

A Culture for Encouraging Shared Knowledge: The Current State of  
Undergraduate Research in the Humanities across the Nation and at  
Virginia Tech

Emily Walters

This thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State  
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
English

Katrina Powell, Chair  
Katharine Cleland  
Gena Chandler-Smith

May 2, 2018  
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: undergraduate research, higher education, humanities, rhetoric

# A Culture for Encouraging Shared Knowledge: The Current State of Undergraduate Research in the Humanities across the Nation and at Virginia Tech

Emily Walters

## Academic Abstract

Over the last two decades, higher education administrations have seen the importance of exposing undergraduate students to research be increasingly emphasized. Following the publication of the Boyer Commission Report in 1998 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, higher education institutions have taken strides to incorporate research into the undergraduate curricula. Undergraduate research scholars largely agree that the natural sciences fields have been the most successful and efficient at implementing these changes to their undergraduate curricula, and that the humanities fields have been much slower to consider how their various departments should evolve to promote undergraduate research.

This project aims to survey the national undergraduate research landscape when it comes to humanities fields to see what steps academic humanities researchers, faculty, and administrators are taking, or need to be taking, to encourage more humanities undergraduates to become involved with research. To do so, an in-depth analysis of the existing literature on the subject is provided, including the Boyer Commission Report and seminal investigative pieces by undergraduate research scholar Joyce Kinkead. Next, the analyses are provided for interviews the author conducted about the state of undergraduate research with higher education administrators from Pennsylvania State University, the University of Delaware, Notre Dame University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the Council on Undergraduate Research. Additionally, this project provides a brief case study of the undergraduate research opportunities available to humanities students at Virginia Tech.

# A Culture for Encouraging Shared Knowledge: The Current State of Undergraduate Research in the Humanities across the Nation and at Virginia Tech

Emily Walters

## General Audience Abstract

Over the last two decades, higher education administrations have seen the importance of exposing undergraduate students to research be increasingly emphasized. Higher education institutions have taken strides to incorporate research into the undergraduate curricula, with the natural sciences fields being the most successful and efficient at implementing these changes. This project aims to survey the national undergraduate research landscape when it comes to humanities fields to see what steps academic humanities researchers, faculty, and administrators are taking, or need to be taking, to encourage more humanities undergraduates to become involved with research. To do so, an in-depth analysis of the existing literature on the subject is provided, along with analyses of interviews the author conducted with several higher education administrators from universities across the nation. Additionally, this project provides a brief case study of the undergraduate research opportunities available to humanities students at Virginia Tech.

## Table of Contents

Academic Abstract.....	ii
General Audience Abstract.....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Literature Review.....	3
<i>Institutionalization of Undergraduate Research</i> .....	3
<i>Benefits and Shortcomings of Institutionalized Undergraduate Research</i> .....	6
<i>Systems Approaches to Undergraduate Research</i> .....	9
Analysis of Interviews Conducted.....	12
Undergraduate Research in the Humanities at Virginia Tech: A Brief Case Study .....	20
<i>Personal Undergraduate Research</i> .....	20
<i>Publishing Undergraduate Research: Philologia Experience</i> .....	23
<i>Undergraduate Research Seminar</i> .....	25
<i>Virginia Tech's Office of Undergraduate Research</i> .....	28
<i>Case Study Conclusions</i> .....	32
Conclusions and Future Research.....	33
Bibliography .....	35

## Introduction

Over the last two decades, higher education administrations have seen the importance of undergraduate students having been exposed to research be increasingly emphasized—whether the research be their own original project or being a research assistant for an experienced professor.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of discipline, there has been a push for higher education institutions to encourage their undergraduate students to consider postgraduate education or become researchers for their nations; research experience as an undergraduate makes a candidate more competitive than a candidate without that type of experience and exposure, for both academic and industrial opportunities.<sup>2</sup> This emphasis on undergraduate research started gaining ground in the 1990s, and the natural sciences were quick to reform their curricula to include more undergraduate research opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Although the arts and humanities haven't completely ignored the push for undergraduate inclusion in research, it is proving to be a much slower uptake of the agenda in these disciplines than in the natural sciences.<sup>4</sup>

For the purposes of this project, “undergraduate research” refers to the definition by the Council on Undergraduate Research: “An inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.”<sup>5</sup> Undergraduate research differs from the work students do for class as it is something they pursue on their own, rather than having a research project assigned to them by a professor. Typically, in-class research projects are somewhat topic controlled, and therefore may not be as intriguing to

---

<sup>1</sup> See Boyer Commission 1998; Grobman and Kinkead 2010; Guterman 2007; Ishiyama 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Kerry Karukstis. “The Impact of Undergraduate Research on America’s Global Competitiveness.” *Journal of Chemical Education* 84, no. 6. (2007).

<sup>3</sup> See Katkin 2003; Kinkead 2003; Levenson 2010; Wilson 2003.

<sup>4</sup> See Levenson 2010; Wilson 2003.

<sup>5</sup> “About CUR: Mission Statement,” Council on Undergraduate Research, Accessed April 8, 2018, [https://www.cur.org/about\\_cur/](https://www.cur.org/about_cur/).

students as it could be. Pursuing undergraduate research allows a student to explore a topic they find more intriguing and provides a more inspiring learning environment.

The scholarship surrounding undergraduate research over the last two decades provides some insight into how the apparatus of undergraduate research has evolved and grown since the 1990s. Based on my analysis, I've identified three trends within the research and scholarship about undergraduate research: 1. The institutionalization of undergraduate research as an apparatus; 2. The benefits and shortcomings of undergraduate research for students and faculty alike; and 3. Various systems approaches to undergraduate research at higher education institutions. These trends appear chronologically in the scholarship.

To gain a more detailed understanding of the national landscape of undergraduate research in the humanities as it stands today, I've also conducted interviews with various academic administrators at universities across the nation including: Dr. Alan Rieck, Assistant Vice President and Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education at Pennsylvania State University; Dr. Iain Crawford, President-elect of the Council on Undergraduate Research and Director of Undergraduate Research Programs at the University of Delaware; Dr. Sean Burns, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarships at the University of California, Berkeley; and Dr. Holly Rivers, Associate Director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. In the future, I would like to conduct several more interviews and learn about the undergraduate research programs at more universities, specifically what universities are doing in order to encourage more arts and humanities students to pursue and become involved with research on their own both with and without the encouragement of faculty mentorship.

To complete this first step in what I hope will one day expand into a larger project, I also completed a brief case study of Virginia Tech's opportunities for undergraduate researchers in the humanities. I spoke with the undergraduate research coordinator in the Office of Undergraduate Research about how she sees undergraduate research evolving on Virginia Tech's campus, and I also relied on my own personal experiences with research as a humanities undergraduate: I served as editor-in-chief for a humanities-based research journal for two years, completed a research seminar for undergraduates who have returned from study abroad programs, and conducted my own undergraduate research.

## **Literature Review**

To gain a sense of the attitudes and conclusions about the apparatus of undergraduate research as it stands today, I will give a brief overview of some of the scholarship on the subject. This is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to scholarship on this subject, and for the purposes of this project my aim is to provide the most influential and/or seminal pieces of scholarship in this brief literature review. While examining the scholarship, I identified three main, chronological movements in the scholarship: the institutionalization of undergraduate research, the benefits and shortcomings of this institutionalization, and current systems approaches to creating undergraduate research programs at universities across the nation.

