

Introduction

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In this issue of *SPUR*, a variety of articles is presented that examine the practice and assessment of undergraduate research, including several that provide excellent models of undergraduate research programs.

The first article in this issue, “A Peer Research Consultant Program: Feasibility and Outcomes” by Francisca Beer, Christina M. Hassija, Arturo Covarrubias-Paniagua, and Jeffrey M. Thompson (California State University, San Bernardino), provides assessment data for a peer-mentoring undergraduate research program. The Peer Research Consultant Program pairs faculty with an undergraduate or graduate peer mentor who helps identify research projects that can be derived from class assignments and provides outside assistance to undergraduate researchers throughout the research process. Assessment data reveal notable gains for students participating in the program, compared to nonparticipants.

In the first of five Practice articles, Luciana Aenasoaie, Justin Joque, Amanda Peters, and Jamie Vander Broek (University of Michigan) explore the role that libraries can play in advancing undergraduate research in the humanities in their case study, “Leveraging the Role of Library Partnerships to Understand Undergraduate Research Contributions to Humanities Scholarship.” They note that campus libraries are in a unique position to assist with undergraduate research projects. Because librarians work closely with researchers, they are highly skilled at identifying a wide range of research materials. Additionally, as the library is one of the few resources utilized by virtually all departments at the institution, library professionals can be an invaluable resource for identifying potential areas for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Given the focus on publishing peer-reviewed journal articles for tenure and promotion, many tenure-track and tenured faculty may eschew writing book reviews. However, in their article, “Learning ‘Scholarship as Conversation’ by Writing Book Reviews,” Nicholas Rowland (Penn State Altoona), Jeffrey A. Knapp (Penn State University Park), and Hailley Fargo (Penn State University Park) point out that book reviews can be very beneficial for students and faculty alike. Using the Association of College & Research Libraries Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, the authors evaluate the benefits of coauthoring book reviews with students. Through the process of reviewing an academic book, students learn to cite research

properly, evaluate the work of other researchers critically, and recognize the scholarly contribution of the book, among other invaluable research skills. The authors conclude with suggestions for faculty and librarians in transforming book reviews into undergraduate research opportunities that contribute to teaching, research, and service.

Providing opportunities for students to present their original research at conferences is a critical aspect of undergraduate research. Eric C. Freundt (University of Tampa) and Kimberly R. Schneider (University of Central Florida) discuss the development of the Florida Undergraduate Research Conference (FURC), a multidisciplinary statewide conference. Since its implementation in 2011, more than 2,100 students have presented their research at FURC, and survey data reveal a number of positive student outcomes. This case study provides an excellent road map for those interested in planning and implementing regional or statewide conferences across institutions.

The presence of human and social capital is critical for success in nearly every sphere of life and undergraduate research is no exception. Shannon N. Davis (George Mason University) and Sarah E. Wagner (Mathematica Policy Research) examine the relationship between human and social capital as well as the development of a disciplinary identity. They compared undergraduate students from the social and natural sciences, and results revealed that both social and human capital were important factors for the development of a scientific identity for students in the natural sciences. However, human capital alone influenced disciplinary identity among students in the social sciences.

The ability for undergraduates to explain their research to a general audience is an important feature of research that often is neglected in undergraduate research programs. Robert V. Reichle (The University of Texas at Austin) describes the Texas Student Research Showdown in “Student Research Showdown: A Research Communication Competition.” As part of this annual event, students create two-minute videos to present their research to a nonspecialist audience. Additionally, students participate in several workshops that cover topics related to communication such as Making a Two-Minute Pitch and How to Explain Your Research to Anyone. Self-report data reveal significant increases in students’ perceived communication abilities.

The International Perspectives article, “Knowledge Makers: Indigenous Student Undergraduate Researchers and Research” by Sereana Naepi and Airini (Thompson Rivers

University, Canada), explores the importance of increasing the number of Indigenous researchers and expanding the practice of Indigenous research. Through one-on-one meetings, a two-day workshop, and a publication opportunity, Indigenous students are introduced to Indigenous research methodologies, draw on their ancestors and present-day tribal elders for knowledge and support, and engage in research as a form of service. The authors

describe the program in detail and discuss the academic and personal benefits for student participants.

It is hoped that the articles presented in this issue will help faculty think outside of the box when developing undergraduate research projects and leverage the expertise of librarians and others to benefit undergraduate research projects and programs.

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