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Approaches to Undergraduate Research in Writing—for Writing Teachers

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Part educational movement, part curricular innovation, undergraduate research is now widely recognized as a "high-impact educational practice": a method of teaching and learning known to substantially benefit students from a variety of backgrounds across a range of instructional contexts, including curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities.
Student Bill of Rights

1. Opportunities to learn through inquiry rather than simple transmission of knowledge.

2. Training in the skills necessary for oral and written communication at a level that will serve the student both within the university and in postgraduate professional and personal life.

3. Appreciation of arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences, and the opportunity to experience them at any intensity and depth the student can accommodate.

4. Careful and comprehensive preparation for whatever may lie beyond graduation, whether it be graduate school, professional school, or first professional position.

*Undergraduate education in research universities requires renewed emphasis on a point strongly made by John Dewey almost a century ago: learning is based on discovery guided by mentoring rather than on the transmission of information. Inherent in inquiry-based learning is an element of reciprocity: faculty can learn from students as students are learning from faculty.*
High-Impact Educational Practices:
What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, & Why They Matter

George D. Kuh (AAC&U, 2008)

- First-Year Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
* Writing portfolios
On one hand, undergraduate research in all subject areas involves written communication. On the other hand, undergraduate research in writing creates unique, discipline-specific opportunities. Students who become undergraduate writing researchers obtain knowledge of writing that can be learned only through direct participation in full-fledged, creative, or critical inquiries.
How do we approach UR in Writing as writing teachers?
A belletristic approach gives students
• opportunities to read, discuss, and write about research
• opportunities to read, discuss, and write about conducting research
• exposure to UR (e.g., through scholarship by undergrad researchers)

An inquiry-based approach asks students to
• formulate a research question
• propose and conduct a related inquiry, focusing mainly on what others (who are experts) have discovered
• analyze, write about, and publicly present their findings

A single method approach gives students
• an introduction to a particular inquiry method
• one or more opportunities to use that method for data collection
• opportunities to analyze, write about, and publicly present their research

A multiple methods approach gives students
• opportunities to learn about 2-3 general types of research methods
• opportunities to try out specific research methods in each category
• opportunities to write about and publicly present their research

A discipline-specific approach invites students to
• learn one or more research methods common to a specific discipline, field, or sub-field
• conduct one or more primary inquiries
• analyze, write about, and publicly present their findings
THANK YOU

for contributing to the
Undergraduate Research
Impact Collection in DALN:
The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives.

This collection was established in conjunction with The Undergraduate Research Impact Project, a study of the impact undergraduate research has on rhetoric and composition/writing studies. Importantly, the UR Impact Collection is designed to grow well beyond that research, and it is designed to be shaped by you and other DALN contributors. The next benchmark for the Collection is 2018, when we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Boyer Commission Report alongside the work of undergraduate researchers and their mentors in our discipline.

As you prepare to share your story—or stories!—of undergraduate research with the DALN, it may be useful to review. Formally, undergraduate research has 4 key components, which Toufic Hakim enumerates in his "Soft Assessment of Undergraduate Research" (1998):

1. Undergraduate researchers are mentored by faculty;
2. Undergraduate researchers use methodologies that are widely accepted in their field of study;
3. Undergraduate researchers make a contribution to knowledge;
4. Undergraduate researchers disseminate their work beyond the classroom (i.e., publication, public presentation).

The prompts below are meant to help you gather your thoughts. You are welcome to address as many (or as few) as you like and to add your own as they occur to you. You are welcome to record by yourself or with someone who has been involved in your UR experience. Above all else, we encourage you to be creative and have fun showing and telling us about the impact undergraduate research has had on you.

Jenn Fishman, Jane Greer, and Dominic Dell Carpita

1st Annual
Writing Innovation Symposium

Since writing is a cornerstone of innovation, writing instruction should be central to social innovation education from foundations to capstones and signature work.

April 27th - 28th 2017

With a focus on undergraduate education, we welcome colleagues from all disciplines interested in new strategies for integrating writing into formal social innovation and entrepreneurship coursework, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular programs.

Join us for two days of learning, leaming, and hands-on project development led by Jenn Fishman, Associate Professor of English and Director of Marquette’s First-Year English Program.

For More Info Contact:
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