### ***Institutionalization of Undergraduate Research***

The real "boom" in the emphasis on undergraduate research came in the early 2000s. Articles written then suggest a growing need for the "institutionalization" of undergraduate research—the need for regulations. These pieces of scholarship were written as a response to the 1998 Boyer Commission Report. This report revitalized the need to invest in the undergraduate student and encouraged higher education research institutions to revamp their undergraduate

education programs. The mission of the Boyer Commission Report was to “stimulate new debate about the nature of undergraduate education in research universities that will produce widespread and sweeping reform.”<sup>6</sup> The report suggests that a new model for undergraduate education is needed that makes research an integral part of the curriculum: “There needs to be a symbiotic relationship between all the participants in university learning that will provide a new kind of undergraduate experience available *only* at research institutions.”<sup>7</sup> The report advocates for research institutions as being unique from other higher education institutions; providing undergraduate students a research experience they would not be able to get at a non-research institution, thereby increasing the competitiveness of both applicants and other, “rival” institutions.

Following the Boyer Commission Report, a volume of essays edited by Joyce Kinhead was published in 2003 that pushed for the institutionalization of undergraduate research in higher education through several different lenses inspired by the report. This collection of essays provides insight into the initial push for the development of undergraduate research in the humanities, presenting an in-depth argument through the various essays. In Wendy Katkin’s essay, for example, she credits the Boyer Commission Report for being the catalyst for the reformation in undergraduate education, being the source that many higher education institutions have used to enable change. Katkin argues that this report set in motion a “...rethinking and experimentation [that] have occurred in the curricular, pedagogical, and social arenas...”<sup>8</sup>

In Kinhead’s own essay, she provides a definition for undergraduate research and explores ways that universities can institutionalize undergraduate research into their curricula.

---

<sup>6</sup> Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University. *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities*. (New York: State University of New York at Stony Brook for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1998), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Boyer Commission, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education*, 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> Wendy Katkin, “The Boyer Commission Report and Its Impact on Undergraduate Research.” *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 93. (2003): 35.

Kinkead aims to rectify misconceptions about undergraduate research as only being for the sciences.<sup>9</sup> Kinkead's article serves as a jumping off point for any higher education administrators who wish to more permanently implement undergraduate research into their institutions. Kinkead argues that faculty members at institutions across the nation should be credited as those who saved undergraduates from neglect by including them in their own research.<sup>10</sup> Kinkead kicks off the deeper look into undergraduate research as a whole, encouraging its institutionalization.

In 2002, John Ishiyama wrote a short article examining the practicalities of humanities undergraduates performing and participating in research and how it impacts their educational experiences. Ishiyama argues that there has been a lot of work done on the development of the general student through undergraduate research, but not a lot done on the development of the humanities and social sciences students who are conducting research in these fields.<sup>11</sup> He points out that there has been "a considerable amount of literature"<sup>12</sup> on how research helps undergraduate students in general, but this literature has been about those students who study the natural sciences. Importantly, Ishiyama looked into how participation in research aided the development of an undergraduate student's skills, rather than just the student retention rate or graduate school placement, which most previous research had done before.<sup>13</sup>

In Reed Wilson's short article "Researching 'Undergraduate Research' in the Humanities," he enters into the gap that existed between researching and teaching for professors at higher education institutions. Wilson believes there is a way to "make 'research' part of undergraduate education, and undergraduate education part of research" without overworking the

---

<sup>9</sup> Joyce Kinkead, "Learning Through Inquiry: An Overview of Undergraduate Research," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 93. (2003): 6.

<sup>10</sup> Kinkead, "Learning Through Inquiry," 9.

<sup>11</sup> John Ishiyama, "Does Early Participation in Undergraduate Research Benefit Social Science and Humanities Students?," *College Student Journal* 36, no. 3. (2002): 380.

<sup>12</sup> Ishiyama, "Does Early Participation."

<sup>13</sup> Ishiyama, "Does Early Participation," 381.

professors providing both to undergraduates.<sup>14</sup> In this article, Wilson explores “re-envisioning” mentoring for students because undergraduates approach faculty without *really* knowing what research is.<sup>15</sup> Wilson’s most significant point is that including the young minds of undergraduate researchers may help faculty’s research in more ways than one “and may in fact provide us with far more ‘research assistance’ than we ever imagined.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Benefits and Shortcomings of Institutionalized Undergraduate Research***

After undergraduate research began to be institutionalized, scholars started analyzing the benefits and shortcomings of this new learning apparatus. The phenomena of undergraduate research produced many inquiries, including interest from less scholarly sources—Lila Guterman’s 2007 article “What good is undergraduate research, anyway?”, where the author analyzes the practice of institutional undergraduate research and whether or not it is working, suggests a popular, surface-level interest in the system of undergraduate research and how to make it more successful for the students participating in it.<sup>17</sup>

One large ethical question that arose from the institutionalization of undergraduate research concerned authorship. Laurie Grobman explored this by looking at the role of student researchers and scholars in the rhetoric and composition field. With the implementation of undergraduate research as a practice in higher education curricula, the issue of whether or not the students producing original research are taken seriously and how credible they are as researchers arose. Grobman explains that in her article she wanted to “focus on the potential for student scholars to obtain authorship and authority through participation in undergraduate research,”

---

<sup>14</sup> Reed Wilson, “Researching ‘Undergraduate Research’ in the Humanities,” *Modern Language Association* 33, no. 1/2. (2003): 74.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson, “Researching,” 76.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, “Researching,” 79.

<sup>17</sup> Lila Guterman. “What good is undergraduate research, anyway?” *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Last modified August 17, 2007. <http://chronicle.com/article/What-Good-Is-Undergraduate/6927>.

because she sees this as “a potentially democratic learning site in which students write themselves into disciplinary conversations and challenge faculty/scholar-constructed representations of them.”<sup>18</sup> In order to do this without undermining the authority of the faculty, Grobman argues that authorship should be viewed as being a continuum, and that undergraduate students should be considered “scholars-in-process.”<sup>19</sup> Grobman acknowledges one of the largest concerns coming out of the undergraduate research institutionalization: the scholarly identity being transformed into something less authoritative once undergraduates are allowed to participate in these scholarly conversations.<sup>20</sup> Grobman believes that by viewing authorship as a continuum, there is a way to maintain authority without creating a restrictive binary between mentor and undergraduate scholar.<sup>21</sup> She also points out that, “By naming them as students and understanding scholarly authority as relational, we may ascribe different levels of authority to student texts without dichotomizing authority as all or nothing.”<sup>22</sup>

Another issue at hand with the institutionalization and increasing prevalence of undergraduate research as an integral part to the higher education curricula: the workload this puts on the faculty to become successful and engaging mentors to undergraduate students. Reed Wilson briefly addressed this early on, but Eileen Cooley, Amber Garcia, and Jennifer Hughes look at this issue thoroughly in their article concerning undergraduate research in psychology. The authors point out that the interference that mentoring undergraduates creates with a faculty mentor’s personal scholarship “is particularly problematic as faculty scholarship criteria are

---

<sup>18</sup> Laurie Grobman. “The Student Scholar: (Re)Negotiating Authorship and Authority.” *College Composition and Communication* 61, no.1. (2009): 176.

<sup>19</sup> Grobman, “The Student Scholar,” 177.

<sup>20</sup> Grobman, “The Student Scholar.”

<sup>21</sup> Grobman, “The Student Scholar,” 185.

<sup>22</sup> Grobman, “The Student Scholar,” 186.

increasingly emphasized for tenure and promotion.”<sup>23</sup> The benefits and importance of undergraduate research continues to be emphasized; however, the pressures on faculty to continue to publish their own original work to gain tenure and establish their position in their own scholarly fields make it hard to convince some to focus just as much on the development of their students as researchers. The authors assert that this makes faculty hesitant to take on the additional labor of mentoring undergraduate researchers: “Therefore, there is clearly a need to identify how our undergraduate research options can be structured to meet research goals for both faculty and students.”<sup>24</sup>

One other side to undergraduate research concerns how the experience is affecting the students’ futures. Both Kerry Karukstis’s and Susan Russell, Mary Hancock, and James McCullough’s pieces of scholarship look at the benefits in terms of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, yet the outcomes they find can be applied to undergraduate research in any field. In their article, Russell and her fellow researchers found that students who participated in undergraduate research from a younger age were more likely to move on and get higher degrees in the field—so long as enthusiasm for the topic was instilled in the students by their mentors throughout the whole process.<sup>25</sup> With these graduate degrees, students often go on to enter the professional scholarship field and routinely produce their own original research.

