



**PURM**

Perspectives on Undergraduate  
Research & Mentoring

## Letter from the Guest Editors for Issue 7.1

As editors of this special issue on mentoring Undergraduate Research (UR) in global contexts, we feel fortunate to have drawn high-quality submissions that offer the opportunity to learn about a number of diverse and powerful mentoring practices, processes, and collaborations, many of which are predicated on relationships that link individual students' research and course-based cohorts with campus communities, regional partners, and international groups. These collaborations produce innovative and robust mentored learning opportunities that undeniably benefit our students, and that also often have compelling reciprocal benefits for the various communities engaged. Developing and nurturing these research communities is time-intensive but immensely rewarding work, particularly in terms of how they draw students into mentoring networks characterized by exchange, engagement with difference, and academic rigor.

Across the nine articles included in this special issue there are several mentoring practices that we would highlight: where some were utilized frequently and persuasively, others were cited for their potential by authors, who acknowledged that these practices could be integrated more intentionally and fully in future research contexts. In all of these global settings, mentor expertise is central. While effective mentoring often involves a long-term learning experience for both the mentor and mentee, punctuated by successes and setbacks, it relies on mentor expertise as its foundation. Mentors regularly open up learning opportunities that are not otherwise accessible to students, leveraging pre-existing relationships, specialized content knowledge, methodological proficiency, and deep regional familiarity. Since these learning opportunities are frequently built on established rapport, sharing them with students entails trust and implies a level of baseline competence, where students rise to meet intellectual challenges and approach the status of co-inquirers and collaborators. Authors argue persuasively for integrating high-impact experiences, namely undertaking undergraduate research in global contexts, both abroad and domestically, and celebrate the benefits to students who engage diversity, view problems and questions from multiple angles, and situate their questions in context-specific, culturally meaningful frameworks.

Finally, authors amply demonstrate their commitment to developing creative pathways toward making research more visible to the campus and broader community and to supporting students' professional development beyond the boundaries of the research project. In many of our articles, this holistic commitment emerges as a prominent characteristic of high-quality mentoring and contributes to students' personal and academic growth and success.

In a research article that contextualizes many of the benefits and challenges of conducting UR in global contexts, authors Vandermaas-Peeler, Allocco, and Fair develop a set of recommendations based on focus groups with students and offer a case study of effective instrumental and psychosocial mentoring practices utilized by mentors in a multidisciplinary research group. In the second paper, Allocco and Fredsell offer an elaborated account of highly engaged mentoring in a

joint ethnographic research project in India that transformed not only the research but also the authors' relationship and identities as scholars and feminists.

Intensive faculty-mentored UR is often conducted during the summer months. Heldt, Smith, Cunningham, and Miller discuss a collaborative model that facilitated students' work in interdisciplinary and international research teams addressing global health research initiatives, as well as their knowledge and experience in communicating findings with peers and the public as they conducted mentored UR in Denmark.

Kuh (2008) argued that students should participate in at least two high-impact practices (HIPs) to augment opportunities for deep, engaged, and sustained learning. As the authors in the next set of papers demonstrate, the integration of UR and study away programs maximizes this potential. Campbell and Jones describe the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing a research-centered, short-term study abroad program in South Africa. Utilizing their expertise in the fields of history and psychology, the faculty directors scaffold students' development and conduct of research projects and elucidate students' perspectives by incorporating their voices into the paper. Bradley and Teitsort share benefits of combining UR and study abroad in course-integrated linguistic fieldwork research, particularly highlighting the advantages for the fields of social science and language science. Hall, Walkington, Vandermaas-Peeler, Shanahan, Gudiksen, and Zimmer offer a framework of salient mentoring practices and demonstrate how it can be used to support an emergent curriculum design project that embeds UR within a study abroad program in Scandinavia. Oppenheim and Knott explore the pedagogical dimensions of digital mentorship within a program that integrates UR and internships in grassroots social impact organizations. In exploring the combination of immersive global service-learning with internship experiences, this research team highlights student inquiry that is grounded in reflexivity, committed to polyvocality, and seeks to raise a certain kind of critical awareness.

As the impact of study away experiences on the home campus is virtually uncharted in extant scholarship on mentoring UR, the contribution of authors Duan, Little, Williams, Wagner, and Moritz is especially significant. Their paper describes a collaborative student research project spanning three contexts, two countries and two disciplines. In this unique model, students in a short-term study abroad course in China purchased one artistic object based on pre-departure research that later became part of the Elon University permanent art collection. In the following semester, another group of students in an on-campus course researched the historical meaning and cultural significance of the objects. The project culminated in an on-campus art exhibit showcasing the students' research, illustrating how a collaborative student research project can serve as an engaging tool to bring short-term study abroad back to campus and mentor cross-disciplinary UR. In the issue's final paper, authors Krumm, Perkowski, Mecouch, Woods, Shea, Goraya and Tran share an innovative on-campus course design in which students partnered with faculty and museum curators on research projects using digitized natural history collections. This collaboration provided students with opportunities to expand their understanding of global biological issues and experience different research communities.

## **Future Directions**

Our work as co-editors of this special issue offers a unique opportunity to identify promising trajectories for future scholarship on mentoring UR in global contexts. The dialogues between faculty mentors, students, institutional and community partners, and many others, highlight the collaborative, innovative nature of mentoring within and across contexts and the importance of sustained, engaged professional networks to support these interactions longitudinally. The diverse contexts in which our colleagues are working to support student learning and engagement offer

fertile opportunities for ongoing scholarship. Future research could analyze case studies that leverage innovative mentoring pedagogies and practices, synthesize salient mentoring practices across contexts, and identify shared challenges and recommended solutions from the perspectives of faculty mentors, students and community partners. The impact of students' participation in faculty-mentored UR in diverse contexts on the participating institutions, including the home campus and off-campus partners, is an under-studied topic of the utmost importance for higher education. Scholarship examining the integration of two high-impact practices, undergraduate research and diversity/global learning, is essential for the development of evidence-based pedagogies, practices, and programs that support the highest quality teaching and learning. This is an emergent field of scholarship with immense potential and we anticipate future issues of *PURM* that elucidate the essential role of faculty mentors.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge the insightful, constructive and expedient feedback that the reviewers offered the authors of this special issue. We also want to thank the Editor-in-Chief of *PURM*, Dr. Qian Xu, who works diligently to support the authors and editors behind the scenes. By sharing their wisdom and expertise, these scholars augmented the quality of each contribution and the special issue as a whole. We appreciate their contributions and offer them our sincere gratitude for their efforts on behalf of *PURM*.

Sincerely,

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Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology and Director, Center for Research on Global Engagement

#### Reference

Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. AAC&U: Washington, D.C.