

Undergraduate Education Task Force Best Practices Signature Experiences Summary

Assessment Used to Collect Data: Sent e-mail inquiry to provost's office of 18 AAU universities; received responses from 12 (67%) by time this summary was compiled

Summary of Findings Regarding Signature Experiences

1. In addressing the question regarding signature experiences, most universities discussed these experiences in the context of the overall goals of the university for undergraduate education. (I have provided an example from WI on the web site).
2. First year seminars were commonly offered but not required; designed as small groups (e.g. 20-25 students). Interesting program at University of Washington for students starting in Summer, connect students to each other and the campus: Washington's Discovery Seminar www.artsci.washington.edu/discovery/. Also offer Freshmen Interest Group in which same students take 3 courses together + seminar
3. Half the programs specifically mentioned research as a signature experience; however, programs were quite varied, ranging from inquiry being part of a freshmen seminar (Rutgers) to upper division programs and research forums (e.g. Ohio State). One example is summer research program in biology at Arizona, which is open to engineering, computer science, math, and physics students [Http://ubrp.arizona.edu](http://ubrp.arizona.edu) ; this is supported by NIH funding. One program (University of Virginia) mentioned combining research and service in a new public service program called Jefferson Public Citizens. The press release can be found at <http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=6619>
4. Some universities have financial support for research experiences, ranging from small amounts for project supplies (Texas A&M) to larger amounts to provide research support dollars for faculty (Rutgers, Ohio State) and combine efforts between honors and undergraduate research offices
5. General education was also used as one venue to create integrative learning or connections between theory and application as illustrated by University of North Carolina, who has created an experiential and supplemental general education program for arts and sciences www.unc.edu/depts/uc/06description.html)

Recommendations Regarding Best Practices

1. Signature experiences should be part of a broader expression of student engagement and professional development
2. An informational web site for students capturing the values of the institution and/or goals for undergraduate education and the signature experiences aligning with these values/goals would provide an overarching context in which these experiences take place
3. Multiple options at various levels of academic progression should be available to encourage participation and provide students with flexibility and choices matching their professional development interests and needs
4. Further exploration of other programs for possible adaptation at UF would be useful
5. Funding and associated criteria for such funding to support signature experiences should be considered