Karukstis briefly examines how “Participation in undergraduate research with a faculty mentor is well acknowledged as a contributor to student retention in undergraduate studies and as a valuable mechanism to direct students toward specific career paths.”<sup>26</sup> Karukstis applauds the

---

<sup>23</sup> Eileen L. Cooley, Amber L. Garcia, and Jennifer L. Hughes. “Undergraduate Research in Psychology at Liberal Arts Colleges: Reflections on Mutual Benefits for Faculty and Students.” *North American Journal of Psychology* 10, no. 3. (2008): 464.

<sup>24</sup> Cooley et al., “Undergraduate Research.”

<sup>25</sup> Susan H. Russell, Mary P. Hancock, and James McCullough. “Benefits of Undergraduate Research Experiences.” *Science* 316, no. 5824. (2007): 549.

<sup>26</sup> Karukstis, “The Impact,” 912.

efforts of institutions for successfully implementing research into undergraduates' experience: "As a consequence of the success of this form of pedagogy, institutions have embraced research as a valued part of an undergraduate curriculum and thereby propelled undergraduate research to national prominence as an effective educational strategy."<sup>27</sup> Karukstis points out that for the United States to be able to produce quality, experienced researchers, the country increases its global competitiveness as a leading research nation.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Systems Approaches to Undergraduate Research***

The most recent scholarship surrounding undergraduate research concerns how various institutions are implementing undergraduate research into their curricular methods, and whether or not those approaches are successful in their intent. There are some pockets of recent scholarship for specific fields in the humanities who feel they have some catching up to do. In answer to the findings, several publications of "systems approaches" to undergraduate research—where specific institutions lay out the groundwork and details for their own undergraduate research offices and organizations, offering tips and suggestions for institutions who would like to catch up—have recently emerged as an area of scholarship.

Mitchell Malachowski and his fellow editors summed up the field of undergraduate research as it stands in 2015 in their volume of essays that is specifically about systems approaches for undergraduate research at various institutions across the nation. In their introduction, the editors point out that "Although the positive outcomes of undergraduate research are now well documented, its practice is still far from universal."<sup>29</sup> In an attempt to offer suggestions for

---

<sup>27</sup> Karukstis, "The Impact."

<sup>28</sup> Karukstis, "The Impact."

<sup>29</sup> Mitchell Malachowski, Jeffrey M. Osborn, Kerry K. Karukstis, and Elizabeth L. Ambos, eds. Editor's Notes to *Enhancing and Expanding Undergraduate Research: A Systems Approach*. Vol. 169 of *New Directions for Higher Education*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 1.

rectifying the missing universality of undergraduate research practices, this volume of success stories from campuses that have institutionalized undergraduate research serves as a guidebook for various higher education institutions to learn from and make their own decisions about how to move forward with an apparatus on their own campuses.

While Malachowski's volume focuses on undergraduate broadly to encompass all disciplines, Cathy Levenson makes the distinction between STEM and the humanities, being one of the first scholars to raise the issue of the humanities not adapting to the changing undergraduate research landscape as fast as other disciplines. She makes it clear that humanities fields need just as much attention as STEM fields.<sup>30</sup> She suggests ways to successfully integrate humanities students into the impressive and encouraging process of undergraduate research institutionalization.<sup>31</sup> Levenson addresses one of the main issues with getting undergraduate humanities students doing their own research: this type of research is usually tangential from their faculty mentor's research and thus becomes time-consuming and unhelpful for the mentor. So, Levenson argues, faculty must bring undergraduates in to perform the grunt work—like indexing and copyediting—of their own research, despite hesitation from faculty.<sup>32</sup> To end her brief overview, Levenson makes her most impactful point yet: “A successful undergraduate research program requires a faculty committed to undergraduate education and a university administration willing to make the investment in the training of its students outside of the classroom.”<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these pieces of scholarship that provide somewhat broad overviews of undergraduate research, there have been several scholars looking into specific instances of

---

<sup>30</sup> Cathy Levenson. “Enhancing Undergraduate Research in the Arts and the Humanities.” *Peer Review* 12, no. 2. (2010): 13.

<sup>31</sup> Levenson, “Enhancing Undergraduate Research.”

<sup>32</sup> Levenson, “Enhancing Undergraduate Research.”

<sup>33</sup> Levenson, “Enhancing Undergraduate Research.”

undergraduate research—whether it be a specific field’s approach, or how undergraduate research is benefitting something specific outside of itself. Most recently, scholars have been looking into how undergraduate research can benefit fields outside of academia. Dean Van Galen and his fellow scholars considered how undergraduate research impacts economic development. By looking at this aspect through the frame of a specific undergraduate research program at the University of Wisconsin, the scholars provided a framework for other institutions to follow, if they so desire. The authors assert that:

Higher education is now expected to do more than produce well-educated, career-ready graduates. Today, expectations often include producing graduates in high-need areas, providing expertise to the private sector, engaging in university-business partnerships, technology transfer, and new business creation.<sup>34</sup>

Other researchers have looked into how undergraduate research is approached in specific humanities fields: Christopher Corley looked at how it is being approached in the field of history. Corley points out that the humanities fields have been slow to adapt to the undergraduate research phenomenon: “Despite the increased interest in undergraduate research across the United States, humanists generally, and historians more specifically, have been slow to provide leadership in the movement.”<sup>35</sup> Corley makes many of the same points that scholars who have also written about undergraduate research broadly make: it’s integral to a student’s undergraduate experience and it does not have to be detrimental to a faculty member’s own professional development.<sup>36</sup>

Laurie Grobman and Joyce Kinkead addressed similar issues in their introduction to the volume of articles they edited concerning undergraduate research in English studies. The editors hope to spread the knowledge of the growing field of undergraduate research in English studies

---

<sup>34</sup> Van Galen et al., “Undergraduate Research.”

<sup>35</sup> Christopher R. Corley. “From Mentoring to Collaborating: Fostering Undergraduate Research in History.” *The History Teacher* 46, no. 3. (2013): 397.

<sup>36</sup> Corley, “From Mentoring,” 402.

and provide some guidance for those who aren't sure where to start.<sup>37</sup> By sharing these practices, the editors hope to stimulate growth and unity in the practice: "Although the movement may be fragmented at the moment, we are clearly on the cusp of implementation in all subfields of English throughout our various institutions."<sup>38</sup> The same two scholars continue to make this same point of the growing usefulness of undergraduate research in the field of English studies in their article "Expanding Opportunities for Undergraduate Research in English Studies." Here, they argue that they "...foresee English studies taking a leading role in undergraduate research, despite its slow start."<sup>39</sup>

The past two decades have seen immense changes in the way undergraduate research is approached in the United States. The scholarship surrounding undergraduate research largely praises its implementation into undergraduate curricula, while pointing out that the pedagogical practice still has a long way to go before it is as impactful as it can be. To continue this investigation into undergraduate research, I've examined higher education institutions across the nation by way of interviewing administrators heavily involved with undergraduate research opportunities and experiences.

### **Analysis of Interviews Conducted**

My investigation into the scholarship surrounding undergraduate research in the humanities indicated that most scholars came to the same conclusion: undergraduate students should be exposed to some sort of research experience in order to be more competitive candidates in their future career paths, academic or industrial. The scholarship suggested that all universities should

---

<sup>37</sup> Grobman, "Introduction," x.

<sup>38</sup> Grobman, "Introduction."

