We Don’t Take Summers Off: Nurturing Undergraduate Student Research at a Small Liberal Arts College

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Word Cloud Prompt

What library projects do you spend your summers working on?

https://pollev.com/erinsulla585
Occidental College

- SLAC in Los Angeles
  - ~2,100 undergraduates
- Semester schedule
Undergraduate Research Center (URC)

• Founded in 1998
• Received a “Campus-Wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments” from the Council on Undergraduate Research in 2019
Summer Research Program (SRP)

- Faculty-mentored ten week program
  - End of May to early August
- Open to all Oxy students
- Applications due February 1 each year
  - Usually ~100-120 students accepted
  - Selected by a faculty committee
SRP Application

Components:

- Five-page research proposal
- Two-page personal statement
- Itemized budget
- Faculty recommendation letter
SRP Application

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- **Five-page research proposal**
- Two-page personal statement
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Collaboration Begins (Fall 2022)

1) Strengthen research proposals *before* the SRP begins

2) Support research needs *during* the SRP
SRP Research Proposals

Pre-library collaboration:

- **The good:**
  - Creative! Ambitious! Interdisciplinary!

- **The less good:**
  - Vary in quality
  - Too generalized
  - Lack proper grounding in existing scholarship
55% of the 2023 SRP cohort reported it was their first time doing any mentored research.
Research Proposal Workshops

**November 2022:** 3 workshops split between humanities/social sciences & STEM students

**January 2023:** 1 multidisciplinary workshop for all students

**February 2023:** SRP application (including research proposal) due
Research Proposal Workshops

How to:

- Formulate good research questions
- Ground an argument in scholarship
- Tailor to a specific audience
  - In this case, a selection committee consisting of multidisciplinary faculty
DURING
Library Mentors

- Each SRP student needs a faculty mentor
  - ...why not a library mentor too?
- Open to **all** library staff
  - Optional Google form sign-up
  - Mentors paired with students based on staff discipline interest & project titles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Library Mentor</th>
<th>Mentor Department</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Science</td>
<td>science librarian</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive Science, Mathematics</td>
<td>user services specialist</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparative Studies in Literature &amp; Culture</td>
<td>first year librarian</td>
<td>Comp Lit, Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture</td>
<td>humanities librarian</td>
<td>History, Asian Studies</td>
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<td>Computer Science, Music</td>
<td>user services specialist</td>
<td>Cognitive Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Theory &amp; Social Justice</td>
<td>director of teaching</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
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<td>Critical Theory Social Justice</td>
<td>resource sharing specialist</td>
<td>Media Arts &amp; Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>college archivist</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
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Library-Led Summer Workshops

• Each SRP student must attend a minimum of four professional development workshops
• Introduced librarian-led workshops for SRP 2023 as part of this broader series
Library-Led Summer Workshops

Research/Information Literacy Skills

- Introduction to the Research Process
- Introduction to Archival Research
- How to Read a Research Article
- Note-Taking and Citation Management
Library-Led Summer Workshops

Broader Skills

- The Elevator Pitch
- Dynamic Presentation Skills
- Poster Presentation Style
- Presentation Practice
Percentage of Students Indicating Library Workshops as Helpful or Informative

- How to Read a Research Article: 88%
- Introduction to Archival Research: 86%
- Introduction to the Research Process: 81%
- Notetaking and Organizing Citations: 84%
- Dynamic Presentations: 87%
- Poster Presentations: 86%
- Elevator Pitch: 89%
- Presentation Practice: 85%
Prompt: Tell us a story of how you’ve utilized library resources as a tool for success in your Summer Research Project. Also, reflect on your plans for how you might use the library to find success in the future at Oxy.
AFTER?
Future Steps

- Hold all multidisciplinary research proposal workshops
- Provide library mentors with the same orientation materials as students
- Explain target audiences for summer skill workshops
- Find more campus partners!
Think-Pair-Share

Which of these initiatives might be successful on your campus?
Council on Undergraduate Research. “2019 AURA Awardees: Bridgewater State University, Florida State University, Occidental College.”


McGuinness, Claire. “What Faculty Think—Exploring the Barriers to Information Literacy Development in Undergraduate Education.” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 32, no. 6 (November 1, 2006): 573–82.


Collaborator Acknowledgments

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Thank you!
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