



PURM

Perspectives on Undergraduate
Research & Mentoring

Letter from the Guest Editors for Issue 8.1

As the co-guest editors of this special issue on Mentoring Undergraduate Creative Scholarship, we are thankful to have received submissions that offer insight into not only the rich and varied contexts of creative scholarship, but also the diverse and impactful mentoring practices, processes, and collaborations. Mentoring creative scholarship, similar to the act of creative process itself, is unique to each artistic discipline and project, and this issue includes a diversity of research methods and modes of expression. The contributors to this issue delineate their respective approaches to mentoring undergraduates in the varied disciplines of creative writing, dance, theatre, and the broader field of creative arts. The authors offer their perspectives on best practices, including the relational aspect of creative mentoring, disrupting historical bias inherent in apprenticeship models often found in performing arts, and analyzing collaborative mentorship in creative writing. This is the first time that *PURM* has focused on the mentorship of creative scholarship and we were pleased to be a part of this closer look at this branch of undergraduate research

In *Mentoring Undergraduate Research in the Performing Arts: Case Studies of the Ten Salient Practices in Action*, Shawyer, Aumiller, Hall, and Shively highlight three case studies and expertly connect each of them to the Salient Practices Framework proposed by Shanahan, Ackley-Holbrook, Hall, Stewart, and Walkington (2015). The authors also make a very sound argument for best practices in theatre and dance undergraduate research mentorship. The first case study examines how collaboration creates opportunities for students to learn mentoring skills, and how many faculty members in theatre and dance are also practitioners in the industry, therefore bringing existing industry practices into their mentoring. Through these three case studies, the authors affirm the usefulness of the Salient Practices Framework with regards to the mentoring of undergraduate research in theatre and dance. In *Deconstructing Authority for Truly Collaborative Mentorship in Undergraduate Creative Writing*, Brown, Kausen, and Surani juxtapose the historical context of the mentor-workshop model famously pioneered by the Iowa Writers Workshop in 1936 with the seminal critique of that model by Bishop (1988). The authors, one creative writing faculty mentor and two undergraduate mentees, utilize that juxtaposition as a framework to uniquely detail and assess their own experience of mentorship through Bishop's lens. They offer a model of mentoring addressing power dynamics inherent in creative writing mentorship and removing grading work produced during a mentorship to allow for a more authentic experience for both the mentee and mentor. In *Divisional Trends in Undergraduate Research: A Data-Driven Dialogue in the Creative Arts*, McCaffrey, Baker, and Manning methodically outline how and why initiating a data-driven dialogue about the role of the creative arts in undergraduate research programs is crucial. The analysis provided by the authors include a twenty-year historical investigation of undergraduate research, across all disciplines, including and focusing on the arts, at one liberal arts college. The final article from Sinor and Graham, *Finding the Words: An Epistolary Essay on Mentoring in the Creative Arts*, is a series of letters written by a creative writing mentor and her since matriculated undergraduate mentee. The authors uniquely reimagine Ranier Maria Rilke's (2012) foundational book, *Letters to a Young Poet*, to illuminate a contemporary example of mentorship in the creative arts. Their elegantly crafted

exchange allows the reader to gain insight into not only their mastery of prose, but also their mentoring relationship and their perspectives as teacher/mentor, student/mentee, and as collegial artists.

Mentoring artistic research is often an underrepresented field of the scholarship of teaching and learning, yet a rich and fertile area that we hope future issues of PURM will continue to explore. In closing, we want to thank the reviewers who offered critical and insightful feedback to the authors. Their efforts helped the authors elevate their articles and clarify their ideas. We especially want to thank the Editor-in-Chief of *PURM*, Dr. Qian Xu, who works tirelessly to support the authors and the editors. Her guidance in this process was invaluable. Lastly, we thank the authors for sharing their expertise and insight on mentoring creative scholarship and for their generous contributions to this special issue.

Sincerely,

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References

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Shanahan, J. O., Ackley-Holbrook, E., Hall, E., Stewart, K., & Walkington, H. (2015). Ten salient practices of undergraduate research mentors: A review of the literature. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 23(5), 359–376.