<sup>39</sup> Joyce Kinkead and Laurie Grobman. "Expanding Opportunities for Undergraduate Research in English Studies." *Profession*. (2011): 227.

provide the resources necessary for their students to become involved with research and complete their own research projects. This led me to ask whether or not universities across the nation were adhering to the scholarship's general advice. In order to gain a better understanding of the current national landscape of undergraduate research, I interviewed four administrators at higher education institutions across the nation about their undergraduate research programs and their efforts to bring more humanities students into the fold of undergraduate research.

These administrators were Dr. Alan Rieck, Assistant Vice President and Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Education at Pennsylvania State University; Dr. Iain Crawford, Director of the Undergraduate Research Program at the University of Delaware and the President-elect of the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR); Dr. Sean Burns, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarships at the University of California, Berkeley; and Dr. Holly Rivers, Associate Director for the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. All four of these administrators were excited to speak with me about this topic—as it was typically in their wheelhouse and what they were passionate about at their respective universities—eager to share with me the initiatives their institutions are taking to promote undergraduate research not only in the humanities, but across all disciplines of study, in progressive ways that will be beneficial to these students as they move through their careers.

The four universities represented all have their own version of an undergraduate research office, which serves as somewhat of a governing body for all undergraduate research at the university. At Penn State, most colleges and/or departments have their own office for undergraduate research. Dr. Rieck described it as being one of the most decentralized places he's ever worked, but he's impressed with the great successes he's seen with this approach. Because there are so many colleges and campuses that make up Penn State, that gives the smaller subsets the ability to

improve their approaches to undergraduate research and attempt to incorporate them into the curriculum. Dr. Rieck has seen departments like biology, and other natural sciences, do this the most successfully because those students and professors are typically more accustomed to writing grants and research requests—the research projects in the natural sciences are inherently collaborative, making it a bit easier to incorporate research into the curriculum. Although, Dr. Rieck does not mean to say that the humanities are failing on this front; the field just seems to be slower on the uptake and immediate success. The University of California, Berkeley seems to be taking a similar approach: they have a general Office for Undergraduate Research and Scholarships (OURS), but it mainly serves as a centralized location for information available. According to Dr. Burns, there are several departments that have undergraduate curricular requirements for engagement with research, but there are no requirements to go through or work with OURS—the students working with OURS go to the office on their own accord. Dr. Burns believes that participating in undergraduate research is one of the smartest and most tactful things an undergraduate student can do today and is encouraged by the number of students who do go into the OURS looking to begin their undergraduate research journey.

Before his time at the University of Delaware, Dr. Crawford worked at Wooster College which had a very innovative approach to undergraduate research: every student was required to complete a senior thesis, and it was something students worked towards all four years of their undergraduate careers. The college had the process structured in such a way that certain milestones in the research project were completed at the end of each academic year, culminating in an original senior thesis that students could use to apply to graduate schools, typically as writing samples. This provided students with a comprehensive understanding of the entire research process, but also with the proven skills to complete a long-term project and maintain quality

throughout. There is also a senior capstone at the University of Notre Dame through the Kellogg Institute. At Notre Dame, an International Development minor has been created, and part of the curriculum requirements is for these students to complete a 6-week project in the field. In order to prepare the students for their senior capstones and fieldwork experiences, there is a Research Methods course that these students must take—but it's open to students across all fields of study. In this course, students learn how to write grant proposals, how to develop research questions, what audiences to consider, etc. Because of this class (and other undergraduate research initiatives across campus), Dr. Rivers has seen an incredible increase in the quality of these student researchers.

All of the administrators I spoke with over the course of these last two semesters all had one general theme: the vocational world is changing, and academia needs to change with it. In addition to the scholarship pointing towards including undergraduate research across disciplinary curricula, the current job climate expects candidates to have certain skillsets as they're applying for jobs. It is no longer the case that someone will completely train a new hire after they start—companies hire graduates who have the most well-rounded and comprehensive experiences. The same is true for graduate schools: in order to be considered a serious applicant, a student's undergraduate experience needs to feature much more than just attending class and writing seminar papers. Dr. Burns believes that term and seminar papers just don't quite cut it in terms of having actually engaged with research. The professors grading these term papers are largely concerned with the results and final project, and less concerned with the research process that took place. This isn't serving humanities students in the way they need to be prepared for entering life after graduation. Dr. Rivers has seen an increase in the quality produced by her students after the implementation of classes and programs aimed at developing students as researchers. She says that

this increased quality arms students for interviews by showing that they've taken the initiative to go through the program and grow as learners as researchers; she believes that initiative is a quality that most employers and hiring managers will be looking for when seeking stand-out candidates, and research experiences provides that.

As mentioned, Dr. Rieck said that he seems to be seeing the natural sciences revamping their curricula to include undergraduate research at much faster rates than the humanities. Given Dr. Crawford's role with CUR, I was interested in his thoughts on why the humanities are slower to change than other disciplines. He speculates that there is an internalized attitude in some humanities faculty that isn't conducive to making undergraduate research widely available to humanities students—Dr. Crawford believes that the faculty are the biggest challenge to undergraduate research in the humanities at the moment. Within humanities fields, scholars still seem to be wed to a certain model of labor and hierarchical structure that work produced is only widely credible if the researcher has received their Ph.D. This is an issue that Grobman addresses in her piece about authorship—who is a credible researcher, and who can produce original research?<sup>40</sup> This inability to let go of that hierarchical structure demonstrates, Dr. Crawford believes, how humanities faculty are primarily concerned with the product, when for the undergraduates it should primarily be about the learning experience. In many ways, the product should come second to the learning experience. Dr. Crawford thinks that the reason the humanities are slower than the natural sciences to revamp the undergraduate research approach is because the discipline is slow to catch up with the learning experience understanding and is resistant to anything feeling “corporate.” Dr. Crawford insists that humanities undergraduates have just as much to contribute

---

<sup>40</sup> Grobman, “The Student Scholar,” 177.

as humanities faculties and scholars, and that the humanities need to be as inclusive of all levels of colleagues as the natural sciences seem to have done.

Despite the incorporation of undergraduate research into the humanities curriculum not being as smooth as in the natural sciences, Dr. Crawford has seen an increase in the interest from arts and humanities students to get involved with undergraduate research and begin the process on their own. To help with this, CUR has taken large steps in an effort to encourage more humanities undergraduates to become involved with research. They've redeveloped their conference structure in order to create as many opportunities for a wide variety of students as possible, created an Arts and Humanities division about 10 years ago, and have developed institutes for humanities faculty to attend and learn about how to encourage an active engagement with research in their classrooms. In addition to all of this, CUR has several publications that serve as "how-to" guides for those institutions or departments who do not yet have their own equivalent of an undergraduate research office and are eager to create one and begin working with students to create the most beneficial atmosphere possible.

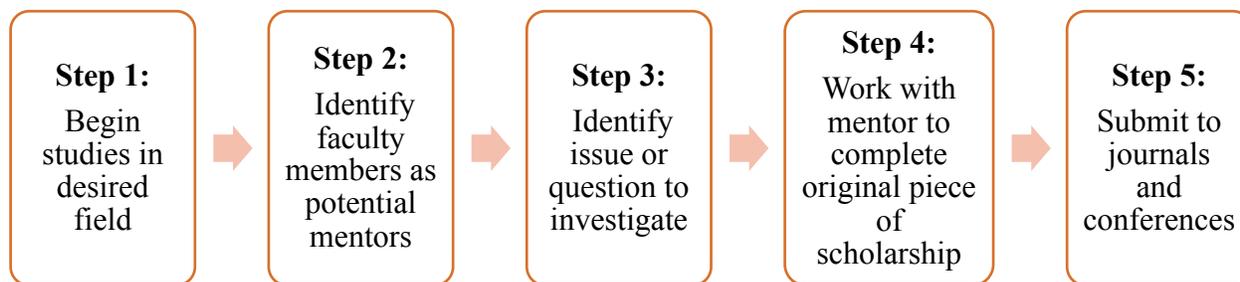
Table 1 illustrates the differences between the four institutions of which I've provided a brief overview. In addition to these four institutions, I included Wooster College—where Dr. Crawford worked before the University of Delaware—because Dr. Crawford did provide some insight into how undergraduate research worked at that institution. I also included Virginia Tech in this chart; there is a detailed case study of Virginia Tech's undergraduate research opportunities in the next section of this paper. This table is not comprehensive and only provides the major components of an institution's available opportunities.

