PURM
Perspectives on Undergraduate Research & Mentoring

# "I don't know, but let's talk about it together": A Collaborative Model for Inclusive Mentorship in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Kirsten M. Drickey, Ph.D., Western Washington University (drickek@wwu.edu),
María José Palacios Figueroa, George Mason University,
Jordan Sandoval, Ph.D., Western Washington University,
Brahm VanWoerden, Ferndale High School

## Introduction

Students, faculty, university administrators, and funding organizations all recognize the rich possibilities that mentored undergraduate research experiences offer in terms of academic achievement and social and professional development. These benefits have likewise been well documented in academic research, including by Shanahan et al. (2015). The challenge lies in creating sustainable, scalable mentorship models that build upon this body of research and allow for increased access to high-quality mentorship for diverse students across a broad range of academic disciplines. For the authors of this article, our practice of collaborative co-mentorship has allowed us to expand participation in mentored experiences to involve students from increasingly diverse backgrounds in fields related to linguistics, world language instruction, and second-language acquisition. That is, a collaborative approach to mentorship, in combination with an expansion of mentorship opportunities for students in the humanities and social sciences, has made mentorship in our programs more inclusive, more equitable, and more sustainable for those involved.

Our experience suggests that not only do world language students benefit from these kinds of mentored research experiences, they are hungry for ways to connect their academic study with their personal and professional goals. Indeed, fields such as linguistics, world language instruction, and second-language acquisition lend themselves well to mentored undergraduate research experiences, both in terms of alignment with disciplinary practices and the extension of these experiences to more diverse groups of undergraduate students. The co-mentoring model we describe here has allowed us to reframe our work and address one of the most common roadblocks to this kind of work, namely, that of time. Thus, we have experienced the ways in which co-mentoring offers the kinds of high-value educational experiences that we prize for our students and makes the whole enterprise more sustainable and rewarding. Further, this model has allowed us to expand access to mentored research experiences to a more diverse group of undergraduate students. Here, we offer an overview of what, specifically, we believe works when creating meaningful long-term collaborations. In particular, our model emphasizes shared ownership of projects, an expanded view of expertise, a developmental mindset, and multidirectional mentorship.

**Background: Our Work in Context**

Recent scholarly attention to mentorship and high impact educational practices coincides with other pedagogical goals and demographic shifts in the US, including the desire to make high quality educational experiences more inclusive and broadly available to historically underrepresented groups of students, among these first- and second-year students (Kaul & Pratt, 2010), first-generation college students (Haeger & Fresquez, 2016), and historically underrepresented groups (Gregerman, 2009; López Figueroa & Rodríguez, 2015; Gregerman, 2009; Osborn & Karukstis, 2009; Owerbach & Oyekan, 2015).

Our work involves multiple forms of high impact educational practices; our discussion here focuses primarily on mentored undergraduate research. High impact educational practices, while diverse in scope, offer meaningful connections based on shared intellectual interests and the opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom or the academic term (Kuh, 2008). Mentored undergraduate research, in turn, allows students practical experience with their academic specializations and develops personal, professional relationships. The research component allows for the development of academic knowledge within a given field and has the potential for students to make discipline-specific contributions to that academic field. Additionally, the mentorship component is specific to the development of the student as a whole person. There is growing scholarly evidence that, for students, these kinds of practices matter in measurable ways (Kuh, 2008), and that, done well, they can be energizing for faculty (Hall et al., 2018). Although we are still in the early stages of documenting the efficacy of our mentorship practices for engaging more diverse groups of students, our anecdotal experience suggests that a collaborative model for mentored undergraduate research does indeed increase access to these kinds of experiences for a broad range of undergraduate students.

Our work, which forms the basis for the principles we describe here, spans mentorship, mentored undergraduate research experiences in the humanities and social sciences, community-based learning, and internships in the fields of applied linguistics and second language instruction. Together, we (Kirsten Drickey and Jordan Sandoval) supervise a rotating group of students as part of the Language Learning Research Group (LLRG) at Western Washington University. In addition to our work together, each of us has been involved separately as a faculty mentor in mentored research, service learning, and community engagement projects. Our undergraduate collaborators in the LLRG work with us to research, design, and implement explicit pronunciation training in intermediate Spanish classrooms. Our institution also hosts the Employee Language Program (ELP), which is a paid work experience in which upper-division world language students lead conversational language workshops for university faculty and staff (Blick & Drickey, 2018). For clarity, these two projects will be referred to throughout this paper as the Language Learning Research Group and the Language Teaching Group. María José Palacios Figueroa and Brahm VanWoerden participated in both projects as undergraduate students, and both have remained connected to this work in various ways, including as informal mentors to subsequent generations of student participants. The present study, in fact, grew out of a panel presentation at a conference in 2022. Palacios Figueroa and VanWoerden are currently active as language educators.

