UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OFFICES & PROGRAMS: MODELS & PRACTICES

Joyce Kinkead and Linda Blockus
The Council on Undergraduate Research
Clockwise from upper left:
Six Ionic columns are all that remain of the University of Missouri’s first building, Academic Hall, which burned in 1892. Jesse Hall, in the background, is the university’s main administrative building.
(photo credit: MU Publications)

Old Main at Utah State University
(photo credit: Anna Brunson McEntire)

Union College’s 16-sided Nott Memorial, a national historic landmark named for the college’s longest-serving president.
(photo credit: Peter Howard)

The tower of Tillman Hall at Winthrop University
(photo courtesy of University Relations at Winthrop University)

Health-Wellness Building at Mesa Community College
(photo credit: MCC Institutional Advancement)

Lewis Hall at Dominican University (Illinois)
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CUR™
The Council on Undergraduate Research
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Preface

During the June 2010 meeting of Undergraduate Research Program Directors (URPD) at the National Conference of the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR), the division’s councilors discussed the merit of updating *How to Develop and Administer Institutional Undergraduate Research Programs* by Toufic Hakim (2000), a valuable book for many of us developing undergraduate research programs at our campuses. Rather than updating this particular volume, however, the division recommended that an entirely new book be developed devoted to “models of undergraduate research programs,” given that much had happened in this important educational initiative over a decade’s time. We are, in effect, ready for a second generation of undergraduate research offices. We envision *Undergraduate Research Offices and Programs: Models and Practices* as a valuable resource and reference book as this second generation evolves.

As this volume was being developed, a call was issued to members of the URPD Division of CUR asking for proposals regarding material that might be included. We were pleased with the diversity of contributions and suggestions put forth, which guided us in further shaping the direction of the book. The models in this volume, generously provided by our colleagues, represent an array of models at various points of maturity.

With the merger of CUR and the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), heightened interest in central offices of undergraduate research (UR) will no doubt occur. At the moment, there is no single reference book of similar nature for those seeking to design an infrastructure that supports undergraduate research initiatives. Some *CUR Quarterly* articles have focused on models for offices or programs. (See Volume 27, Number 2 for a cluster of articles on UR offices). There is an excellent article on budgeting for UR offices (Crowe and Sienerth, 2006). A publication by Taraban and Blanton (2008) focused on UR offices for students in science. What was lacking was a solid reference book showcasing offices of undergraduate research, an educational practice that received much attention in the Boyer Report (1998), which urged research universities to be more proactive in engaging undergraduates. A decade later, the impact of undergraduate research as a high-impact educational practice has been confirmed by the work of George Kuh (2008). Likewise, undergraduate research is an international phenomenon, gaining ground in many countries (Healey and Jenkins 2009).

This book is organized so that each of the “model” chapters is devoted to an institutional type and follows a template, thus making it easy for a reader to browse the chapters and make comparisons or to trace a particular thread or theme. The template is as follows:

a) History of the UR office/program
b) The UR office’s mission
c) Resources and budget information
d) Physical layout and location of the UR office
e) Description of programs within the UR office to support undergraduates
f) Audiences/clientele for the UR office: students, staff, faculty
g) Events
h) Publications
i) Websites
j) Public relations
Preface

k) Fundraising
l) Relationships with other campus units
m) Issues and challenges
n) Assessment
o) Future: What’s next for the UR office.

The models are structured in an order that replicates the Carnegie Classification™ system that has been used since 1970 to describe institutional diversity. The chapters begin with doctorate-granting institutions and move through master’s colleges, and associates colleges. (For more information on the classification system, including individual institutions’ classifications, see: http://www.classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/.) A second organizing principle was to begin by describing centralized offices of undergraduate research and then end with offices that vary from that structure. Finally, this “models” section concludes with a chapter on the exciting developments regarding UR in two-year colleges.

Even though the philosophies, practices, and histories of these UR programs are similar and can follow a template such as the one above, the programs themselves exist in quite different institutional contexts. This is not to say that certain practices are limited to institutional types but rather that the institutional context can play a large role in the shaping of UR on campus. As Pearce (2001) notes, it is important “for each institution to articulate its mission clearly and then vigilantly to use all of its resources—human and financial—to realize that mission” (117).

Part Two focuses on special programs and summer experiences. Assessment is central in Part Three with the first chapter offering advice on how to evaluate campus readiness for a UR office, while the latter two chapters concentrate on assessment after offices are established. The appendices include further pragmatic information for UR office directors. Because there are so many acronyms associated with undergraduate research, we’ve also included a glossary.

When we use the term undergraduate research in this publication, we mean it in the largest possible sense, embracing all disciplines. Undergraduate research is shorthand for a much broader world, including creative activity, scholarship, application, and discovery.

CUR’s Division for Undergraduate Research Program Directors, established in 2005, serves and supports the needs of faculty and administrators who direct undergraduate research programs on their campuses. Its membership includes directors of new and established programs at diverse institutions. These programs encompass a wide variety of disciplines from the sciences to the performing arts, and programs that cross traditional academic boundaries. The division promotes networking among directors in order to share ideas and resources, disseminate best practices, and organize workshops and institutes. The division also sponsors a CUR Affinity Group to support the work of members who wish to remain within a disciplinary division in CUR but would like to benefit from the work of the URPD Division. It is in this spirit of sharing ideas and resources that Undergraduate Research Offices and Programs: Models and Practices was developed.

Our colleagues in URPD have been generous in sharing ideas and contributing to this volume. We also appreciate very much the advice and counsel of CUR’s Publications Committee, which shepherded this manuscript through the review process and enthusiastically supported the results.

As directors of undergraduate research offices, we are passionate about the transformative power of undergraduate research, and thus, we are bullish on the development of offices that support this important activity, which engages students and enhances their learning. Those working in UR programs
at different kinds of institutions have much to learn from each other, and this volume provides the kind of
crosscutting information that can help them do just that.

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