**Table 1: National Undergraduate Research (UGR) Opportunities**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Interviewee Name and Title</b>	<b>UGR Offices Available*</b>	<b>Classes Offered/Curricular Requirements?</b>	<b>Publication venues and/or conferences?</b>
<b>Pennsylvania State University</b>	<b>Dr. Alan Rieck</b> ; Assistant Vice President and Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education	Most colleges and/or departments have their own offices for UGR; Student Engagement Network	Some departments and programs have curricular requirements that aren't mandated by university; One satellite campus dedicated to every student having UGR experience	Undergraduate Exhibit; Summer Grant Program; Funding available for outside conferences
<b>University of Delaware</b>	<b>Dr. Iain Crawford</b> ; Director of Undergraduate Research Programs & President-elect of CUR	UGR Programs; Summer programs	Senior Thesis classes (UNIV 401 & 402); Some departments have curricular requirements that aren't mandated by university	UGR and Service Scholar Celebratory Symposium; Funding available for outside conferences
<b>Wooster College</b>	<b>Dr. Iain Crawford</b> ; was Vice President of Academic Affairs	Sophomore Research Program; Applied Methods and Research Experience	Senior thesis; milestones for thesis reached at the end of each academic year (i.e.: 4-year project)	Senior Research Symposium; Funding available for outside conferences
<b>University of California, Berkeley</b>	<b>Dr. Sean Burns</b> ; Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarships	Office of UGR and Scholarships (OURS); UGR Apprentice Program; several departments have their own office or curricular requirements.	Some departments and programs have curricular requirements that aren't mandated by university	Funding available for outside conferences/opportunities; At least 11 Berkeley-funded scholarly publications.
<b>University of Notre Dame</b>	<b>Dr. Holly Rivers</b> ; Associate Director of the Kellogg Institute	Kellogg Institute for International Studies; Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts; Flatley Center for UG Scholarly Engagement	Senior capstone for International Development minor; 6-week fieldwork project; "Research Methods" course	Human Development Conference; Funding available for outside conferences
<b>Virginia Tech</b>	<b>Keri Swaby</b> ; University Undergraduate Research Coordinator	Office of UGR (OUR); UGR Institute	Study Abroad Research Seminar; Some departments and programs have curricular requirements that aren't mandated by university	<i>Philologia</i> ; some departmental publications; Student Experiential Learning Conference; funding available for outside conferences

\*It is not necessarily required for undergraduate students to go through these offices when pursuing research. These are just what are available to them, should they wish to use them.

Using information from my interviews I've determined a general timeline (Figure 1) for the undergraduate research process, applicable to various higher education institutions:



**Figure 1: General UGR Timeline**

Regardless of the university, this is generally what the administrators described as being the process for their undergraduate researchers over the course of their undergraduate career (typically four years). Of course, there are some steps not represented in this timeline; for example, students would likely approach whatever office of undergraduate research is available to them between steps 1 and 2, if they so desire. A more detailed timeline can be found in the next section of this paper.

Everyone I spoke to for this project gave me many resources and examples of the type of work being produced and opportunities offered at their respective universities, but analyzing these resources goes beyond the scope of this project. In the future I would like to delve into these specific examples and analyze the type of work that's been done across the nation by undergraduate students and determine whether or not these institutions are meeting the quasi-standards set out by the Boyer Commission Report two decades ago, and whether or not they have begun to evolve the standards and/or developing their own.

## **Undergraduate Research in the Humanities at Virginia Tech: A Brief Case Study**

Having surveyed the national landscape of undergraduate research in the humanities, I'd like to take a closer look at Virginia Tech and see how its approaches compare to these other universities. As an undergraduate student in the Department of English at Virginia Tech, I was fortunate to have many experiences with undergraduate research. In addition to completing my own undergraduate research, I also served as the editor-in-chief for an undergraduate research journal that was exclusively for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS). I was also a part of an undergraduate research seminar during my first semester as a graduate student, where I heard about how the undergraduates in that seminar had learned about the opportunities available to them, and their own experiences with undergraduate research.

To accompany those personal experiences in this section of my project, I also spoke with the undergraduate research coordinator in the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) at Virginia Tech, Keri Swaby. I had the chance to ask Ms. Swaby about her experiences with the OUR, how she has seen the office change since joining the staff, and the resources that are available to humanities students at this STEM-inclined university.

### ***Personal Undergraduate Research***

As a senior undergraduate, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to collaborate with a linguistics professor on a research project. I began my relationship with this professor as a sophomore, having been enrolled in one of her introductory courses for linguistics. After that first course, I was in at least one of her classes for each of my remaining semesters. The summer before my senior year, this professor reached out to me with an opening to be her research assistant.

I began working that fall to help her own personal research by running experiments and transcribing interviews. Early into the semester, she approached me with a new research topic

that she would like to pursue but didn't quite have the time available that was required to be a sole primary researcher. This is how I happened into my personal undergraduate research experience: by meeting a professor early on, building the relationship and proving my work ethic and dedication, gaining her trust, and being handed a topic she thought I may be interested in and didn't have time for herself—somewhat representative of steps 1, 2, and 3 in Figure 1. I was extremely fortunate in this sequence of events, and it is certainly not the path for most of the students who are in the Department of English, at least. My own experience with undergraduate research speaks to Levenson's argument that undergraduate researchers in the humanities often acquire projects that are tangential to their faculty mentors'.<sup>41</sup> However, also relating to Levenson's work, I did receive this opportunity by doing the “grunt work” for my professor's research by running experiments and transcribing. By doing that kind of work initially, I was first introduced to the tedious and lengthy aspects of linguistics research, which gave me a greater appreciation for my own research as a whole. Having undergraduates become involved with these more tedious aspects of the research process is foundational and serves as scaffolding for the student in order for them to go on and do the more substantive work of the advanced stages of a research process.

Linguistics at Virginia Tech is a relatively new field of study, with a minor for “Language Sciences” only being introduced within the last five years. At this university, linguistics is housed in the Department of English (rather than the Department of Psychology, like it is at many other universities, if not an entire department on its own). Because of this, I was able to take advantage of some resources available to all humanities students, but of which not many of these students were taking advantage. For example, I had the opportunity to attend the

---

<sup>41</sup> Levenson, “Enhancing Undergraduate Research,” 13.

Georgetown University Roundtable Conference for linguists in March of 2017 to present my research, and I received full funding from the university via a one-time undergraduate research grant from the Undergraduate Research Institute (housed in the CLAHS) to do so. As a humanities student, I was able to apply for this grant and not many other students could or were applying for it—I speculate that this is largely because, as mentioned, undergraduate humanities research is typically tangential from a faculty member’s own research, and therefore not exactly what most conferences are looking for when it comes to undergraduates’ individual research. Of course, being chosen to receive a grant boiled down to the quality of my request for funding and the committee’s belief in my capabilities as a researcher, but it never hurts to be a part of a small applicant pool when the university has money they want to (and sometimes need to for budgetary reasons) give to students as educational aid.

