachers (and, in some cases, students) to use pronouns that do not align with the student's sex assigned at birth. Pennsylvania has not yet enacted any laws regarding this issue. (Refer to "Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures in 2024" for more information.)

My intention is twofold: (1) to design a research study on the use of preferred pronouns and their impact on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and (2) to create a case study with accompanying classroom activities on this topic for use in the Human Resource Management courses or other relevant courses.

Student Research Objectives:

1. To evaluate the current legal and policy framework.
2. To access individual's perceptions on the use of preferred pronouns at workplace.
3. To measure the impact of the use of preferred pronouns on business's DEI initiatives, organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and employee wellbeing.
4. To provide recommendations on developing a policy/legislation to incorporate the use of preferred pronouns into DEI strategies/initiates.
5. To foster awareness and change towards a more inclusive workplace.

Skills Required:

1. Required course: MGMT3600. If student has taken other HR courses, it would be a plus.
2. Management major with Human Resource Management focus/certificate is preferred.
3. Data analytic related course preferred.
4. Experience in a case study analysis/case writing is preferred.
5. Student should be also familiar with APA writing style, show interests in DEI initiatives, and be excellent in writing and finding research articles from the RMU library.
6. Student needs to devote himself/herself on weekly meetings with Dr. Lin and adhere to the weekly plan as follows.
7. Student needs to create a Google Doc folder and share with Dr. Lin.
8. Student needs to check in everyday and report the daily progress.
9. Dr. Lin will check the Google Doc and provide feedback accordingly, and student is expected to revise the research paper/case writing based on Dr. Lin's feedback within 1 business day.

Expected Student Research Outcomes:

Student work closely with Dr. Lin to make sure everything is on track. The student is expected to present at least (1) a poster presentation at the RMU Undergraduate Research Conference the following semester, (2) a research paper presentation at Western Academy of Management (WAM) Annual Conference in March or EAM Annual Conference in May, and (3) an academic journal publication (The Case Journal or Case Research Journal).



Project 2 of 3

Research Project Title: Design Considerations and Prototyping of an Animatronic "Worry Monster" as a Therapeutic Tool for Children with Anxiety.

Research Project Summary: This project will produce preliminary engineering designs and prototypes for a grant proposal to be written by Prof. Campbell (Engineering), Prof. Monda (Psychology), Prof. Ames (Media Arts) and Prof. Parker (Education). The students will interview the researchers involved to produce design criteria for an interactive "Worry Monster" which is a standard therapy tool for children. The student will design, assemble and test the electro-mechanical system then design and 3D print a housing for it, incorporating any motor driven joints or features required. Design review meetings will be held with stakeholders periodically and at the end of the program the student will showcase their progress to the research team.

Grants will be sought to produce additional interactive Worry Monsters for a collaborative research study to evaluate its effectiveness (related to a non-interactive version) in child therapy situations.

Student Research Objectives:

1. Student will learn how to create design specification from stakeholder interviews
2. Student will learn how to design and create an electro-mechanical system for animatronics
3. Student will learn iterative design through 3D printing of a structure to house electro-mechanical components.
4. Student will have the option of creating multiple prototypes using different hardware and software platforms (LEGO Mindstorm or Arduino)

Skills Required:

1. CAD design and 3D printing experience required. Arduino electro-mechanical or LEGO Mindstorm experience preferred. Either Engineering or UX/UI with this skill set is preferred.

Expected Student Research Outcomes:

Student will produce a prototype that can be used as a basis for applying for research funding to refine and produce additional prototypes to be evaluated for effectiveness in a clinical setting helping children with anxiety feed their worries to the animatronic Worry Monster.

Research Professor: Dr. Benjamin Campbell, Engineering Department, SEMS



Project 3 of 3

Research Project Title: Can Elite Athletes be Effective in Sports Diplomacy? Studying the Soft Power Use of Individual Athletes

Research Project Summary: Influencing others to want what you want without coercion or payment in international relations is called soft power. Individual-level soft power use is an underdeveloped area of international relations scholarship. This study will focus on how individual elite athletes use their soft power to impact international relations. The study will compare successful and unsuccessful cases of elite athletes using soft power in international relations to find out if famous athletes' can be effective sport diplomats. The time frame is 2010-2024.

Student Research Objectives:

1. Identify relevant scholarship for literature review. (individual-level soft power use, elite athletes use of soft power, successful and unsuccessful cases in sports diplomacy)
2. Assist with data analysis.
3. Search for new datasets in sports diplomacy.
4. Assist with case selection for successful and unsuccessful cases.

Skills Required:

1. POSL 1040 International Relations, or POLS 1030 Comparative Politics and any research methods class such as SOSC 3800 Social Science Research method if possible.
2. Download and shape data using Excel (maybe other software as well such as STATA, R, or SPSS.)

Expected Student Research Outcomes:

1. Learn to write a literature review.
2. Learn to search for datasets and cases of sports diplomacy.
3. Learn to use qualitative and quantitative research tools.
4. Learn to create a theory.
5. Learn to create a research design.
6. Learn to analyze data and write conclusions.

Research Professor: Dr. Judit Trunkos, Social Sciences, SIHSS