

# From the President

This issue of the *CUR Quarterly* celebrates the creation of CUR's new Division of Arts and Humanities by detailing dynamic examples of best practices from these disciplines. The focus of this issue also serves to highlight evidence that engagement of undergraduates with faculty members in collaborative research, scholarship, and creative activity is a proven and powerful practice in all fields.

A body of knowledge has been amassed in recent years clearly indicating that engaged forms of learning, including student involvement in research, scholarship, and creative activity, are transformational experiences for undergraduates. Engagement in such high-impact practices yields an array of greater educational outcomes for students who participate in them in comparison with those for students who do not have these opportunities; furthermore, the educational gains for students from traditionally underrepresented groups are even greater. These transformational experiences for undergraduates, occurring within the curricular and/or co-curricular arenas, are almost always characterized by deep student involvement and regular student-mentor interactions. Important questions and topics of dialogue for faculties and institutions alike are how to increase student engagement and how to increase the use of transformational pedagogies within the institutional culture. Clearly, there are many different ways for students to become deeply engaged and to realize the educational benefits from transformative learning: research, scholarship, and creative activity; internships; independent study; guided readings; studios; practicums; capstones; service learning; community engagement; global study and international exchange; and student leadership.

Although student engagement can occur through a range of high-impact curricular and co-curricular experiences, I would suggest that undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity provide the most natural, and perhaps best, opportunities for the vast majority of faculty members to deeply engage students. First, the majority of faculty members come to their positions at colleges and universities with significant scholarly experience; very few new faculty members, however, arrive with training in student-leadership development, study-abroad mentoring, or internship coordination, for example. Second, most faculty members are already engaged in some

form of scholarly or creative work, because this is a key component of their academic lives and a requirement for reappointment, tenure, and promotion at many institutions. Third, the type of institution where faculty members serve often plays a key role in the scope of, and the importance accorded to, undergraduate engagement in collaborative research, scholarship, and creative work. Faculty members at two-year and four-year institutions typically only have the opportunity to work with undergraduates in a mentoring role, whereas faculty members at doctoral and research universities can integrate the mentorship of graduate and undergraduate students. Moreover, as the demographics of the professoriate have changed in recent years, more faculty members are engaging undergraduates in research, scholarship, and creative activity because they themselves engaged in it when they were undergraduates and found the experiences to be personally transformational.

Given the educational benefits gained by students, the professional and personal rewards achieved by faculty members, and the broader contributions provided to society, it is clear that undergraduate research impacts all stakeholders of higher education. As the United States and many other countries wrestle with a series of truly enormous challenges in the coming months and years, there is no question that research-based and creative solutions will be needed to address the world's most pressing problems. As such, it is incumbent upon us to renew our commitment to champion the value and benefits of undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity and to fully embed this high-impact educational practice into the undergraduate experience across all of our disciplines and institutions.



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