I was also fortunate enough to have my work published in *Philologia: Undergraduate Research Journal for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences*, an in-house Virginia Tech publication. I’ll speak more to *Philologia* and its mission in the next section, but the journal prides itself on publishing research by undergraduates who represent the diversity of the departments in the CLAHS. As I was part of the initial body of students who began taking linguistics classes and performing linguistics research, there had not yet been many, if any, papers from the field published in the journal. I suspect this lent to the acceptability of my submission, setting aside the quality of the research itself (which is, of course, still a factor for submission).

I am grateful for the opportunities I had as an undergraduate researcher in the humanities, but I know that the opportunities I had are not presented to many other humanities students here at Virginia Tech, at least in the Department of English. While there are some opportunities for students to complete an independent study with professors of their choice, there is a certain

responsibility that lies with the professor to inform their students about available grants, conferences, and publishing prospects. Personally, I had a professor who was very encouraging in getting me to attend the conference, figured out which grants I could apply for, and helped me write the request in a professional way.

To better illustrate the various routes a student's undergraduate research journey could look like, Figure 2 represents a more detailed timeline:

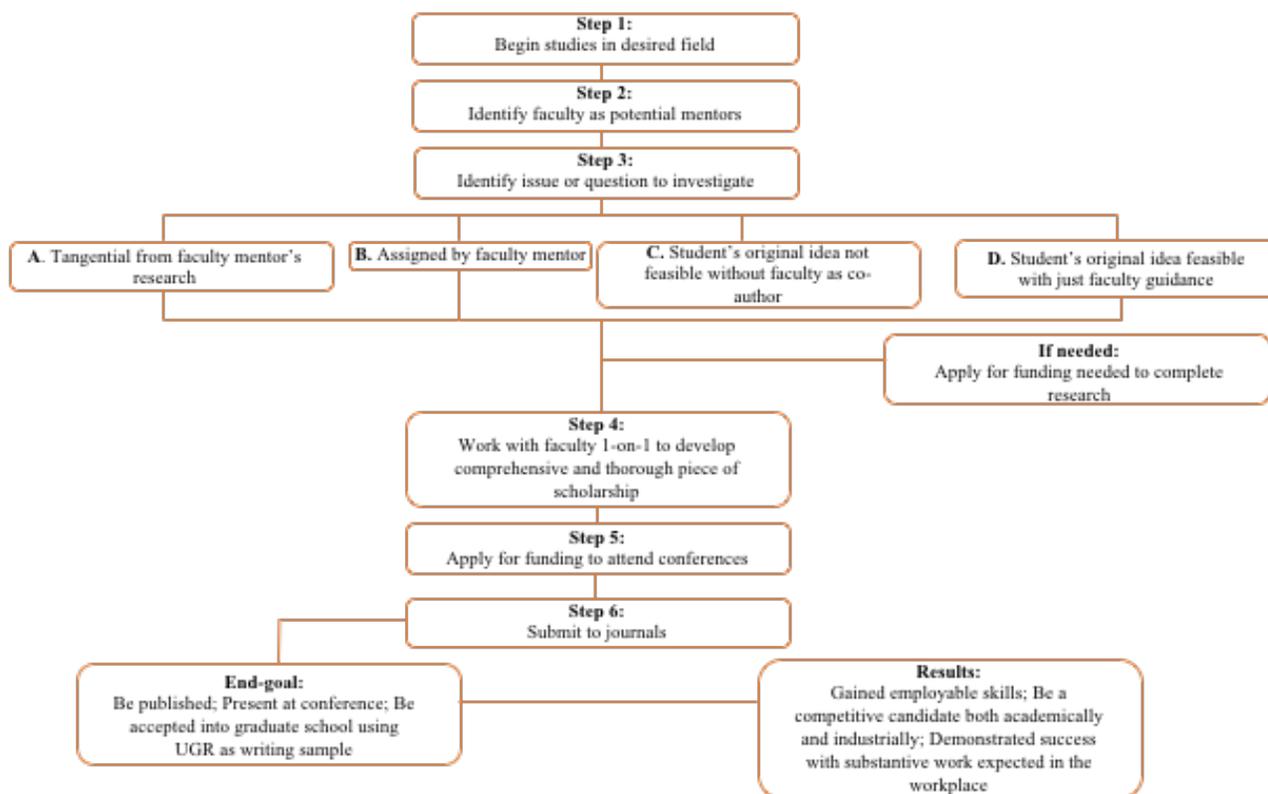


Figure 2: Detailed UGR Timeline

### ***Publishing Undergraduate Research: Philologia Experience***

For the majority of my undergraduate career (sophomore, junior, and senior years), I was a member of the student editorial staff of the CLAHS's premier undergraduate research journal: *Philologia*. I served as the editor-in-chief my last two years, and through this position I learned

more about how the CLAHS works, how projects are funded, and what needs to be a priority when it comes to representation of undergraduate research in the humanities.

When I first assumed the role of editor-in-chief, the journal was at risk of being written out of the budget; there were several faculty changes, and these changes had left no one in charge of the journal itself. I had to work with administrators in the college to prove to them that *Philologia* was vital to not only my and all of the other student editors' undergraduate experience, but also vital to the undergraduate researchers in terms of getting their work published and boosting their academic credibility. I was successful and allowed to resurrect the journal in time to not skip a year of publication and serve not only the student editors and researchers, but also the CLAHS. *Philologia* has been continually used as a promotional tool for the college at freshmen orientations and prospective student information sessions. The college sends out the journal to distinguished alumni and donors, to keep these community members informed about all that is happening in the college today, and also highlight exceptional students and perhaps provide them with opportunities beyond their undergraduate careers through alumni networking.

Soon after taking over the editor-in-chief position, I learned how many college administrators and faculty were involved with the journal and how many connections were needed across the university to create a successful publication. To release the publication each year, a celebration is held where important members of both the CLAHS and overall university administration are invited, as well as students and members of the public. Not only is this event used to promote that year's specific publication, but also to inform as many members of the university and CLAHS as possible that this publication exists, is prestigious in the college, and is something that all undergraduate researchers in the humanities should consider. I quickly learned that the journal is something really only produced by the work of a few students, but that is used by high-

level administrators and faculty across the college—who may or may not have been at all helpful in the production of the journal itself—as a tool to prove the college’s educational standards and worth.

By working on the more administrative side of the journal, I was exposed to the amount of work needed in order to inform humanities students about the opportunities available to them. A good portion of humanities students are unaware of this publishing opportunity. During my tenure as editor-in-chief, I worked very hard at promoting the journal and all that we do in order to encourage as many undergraduates in the humanities to engage in research as possible. Through my work with *Philologia*, I’ve come to firmly believe that students are more motivated to consider undergraduate research as a viable option so long as they can see what kind of “reward” they will receive at the end of their process, rather than just their consolidated and written-up findings or results. The presence of *Philologia* on this campus indicates to humanities students that there will always be the chance to be published—while it may not be in a more prestigious, trade journal, at least it’s published in a respected journal of the university. Publication is the end-goal of many researchers’ projects, and for undergraduates it is intimidating to submit to larger research journals that many graduate students and professors submit to and are more likely to be published in. *Philologia* presents itself as a more accessible resource for these undergraduate researchers. The journal is a form of reassurance for these undergraduates who are serious about becoming professional researchers and are interested in taking the necessary steps to achieve their career goals.

