

Center for Engaged Learning Seminar
Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research
2014-2016

“The most important obligation now confronting the nation’s colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar.”

(Boyer, 1990, p. xii)

“To truly take advantage of the promise of HIPs [High-Impact Practices], however, we must invest in developing all faculty members’ capacity to implement HIPs in effective ways and for more students.”

(McNair and Albertine, 2012)

Whether preparing to pursue graduate studies or enter the workforce, the abilities to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve complex problems are among the most valuable skills undergraduate students can develop during their collegiate careers (Hart Research Associates, 2013). These skills develop in the classroom, but deeper student learning is fostered through practices that engage students in learning communities more broadly defined. Kuh (2008) suggests that such “high-impact” practices (HIPs), including undergraduate research (UR), lead to better student retention and engagement. This vision of student learning, which is supported by the Boyer Commission report (1998), contends that undergraduates should be involved in “research-based learning” in which faculty adopt a “scholar-teacher” model and involve undergraduates in the process of discovery. Kuh and O’Donnell (2013) contend that the deepest engagement in UR occurs when students participate in all aspects of the research process from problem identification to public dissemination, doing so in close working relationships with faculty teacher-scholars.

In 1997, the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) developed a definition of undergraduate research that reflects the centrality of the faculty mentor to the achievement of genuine high-impact teaching and learning: “Undergraduate research [scholarship, and creative activity] is an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate in collaboration with a faculty mentor that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline” (Wenzel, 1997). After fifteen years of committed work to the support and institutionalization of undergraduate research, a 2012 CUR publication, *Characteristics of Excellence in Undergraduate Research* ([COEUR](#)) outlined institutional structures that support high-quality UR experiences, including a scholarly faculty, a supportive institutional mission, and integration with other high-impact practices, among other characteristics.

Recent research has begun to identify the student benefits of participating in UR and to delineate institutional supports that foster student engagement in high-impact practices. However, relatively few investigations have focused on the *faculty mentor’s role* in supporting student learning and engagement or on what constitutes a productive student-mentor dynamic in the context of UR. The dearth of empirical findings is especially consequential considering that one of the defining characteristics of an undergraduate research experience is working closely with a faculty mentor (Lopatto, 2003; Osborne & Karukstis, 2009). This gap in our knowledge presents an opportunity to investigate key characteristics of

excellence in mentoring undergraduate research, the connections between mentoring relationships (mentorships), various student development outcomes, and faculty development.

Call for Applications

Elon University is pleased to announce the 2014-2016 Center for Engaged Learning Seminar on Mentoring Undergraduate Research, a two-year research seminar that supports individuals interested in pursuing research that advances excellence in mentoring undergraduate research. We invite interested scholars from across the disciplines to submit applications to join a cohort of researchers collaborating on the study of evidenced-based, high-quality undergraduate research mentoring practices in diverse academic ecologies. Although most investigations of undergraduate research have targeted the STEM disciplines, we encourage applications from all disciplines including Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Physical and Natural Sciences.

From this gathering of interested, committed scholars, the Seminar will facilitate multi-institutional, multi-method research investigations related to the following topics:

1) Key characteristics of mentoring undergraduate research

- What defines high quality UR mentoring, and what does not?
- What are proximal and distal outcomes of UR mentoring?
- Are there unique outcomes of UR mentoring that distinguish it from other mentoring relationships and other high-impact practices?
- What is the role of UR mentoring in developing an intellectual community on campus?

2) Mentoring relationships and student development

- Recognizing that students come from diverse backgrounds and communities, how can faculty mentors best support all students' participation and success in UR?
- What mentoring practices support students' identity development?
- What mentoring constellations and peer constellations do students participate in, and how does participation in different communities influence their personal and professional development?

3) Mentoring practices and faculty development in academic communities

- How can institutions and UR programs assess faculty mentor effectiveness?
- What institutional supports and practices most effectively foster good mentoring?
- How can mentoring be distinguished from other faculty roles including teacher, advisor, and scholar? What overlap exists among these roles and does excellence in mentoring strengthen the other roles?
- Does participation in a community of mentors influence mentoring practices and faculty development more broadly?
- How can we prepare and support faculty mentors across their career development?
- How do institutional programs (e.g., Honors, UR Program, Summer Research Programs) and policies (e.g., tenure evaluation) influence mentoring practices and faculty participation in UR?