Because our work focuses on mentored undergraduate research as a high impact educational practice, we have incorporated a variety of approaches. In both projects, we have drawn inspiration

from the salient practices described by Shanahan et al. (2015) as well as from the kinds of structures that George Kuh (2008) identifies as crucial for successful high impact educational practices. Our guiding practices include:

1. Students must dedicate significant time and effort to complete purposeful tasks
2. Students must make daily decisions that deepen their investment in the activity as well as commitment to their academic program and college
3. Advising is an ongoing set of conversations about issues that students are facing in real time
4. Interactions occur with faculty and peers about substantive matters over academic terms and even years
5. Students have autonomy, but receive continuous feedback

Although there is obviously overlap between Shanahan et al.'s (2015) model and Kuh's (2008), we have found the focus on purposeful tasks and the longitudinal nature of our projects to be particularly relevant. Another important element has been engagement with academic content outside of the classroom, and, just as importantly, outside of a traditional grading or other incentive structure.

Our collaborations across nearly 10 years and numerous projects have helped us articulate the mentorship practices we describe here. The collaborative mentorship model has shaped our formal projects, but it has also become a mindset that calibrates our classroom interactions and other dimensions of our work as instructors and colleagues. Specifically, our co-mentoring approach shares features with educational practices that have proven successful in other contexts, particularly those related to Shanahan's model. We emphasize the creation of learning communities and collaborative assignments, involvement in projects with meaningful impact, tiered mentorship (peer, near peer, faculty), and the chance to disseminate findings in professional and academic contexts (Kuh, 2008; Shanahan et al. 2015). As a constellation of co-mentors, we prioritize letting participant interests–and in particular student interests–drive our projects, and we have created systems to distribute work across all members of the group. In our experience, this is what allows us to maintain a more sustainable level of work while still achieving the benefits associated with mentored undergraduate research experiences.

**Principles of Effective Mentorship**

Recent research on mentorship has focused on principles of effective mentorship, including ways to ensure quality mentoring relationships and to broaden traditional mentorship models. Not unsurprisingly, the benefits to students participating in undergraduate research depend on the quality of mentoring they receive (Bowman & Stage, 2002; Hensel, 2012; Ishiyama, 2007; Linn, Palmer, Baranger, Gerard, & Stone, 2015; Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012; Pfund, Pribbenow, Branchaw, Miller-Lauffer, & Handelsman, 2006). The most recent CITI guidelines (2025) for ethical research include a section on effective mentorship (McIntosh & Antes). Shanahan et al. (2015) describe overarching principles that undergird effective mentorship for undergraduate researchers, and Johnson et al. (2015) seek to define "high-quality" mentorship.

One of the patterns noted by Shanahan et al. (2015) is the expansion from traditional apprenticeship models with individual professors to mentorship experiences which involve diverse groups of students (Brush, Cox, Harris, & Torda, 2010; Corwin, Graham, & Dolan, 2015; Kasprisin, Boyle Single, Single, & Muller, 2003). This important trend involves intentionally expanding access to mentorship and mentored research experiences for traditionally underrepresented groups. Mullen (2009) calls for new models of shared leadership, co-mentoring, democratic learning, and collaboration, and Nicholson et al. (2017) highlight the benefits of a variety of multi-mentoring models. Lopez (2013) highlights ways in which collaborative mentorship can support new teachers in training toward equity and diversity. Feminist (Davis, 2008), co-mentoring (Cohen, 2003) and collaborative (Wasburn et al., 2007) models address organizational inequities and respond to growing diversity in student and faculty populations. While the bulk of undergraduate student mentorship research has been conducted with majority-white university populations, Haeger and Fresquez (2017) highlight the importance of mentorship (and more research on mentorship) of underrepresented and minority students in undergraduate research. López Figueroa and Rodríguez (2015) propose mentorship models that support diverse students in higher education.