### ***Undergraduate Research Seminar***

Graduate students at Virginia Tech are permitted to take up to 6 hours of undergraduate courses for credit. My first semester as a graduate student I took an undergraduate research seminar called “There and Back Again: Writing, Research, and Study Abroad” where students who

have completed a study abroad trip gather and work on independent research projects. At the end of the semester, the class held a “research symposium” where students invited family members, friends, advisers, professors, and anyone else they wished to come watch the researchers’ presentation of their work and enjoy a reception. This symposium emulates a research conference—albeit on a very small scale—and gives these undergraduate researchers a taste of what it’s like to follow through a research project from the very beginning to the very end without having to worry about funding or travel. After the symposium and completion of the research articles, the students get together to organize and publish their own small “journal” containing all of the individual research papers, as well as one collaborative article written by everyone in the class. In this way, the entire course provides these undergraduate researchers a brief window into what it is like to be a professional scholar. Students from this course have gone on to polish their articles and submit to established research journals—the “There and Back Again” course likely gave them confidence in their individual research, and to take the initiative to submit to professional journals.

From my interviews with administrators at other colleges, it seems as though other universities have created courses for students who have participated in undergraduate research—like the University of Notre Dame’s “Research Methods” course. However, this “There and Back Again” seminar appears to be unique in its aims. I spoke with the professor, Jane Wemhoener, about why this course exists and what its purpose is, and she indicated that its main purpose is to give students an opportunity to go through an entire research process with as much guidance and support from peers as possible, while also giving them a new lens through which to view their experiences abroad.<sup>42</sup> Operating on a very small scale, this is a unique opportunity for

---

<sup>42</sup> Jane Wemhoener, conversation with author, March 27, 2018.

undergraduates to experience the research process without some of the distracting pressures of funding or potential journal submission that other venues of research can pose. The learning objectives are outlined in the course proposal, which Wemhoener shared with me; these objectives include: “Work independently on original research, engaging with university and international communities,” and “Plan, write, revise, and edit original research using formats suited for research conferences and oral presentations.”<sup>43</sup>

The proposal goes on to provide a short justification for the course, where Wemhoener highlights the department’s commitment “to internationalizing our curriculum” to meet “the university’s goal of providing all students with an international dimension to their VT education.”<sup>44</sup>

In this justification, Wemhoener emphasized the interdisciplinary aspect of the course:

By offering this course to majors from all departments, we permit collaboration among young researchers while we broaden and deepen both their understanding of their own fields and their academic intersections with the disciplines of their colleagues. We also ensure that students gain exposure to international, comparative, and global content, while engaging with academic communities on campus and abroad.<sup>45</sup>

The rhetoric used in this proposal is similar to that used on the website for CUR—answering the need for undergraduate students to work across disciplines and with their colleagues to create original research, with a chance for publication (in whatever capacity that may be). A quick search on Virginia Tech’s course catalogue suggests that this “There and Back Again” course is the only undergraduate research seminar available to such a broad range of students. When speaking casually with some students who have participated, they told me they found it to be one of the most engaging and helpful classes they’ve taken during their time as an undergraduate. A

---

<sup>43</sup> Jane Wemhoener, email to author containing course proposal, March 27, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Wemhoener, March 27, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Wemhoener, March 27, 2018

few of these students told me that it was a course they spoke about in various interviews for their future academic or career paths.

### ***Virginia Tech's Office of Undergraduate Research***

In 2011, the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) was created at Virginia Tech. The OUR is run at the university level: it is housed in the Provost's office and falls under the umbrella of undergraduate academic affairs. Much like the University of California, Berkeley's OURS, Virginia Tech's OUR serves as a centralized resource for undergraduates who wish to pursue research in some capacity, but just aren't sure how to get started or who to contact. The OUR can help students in any part of their research process, from announcing research opportunities to providing funding for students to attend conferences. To learn more about the OUR, I spoke with Virginia Tech's undergraduate research coordinator Keri Swaby. In this interview we discussed the changes that have taken place and what changes would help the students most, how the OUR mostly serves students, and the changing realm of undergraduate research.

At the moment, the OUR is one of two entities on Virginia Tech's campus that manages undergraduate research, the other being the Undergraduate Research Institute (URI) in the CLAHS. The URI precedes the OUR by several years, and the OUR modeled a few things after the URI, including their student ambassador program. Swaby explained that "the purpose of this office is [that] it's a service center" that works to connect faculty and students, answer any and all questions members of the university may have an "act as an agent to connect the pieces" that are involved with undergraduate research. Right now, the OUR is staffed by only Swaby and a group of undergraduate student ambassadors. As mentioned, this ambassador program was modeled after the student ambassadors of the URI. These student ambassadors are veterans of undergraduate research who serve as peer mentors for those students who want some guidance through the process.

In addition to finding and advertising research opportunities for students, the OUR also has a database for faculty to post opportunities they have for undergraduate students. Swaby is a fan of this approach for faculty and mentors; if a faculty member is new to the university and doesn't quite know their students yet, they can advertise there. Likewise, if an engineering professor, for example, needs a marketing student on the team, they likely don't know any and could use the database to recruit students outside of their own discipline. Swaby sees the OUR as a resource to help navigate the research process with students and guide them to the right project and mentor for them. Swaby says that there are "touchpoints all along the way" for where the OUR usually gets involved with an undergraduate's research pursuits, "but really [we are] just working with students the way that they need to be helped if they need to be helped." She describes the office as being kind of fluid in the sense that it can fill different roles for the students, helping them at any point in the research process that they may need help with: "If someone identifies a need, we help with that need." Typically, though, students approach the OUR at the beginning of their undergraduate research journey.

Not only does the OUR work directly with the students' research processes, they also offer some workshops for both students and faculty mentors, the most popular being the workshop for "How to Mentor Undergraduates in Research," which is offered annually—Swaby hopes to bump this up to twice a year. Recently, more graduate students have been taking this workshop because they will likely be entering that mentorship role when they graduate and begin their academic careers. This interest in mentorship is encouraging for the future of successful undergraduate research. There is a heavy leaning with the OUR, Swaby says, to "encourage students to present their research, because that's an important piece: defending." To do so, the OUR has several funding opportunities for presentation and travel expenses to get students to external

conferences. Additionally, if a student submits and is chosen to present at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research, run through CUR, Swaby says that the OUR will completely cover that student's expenses. Other than this, though, the OUR does not have any institutional money to provide full research grants for students. Instead, they work with other programs and offices on campus to promote and manage funding opportunities for which undergraduate students can apply.

There are several challenges to undergraduate research being as successful as possible, and Swaby sees time as the biggest deterrent for students and faculty mentors alike. For faculty members, there is a lot of pressure from the university to take certain steps in order to gain tenure. Because mentorship for undergraduate research is not recognized and awarded at an institutional level, it is usually the first thing a faculty member will have to drop in order to better manage their time. Swaby indicated that there is an ongoing discussion about how to change the attitude around undergraduate research mentorship; perhaps including it on the tenure dossier or creating awards or other recognition of efforts made would encourage faculty members to serve as mentors for undergraduate researchers. This is why the OUR has created an Undergraduate Research Mentor award to recognize an outstanding faculty mentor. Although the OUR created it, the mentors are student nominated. This year, there are about 75 nominations, far surpassing Swaby's initial expectation. Swaby hopes the creation of this award will encourage more faculty members to become and put effort into being an undergraduate research mentor.

Time is also a challenge for the student researchers, but participation in research also depends on the student's major or program. For example, the engineering majors at Virginia Tech have a rigorous course schedule that is essentially already planned out from freshman to senior year, with little room for deviation from the plan. With majors structured like that, it is hard to

find the time to fit in research experience. Swaby also pointed out that, related to time management, financial needs can also be a deterrent for students participating in research as an undergraduate. There are some students who need to use all of their free time working a part-time job, so they don't have the same availability as a student who is not constrained by finances who can use their own free time to participate in research.

