



Enhancing and Expanding Undergraduate Research: A Systems Approach (New Directions for Higher Education, Number 169)

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Wiley, 2015

Book Review

Tags: research methods | undergraduate education | undergraduate research

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Date Reviewed: March 4, 2016

The Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR) wonders why undergraduate research (UR) – which has been shown to increase student retention, graduation rates, and post-graduation achievement – is not practiced more broadly. What can be done to encourage this pedagogical shift? This book advances the cause by providing a reference for academic decision makers showing the benefits of UR, featuring systems and consortia that have successfully implemented the practice.

CUR has championed undergraduate research from 1978 to the present, through publications, awards, and outreach activities, such as holding workshops for consortium leaders. This book is an overview of a series of workshops in which six particular systems and consortia participated. There is a chapter from each workshop with a synopsis of their UR experience and a focus on distinct aspects. The workshop participants included: California State University System (CSU), University of Wisconsin System (UW), the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), City University of New York System (CUNY), and the Great Lakes College Association (GLCA).

The editors arranged the volume so that the first chapter provides an introduction to CUR and the workshops that brought these groups together, providing a context for the book with specific topics following. Chapter 2 introduces the effective system/consortia practices found across the six groups in focus. Chapters 3 through 8 focus on the experiences and successes of these particular groups. Chapter 3 highlights the increased success of underrepresented

students through UR at CSU and Chapter 4 illustrates how at UW it positively affected economic development in the region. Chapter 5 considers the impact on faculty workload and compensation at COPLAC, while Chapter 6 addresses meeting fiscal and enrollment challenges through successful institutionalization at PASSHE. In Chapter 7, CUNY shares their funding strategies, with Chapter 8 revealing how GLCA incorporated research skills into their curriculum. The book concludes with Chapter 9, which considers which aspects of UR belong at the campus level and which are better suited for the systems and consortia.

This compilation reveals how challenges such as faculty and administrative support, funding, and changing institutional culture can be overcome through creating UR system leaders and strategic plans. In these examples, this was accomplished through CUR workshops, outside funding, community support, successful program branding, UR offices, and by providing consistent and meaningful communication to stakeholders. By having the six different groups share their own challenges and strategies, the book successfully models the viability of UR and provides concrete examples others can build on to create their own programs. An additional strength is also a weakness – the compact nature of the book is appreciable, but leaves the reader wishing that some of the topics had been expanded.

This work is an invaluable resource for higher education decision-makers considering whether to incorporate or expand UR on their college campuses, as they consider creative and attainable solutions to the changing academic landscape.

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