

Takeaways from the Mentoring Undergraduate Research and Creative Projects Roundtable

What are good strategies for mentoring undergraduate students in research and creative projects?

- Help students doing creative projects understand the value of the work they are doing
- Contextualizing the projects as part of a cultural conversation
- The best OSCAR recruiters are former grant recipients
- Recruit students by sending a PowerPoint slide to colleagues to show at the beginning of classes
- Tap into the students' inner curiosity
- Teach critical thinking, have them question everything, why this method, why this study species, why this location, why not.. or ... etc.
- Focus on the problem-solving aspect of a research question which also teaching critical thinking
- Help them to personally identify with the research question or process
- It's all about learning and cherishing the research process and the mentor/mentee relationship
- Laugh and make time to get to know the student(s) outside of class and research.
- Get to know great librarians and introduce students to the librarians and other faculty who do work in the field
- Treat the mentoring process like an informal class:
 - Have a regular meeting time—once per week for 30 minutes
 - Consider a flexible syllabus that includes readings and expected timeline
 - Honor the weeks where students just didn't get things done. We all have those weeks!
- Share stories about highs and lows of your own research process
- Encourage students to explore avenues to present their research—conferences like NCUR, in front of a community meeting or board, submit a paper
- Several faculty-led groups across campus engage undergraduate and graduate student researchers using a nested mentoring model
 - A faculty member directly mentors the graduate students on how to mentor the undergraduate student(s) and the graduate student mentors the undergraduate student(s) on active research.
 - This is a win-win model where by graduate students gain sorely needed experience with and training in mentoring (that is usually not available to them during graduate programs) and the undergraduate learns from both the faculty member and a graduate student while honing their research skills.
 - Several programs at Mason use the nested model with great success.