Despite these challenges, though, Swaby finds it important to keep encouraging students to consider the idea of getting involved with undergraduate research. As discussed in other sections, it's becoming more important to show initiative on job and graduate school applications, and undergraduate research is a great way to showcase a student's strengths. However, Swaby sees this as something the OUR needs to work on emphasizing: "I don't know that we are doing the best job messaging the value of research and experiential learning" to the undergraduate students, Swaby says. Undergraduate research gives students essential, transferable skills, but not many students seem to be understanding why this is so important for their futures. This is something Swaby hopes to work on—encouraging students to be curious and pursue their own research questions, but also to realize the value of participating in undergraduate research, and all of the skills they can gain from it. She sees some students come to the office who have heard or read that undergraduate research may be something of value to them, and they wish to learn more; this is great news in terms of making students aware of the opportunities available to them at Virginia Tech, and aware of everything they can gain from these opportunities.

However, students aren't required to go through the OUR in order to complete undergraduate research at Virginia Tech. Although Swaby works with many students across the university, there's a lot of research happening on campus that the OUR is not involved with: "We know it's going on, we just don't know how much of it or where it's happening," Swaby says.

Despite this, Swaby says she has definitely sensed an increase in the last few years in the number of students who are seeking research opportunities or experiential learning of some sort. She also has sensed a growing number of programs that have begun requiring some kind of research or experiential learning in their curricula, mostly in the natural and life sciences. However, a recent policy at the university restricted the number of research credit hours that could count towards a degree, which has somewhat reigned in the amount of research that students are capable of pursuing, whether or not that's for better or for worse. Additionally, there is not a current requirement at the university level for colleges or departments to have research built into their programs.

Swaby has seen some reluctance on the university side of things to mandate undergraduate research in colleges or departments; instead, the term “experiential learning” has become the new “buzzword” as something for university officials to encourage in each discipline. This encompasses many apparatuses of study, including undergraduate research. There are some inherent drawbacks to institutionalizing undergraduate research because there are some students who would do it just to check a box, so to speak. Harm could be done by throwing those students out into the world without proper training or motivation—much the argument that Dr. Rivers of Notre Dame made. This is why Swaby likes the direction that “experiential learning” is taking higher education; it is multi-pronged and can positively affect a broader base of students.

### ***Case Study Conclusions***

This case study has given me a good understanding of the way that undergraduate research works at my own university. Across the board, the students need to take responsibility and initiative for their own experiences with undergraduate research. This essentially boils down to the faculty members having the responsibility of keeping students aware of opportunities as they arise and encouraging those students whom they think would benefit the most from

undergraduate research to pursue it further and take the next steps. Although the OUR is incredibly beneficial and a great resource for students to use if they aren't quite sure how to start, it still isn't as easy as it could be for students to find opportunities that actually interest them and would find worth pursuing. As some scholars have suggested, undergraduates should become involved with research as early in their collegiate careers as possible, but this puts a lot of pressure on the students to find the right faculty members and then have the courage to speak to that professor about becoming involved. It can be intimidating to approach an established professor as a freshman or sophomore—perhaps this is why the university seems to be relying on the students to create content that encourages their peers to become involved in undergraduate research. For example, the OUR student ambassadors create blog posts for the OUR website, and *Philologia* is essentially run by undergraduate students in its entirety.

Because students need to do a lot of the work themselves to become involved with undergraduate research, switching to “experiential learning” would likely be beneficial for the university as a whole. There are certain stigmas attached with the word “research” and the amount of work it requires, so by creating this broad term to encompass as many types of unconventional learning as possible, more students will be able to see the value in the skills they learn through these experiences and use them to their advantage when looking to progress in their career.

## **Conclusions and Future Research**

My initial delve into undergraduate research as a pedagogical practice in the humanities across the nation has only given me new questions to investigate. To get a deeper understanding of the exact steps being taken nationally, and what's been the driving force behind the progressive and reformative steps already taken, I'd like to speak with many more higher education

institutions across the nation and see if their stories, ideas, or viewpoints line up with the small group with whom I've already spoken. I'd also like to speak with undergraduate students at Virginia Tech, whether currently or in the past, who went through a research project and hear their perspectives and learn about their processes. I was heavily involved with several different aspects of undergraduate research during my time at Virginia Tech, yet I didn't go through the OUR. I'd like to hear from students who only went through the experience from the researcher point-of-view—learn about the resources they used to learn more, whether or not that was the OUR, which professors or offices they found most helpful, and what kinds of changes they would like to or have liked to see to make the process easier and a bit less confusing or intimidating.

As I mentioned, the most recent piece of scholarship I studied for the purposes of this project was written in 2015. The third way I'd like to continue this investigation into undergraduate research in the humanities would be to examine the scholarship being published *now*. I'd not only like to read and analyze those pieces, but also reach out to the authors and scholars who are writing the pieces and doing the primary research on their own, learning more from them than I can from their written articles or books.

I'm encouraged to see that the trend seems to be going the way of working hard to include undergraduate research, or experiential learning, in the humanities curriculum, as I am a strong believer that it is one of the best ways to develop as a student and make oneself more appealing and successful on the job market. I hope this trend continues and that more and more undergraduate humanities students across the nation have the ability to conduct their own research.

## Bibliography

- Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University. *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*. Stony Brook, NY: State University of New York at Stony Brook for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1998. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED424840>
- Cooley, Eileen L., Amber L. Garcia, and Jennifer L. Hughes. "Undergraduate Research in Psychology at Liberal Arts Colleges: Reflections on Mutual Benefits for Faculty and Students." *North American Journal of Psychology* 10, no. 3. (2008): 463-472.
- Corley, Christopher R. "From Mentoring to Collaborating: Fostering Undergraduate Research in History." *The History Teacher* 46, no. 3. (2013): 397-414.
- Council on Undergraduate Research. "About CUR: Mission Statement." Accessed April 8, 2018. [https://www.cur.org/about\\_cur/](https://www.cur.org/about_cur/)
- Grobman, Laurie, and Joyce Kinkead. "Introduction: Illuminating Undergraduate Research in English." *Undergraduate Research in English Studies*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2010: ix-xxxii.
- . "Expanding Opportunities for Undergraduate Research in English Studies." *Profession*. (2011): 218-230.
- Grobman, Laurie. "The Student Scholar: (Re)Negotiating Authorship and Authority." *College Composition and Communication* 61, no. 1. (2009): 175-196.
- Guterman, Lila. "What good is undergraduate research, anyway?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Last modified August 17, 2007. <http://chronicle.com/article/What-Good-Is-Undergraduate/6927>.
- Ishiyama, John. "Does Early Participation in Undergraduate Research Benefit Social Science and Humanities Students?" *College Student Journal* 36, no.3. (2002): 380-386.

- Karukstis, Kerry. "The Impact of Undergraduate Research on America's Global Competitiveness." *Journal of Chemical Education* 84, no. 6. (2007): 912-914.
- Katkin, Wendy. "The Boyer Commission Report and Its Impact on Undergraduate Research." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 93. (2003): 19-38.
- Kinkead, Joyce. "Learning Through Inquiry: An Overview of Undergraduate Research." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 93. (2003): 5-17.
- Levenson, Cathy W. "Enhancing Undergraduate Research in the Arts and the Humanities." *Peer Review* 12, no. 2. (2010): 13-15.
- Malachowski, Mitchell, Jeffrey M. Osborn, Kerry K. Karukstis, and Elizabeth L. Ambos, eds. "Enhancing and Expanding Undergraduate Research: A Systems Approach," *New Directions for Higher Education* 169. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015.
- Russell, Susan H., Mary P. Hancock, and James McCullough. "Benefits of Undergraduate Research Experiences." *Science* 316, no. 5824. (2007): 548-549.
- Van Galen, Dean, Lissa Schneider-Rebozo, Karen Havholm, and Kris Andrews. "Undergraduate Research and Economic Development: A Systems Approach in Wisconsin." *New Directions for Higher Education* 169, (2015): 39-49.
- Wilson, Reed. "Researching 'Undergraduate Research' in the Humanities." *Modern Language Studies* 33, no. 1/2. (2003): 74-79.