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Guidelines for 4999 Independent Research

Undergraduate research enables students to practice the process of discovering something new and/or examine something from a new perspective. It includes the learning of techniques appropriate to disciplinary discovery. Undergraduate research’s primary goal is to instill in students a deeper understanding of the scholarly process. Further, undergraduate research fosters the development of faculty/student mentoring relationships.

Scholarly activity in undergraduate research will likely involve an examination of primary sources, secondary sources, or some blend of the two. Background work with sources is likely to occur in all fields, including the fine arts and other creative fields in which the final result may be a performance, a new poem, or exhibition of a new composition. In the social and natural sciences, for example, empirical data may be gathered, analyzed, and inferences made. In any field, the project should be guided by the need to describe the area being studied, the strategies employed in the investigation, and the product or conclusions of the project.

**Eligibility Requirements for Students**

* Sophomore, Junior, or Senior Standing
* Approval of Faculty Mentor, Academic Advisor, and Department Chair
* Minimum 3.0 GPA and completion of any departmental prerequisites
  + ***Students not meeting the GPA requirement may***, with their mentor’s co-signature, submit a petition to the Director of the Undergraduate Research Program requesting a waiver of the requirement. The petition should include specific reasoning and an evidence-based rationale describing the student’s readiness for success in undergraduate research. This waiver request should be submitted to the Undergraduate Research Program director via email with an explanation for the request and plan for going forward.

**Registration and Academic Credit for Students**

* The student must register for 4999 with their mentor using the 4999 Registration Form.
* The credit hours vary based upon the nature of the work, the research project, and the amount of time spent on the research. A minimum of 3 hours per week of research work per semester hour of credit earned is a reasonable requirement.
* A maximum of 8 semester hours of research credit may be applied toward degree requirements.
* Faculty mentors will assign letter grades for 4999 research courses.

**Faculty Mentor Requirements and Role**

* **Full time, continuing faculty** are eligible to mentor students in 4999 and receive compensation.
* Assists students to develop a research plan and set learning objectives.
* Establishes student research responsibilities and supplements those responsibilities with assignments as deemed suitable and necessary for the research project.
* Discusses the basis of grading with student and assigns a final grade.
* Meets regularly with the student throughout the research experience. A minimum of one contact hour per week is suggested.

**Suggestions for Grading/Outcome Assessment**

The nature and outcome of each research project is the best determinant of appropriate assignments. The following are offered as suggestions for graded assignments in a 4999 course: reflective journals on the process and content of the experience, a research proposal, a final report/paper, and a public presentation of the results on-campus (departmental events or SURF) or off-campus (undergraduate or professional conferences).