

## Best Practices in Undergraduate Research

Research is one of the five activities UF recommends for students to enhance their undergraduate experience (<http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/ugrad/experience.html>). UF currently provides a variety of activities that encourage and support undergraduate research including: University Scholars Program (<http://www.scholars.ufl.edu/>), Journal of Undergraduate Research (<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/jur/>), senior thesis, interdisciplinary studies major (CLAS), Science for Life Program (<http://hhmi.chem.ufl.edu/metadot/index.pl>), credit for undergraduate research in some departments and through the honors program, the Undergraduate Research Database (<http://www.honors.ufl.edu/researchdatabase.html>) among others.

Best practices around the country indicate that to go to the next step an office of undergraduate research that provides an organized approach to research across a large university is needed. Among the many successful programs out there, the University of North Carolina provides a superlative example of what such an office can do to provide visibility and support to the research enterprise for students.

With a staff of four the UNC Office of Undergraduate Research (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/>) “provides the information and resources to engage in original inquiry, scholarship and creative work while you are an undergraduate at Carolina.” The office lays out for students what to do starting as an incoming student, freshman, and sophomore and so on. Highlights of this program includes a First Year Seminar that offers a research experience; a sophomore “Reorientation workshop” sponsored by Student Government; a course, IDST 195, Modes of Inquiry, to learn about faculty research in many disciplines; course or courses that teach research methodologies. The website itself is very helpful with various kinds of information and advice (Top Ten Questions about Undergraduate Research, for example). OUR also provides skill-building workshops on such issues as research proposal writing, poster design, navigating the IRB process.

The Carolina Research Scholars Program (CRSP) provides a specific means for students to have an in depth research experience in a systematic way. Students who complete the program receive a designation on their transcript “Carolina Research Scholar.” All students are eligible to earn the CRSP designation. The criteria for completion of the program are: completion of the IDST195 Modes of Inquiry Course; complete at least two research intensive courses (6 credit hours). (OUR maintains an on-line list of these courses in each department. There are also lists of courses where a student is “coached” by a graduate student as they initiate a project. Research intensive courses are those in which over half the class time is devoted to students conducting original research and presenting research conclusions.) Finally a student must present their results at the Annual Celebration of Undergraduate Research.

**Recommendation:** UF move to a centralized Office of Undergraduate Research that gives help to students in navigating the research process and provides information on existing programs. An important first step would be to start in a modest way with the long-term goal to have a vibrant program such as UNC now has. Our final program may well look somewhat different than theirs but overall the model they provide is first-class.