**What Collaborative Mentorship Looks Like for Us**

In alignment with this research, our model emphasizes shared ownership, group decision making regarding the goals and outcomes of projects, and the role that each group member has in mentoring others. This distributed structure creates a more inclusive mentorship practice, allowing for greater access to high-impact educational experiences for more students. Collaborative mentorship, as we define it, fits within the broader rubric of multi-mentorship, as discussed in Nicholson et al. (2017). Our most successful experiences with undergraduate mentorship overlap with many of the salient practices presented in Shanahan et al.'s (2015) review. In particular, these features include 1) scaffolding of expectations, 2) increased student ownership of the research over time, and 3) an emphasis on peer and near-peer mentorship. Both of the projects mentioned above, the Language Learning Group and the Language Teaching Group, reflect a shift from one-on-one to group models of mentorships.

In our work, the focus on shared responsibility and the role of peer and near-peer mentorship have been crucial elements in diversifying our teams. In effect, this allows us to lower the barrier to entry for students who might not feel comfortable stepping directly into the role of researcher or facilitator, while still maintaining the quality of output. Indeed, this is a core feature of the peer and near-peer mentoring relationships, as more experienced team members draw on their own expertise to guide and mentor incoming team members. Faculty members dedicate time to discussing goals and helping all team members frame the experience in ways that align with their academic, professional, and personal goals. We will discuss in more detail the specific practices we utilize in the section on guiding principles.

This collaborative mentorship model varies from traditional approaches in several ways (Table 1). What we see as most significant are 1) students' ability to make real impacts on the research agenda and outcomes; and 2) the role of faculty as resources for each other and for students.

Table 1. Ways in which the collaborative mentorship model differs from traditional mentoring approaches.

| *Traditional Mentorship* | *Collaborative Mentorship Model* |
|---|---|
| Overarching goal is to meet researcher's agenda | Overarching goals are serving community and providing a learning experience for ALL involved |
| Faculty → student mentoring, sometimes peer to less experienced peer | Multidirectional mentorship relationships |
| Research agenda/syllabus/plan set by faculty before the experience | Active and continuous co-construction of project directions and goals with all team members involved. Faculty are flexible<br><br>Role of faculty is to use expertise to guide students in exploring their own research interests as they contribute to the overall project |
| Program or faculty determine metrics of success/expectation of performance for students within a given time frame | Students set own goals for and write "syllabi" for their involvement within the project |
| Students often complete tasks that are more distant from the direct impact of the project, not creative. Individuality not as important | Students are directly involved in purposeful tasks in more direct service to project "clients." Stronger connection between mundane tasks and answering big picture questions |
| | Faculty model intellectual humility and learning from each other, creating an environment for students to approach their learning without defensiveness |

## Mentored Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences

While much mentorship research still focuses on undergraduate research in STEM fields, there is a more limited set of publications attending to mentorship in the humanities (Corley, 2013; Klos et al., 2011; Kinkead & Grobman, 2010). We see distinct advantages for humanities and social sciences fields in encouraging new models for collaborative mentorship. Our experience suggests that fields such as linguistics, second-language acquisition, and world language instruction are particularly compatible with a collaborative model of mentored undergraduate research. In part, this is because research in these fields tends to be less resource intensive, as compared to that of STEM fields, and can be carried out on a smaller scale.

Our collaboration methods and intellectual engagement with disciplinary content likewise represent a natural outgrowth of the topics we explore in our linguistics and world language classrooms. These research experiences depend not just on students' interest in the topics we explore in our

classrooms, but rather build on the academic and personal engagement with language that draws students to the study of world language and linguistics in the first place. One of the things that makes these two group projects accessible is that they draw on existing student interest. We do not formally recruit, relying instead on students connecting with others in their academic programs and sharing information about the projects. This approach has allowed for organic recruitment over time. With this informal model, we are mindful of trying to avoid gatekeeping or the formation of an in-group mentality. We speak publicly about the two projects in our classes and within our departments to ensure that word about these opportunities is shared widely, whether through our own efforts or those of our colleagues. The Language Teaching Group has moved to a formal recruitment for this paid position, although we do still rely on colleagues to identify qualified students and encourage them to apply.