Research Cohorts and Seminar Logistics

The Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will support multi-institutional research addressing and surrounding this theme over a two-year period, with two one-week summer meetings on the Elon University campus, as well as a third culminating meeting of a yet determined form.

- **July 13-18, 2014:** Working in multi-institutional teams, participants will meet on Elon's campus to develop and plan research projects to be conducted throughout the following year at the participants' own institutions.
- **July 12-17, 2015** (tentative dates): Participants will meet to share their initial results and to plan a more sharply focused research agenda for the research cohort for year two. These research cohorts will afford inter-institutional collaborations that enable larger scale studies and explorations of the impact of different institutional contexts.
- **July 17-22, 2016** (tentative dates): Participants will reconvene to share their year two results, to plan continuations of their work, and/or to host a conference on mentoring undergraduate research.

Participants will produce significant, concrete outcomes. Outcomes of the Center for Engaged Learning Seminar could include white papers, an edited volume, conference panels, individual publications, and/or a website gallery of cohort projects – as well as local initiatives on participants' home campuses.

Seminar Leaders

The 2014-2016 Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will be led by Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler, Paul Miller, Brad Johnson, and Laura Behling.

- **Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler** is Professor of Psychology at Elon University. She served as a CUR Psychology Councilor from 2007 – 2010 and as Director of the Elon University Honors Program from 2008 to 2013. She has published and presented research on mentoring and developmental psychology, and was recognized with the 2011 Ward Family Excellence in Mentoring Award in support of her mentoring of undergraduates in research at Elon University.
- **Paul Miller** is the Director of the Undergraduate Research Program and a Professor of Exercise Science at Elon University. He has delivered several research presentations and workshops on how undergraduate research can effectively support student and faculty development. He currently serves as a CUR councilor and was the founding chair of CUR's Health Sciences Division.
- **W. Brad Johnson** is Professor of Psychology in the Department of Leadership, Ethics and Law at the United States Naval Academy, and a Faculty Associate in the Graduate School of Education at Johns Hopkins University. A clinical psychologist, he is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and recipient of the Johns Hopkins University Teaching Excellence Award. He is the author of several books on mentoring relationships including, *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Faculty in Higher Education*.
- **Laura Behling** is the Dean of the College and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Knox College, Illinois. Trained as a literature scholar, she is the author of *Reading, Writing, and Research: Undergraduate Research in Literary Studies* (CUR 2010) and has served in the Arts & Humanities Division of CUR.

How to Apply

To apply, submit a completed application and abbreviated curriculum vita by **October 31, 2013**. The application, available online at <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/cel/mentoringur>, asks for the following information:

- Which research question(s) above are you most interested in examining, and why?
- How does this topic fit with your existing scholarly work? Does it have a larger institutional context at your campus?
- What research methods do you anticipate employing to study mentoring undergraduate research? Do you have experience using these methods?
- Are there unique demographic/background variables relevant to your research questions?
- What is the institutional context for your work?
- What kinds of expertise do you bring to the study of mentoring undergraduate research?

More than one person per institution may apply, and teams that cross disciplines or institutional areas of responsibility are encouraged. Although CEL Seminar projects will be multi-institutional, applicants do not need to form these teams before they apply; CEL Seminar leaders will create initial teams based on applicants' information.

A review committee, including the seminar leaders, will review applications, make selections, and notify all applicants by **December 2, 2013**. Questions about the application and selection process should be directed to Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler and Paul Miller at mentoringUR@elon.edu.

Participant expenses

Elon University will provide lodging and meals for seminar participants during the seminar's 2014-2016 summer meetings. In addition, each participant will be reimbursed up to \$500/year (up to \$1000/year for international participants) for travel to the seminar's summer meetings at Elon University. Full reimbursement policies will be distributed to accepted participants. Other participant expenses, including additional travel costs and any research costs, will be paid by the participants and/or their home institutions.

To learn more about the 2014-2016 CEL Seminar on Mentoring Undergraduate Research, visit: <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/cel/mentoringur>.

To learn more about the Center for Engaged Learning, visit: <http://www.elon.edu/cel>.

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