The kinds of questions we study in our research group relate to the value of different ways of "doing language," including the perspectives and experiences that students bring to language study. By virtue of their long experience using language on a daily basis, we can presume a minimum level of shared expertise regarding language use. All our student participants come in with experience of a variety of linguistic communities, including as those they belong to as language learners. Such existing experience in incoming students allows us to focus our work with students on the mechanics of doing research and language pedagogy. These are important differences as compared to research experiences in STEM fields, which often require an investment of time and resources to teach undergraduate students laboratory or methodological techniques (Linn et al., 2015). Our shared familiarity with language use across multiple linguistic communities allows the student researchers to get up to speed quickly and to make genuine contributions to our research projects.

Because we as faculty members view the work of our research and teaching groups as tightly connected to the kinds of collaborative inquiry we already do in the classroom, this mentorship model has allowed us to formalize practices with which we have previously had success. In particular, this includes a focus on teaching processes–the *how* of research and language pedagogy–and encouraging students to develop their own questions about the *why* of any given project. Both Sandoval and Drickey have, in the courses they teach, focused on designing individual and group projects that allow students to learn processes that can then be applied in other contexts. For example, students in Drickey's intermediate Spanish courses complete group research projects that are open-ended in topic, but constrained in terms of structure. Similarly, in the Language Teaching Group, we begin with the premise that, while there are many ways to teach language well, there are processes that set new instructors up for success, including sharing resources, team teaching (new instructors are paired with veteran facilitators), and frequent peer teaching observations. Further examples will be discussed below.

We have found both the philosophical underpinnings and the actual practices we employ to be useful in creating time and space for reflection and genuine collaboration, across a variety of projects. This mindset enriches our research and teaching groups, and it brings new energy to our classroom teaching. It also informs our understanding of how mentorship operates within the group. López Figueroa and Rodríguez describe mentorship as a "professional development relationship meant to demystify, enrich, and stretch one's thinking about how to be an effective scholar, model

collegiality, and frame one's work as a useful resource to those outside the university community" (2015, p. 27). The collaborative mentorship model has, for us, opened up new lines of inquiry, even beyond those directly connected to our research on second-language acquisition.

One example of this is the involvement of heritage language speakers in our projects. The linguistic and cultural knowledge that heritage language speakers bring simultaneously enriches our projects and encourages those students to expand their skills with the language. Our experience suggests that these kinds of academic experiences foster increased involvement in the university community and greater retention rates for heritage language students involved in our programs. Within the Language Teaching Group, we have seen a strong correlation between participation in this project and students majoring or minoring in world languages. For heritage language students in particular, these projects validate their life experiences with their family languages while giving them the opportunity to gain confidence using their language skills in a variety of contexts. All language learners involved in our projects have the opportunity to connect their academic experiences with professional development in ways that are outside of the traditional classroom. Over time, this approach has informed the Language Learning Research Group's current academic focus on student motivation as a crucial component of language acquisition.

Similarly, our projects typically include a range of undergraduate students that is more diverse than the general population at our institution, especially with respect to first generation college students, heritage language speakers, female-identifying students, and students of color. We see several key reasons for this: 1) lower barriers to participation and more support during the projects; 2) longer terms of involvement, often beyond the academic term; and 3) socio-emotional connections and positive peer pressure. Students enjoy working with their peers, faculty, and staff, which encourages them to stay involved with the projects. Indeed, in Palacios Figueroa's case, she notes that without the supportive environment of the Language Learning Research Group and the Language Teaching Group, she would not have persisted in the post-secondary study of Spanish and Spanish linguistics. Quite simply, she would not have remained in academia. The significant positive impact of having mentorship and working on a long term project within that framework is not surprising. In fact, the 2014 Gallup Purdue Index Report found these two factors to be among the most powerful contributors to graduates having "great jobs" and "great lives" (Gallup, 2014). In the future, we would like to see more research on the impacts of mentored undergraduate research experiences for historically underrepresented groups studying at majority-white institutions such as ours.

**Guiding Principles and Suggestions for Implementation:**
Our collaboration across various kinds of projects, both formal and informal, has helped us articulate guiding principles for effective mentoring relationships. We have seen the positive effects of these principles in our partnerships on the Language Learning Research Group and the Language Teaching Group, as well as in our classroom teaching, our other research projects, and community-based collaborations.

- **Shared ownership**: Everyone completes tasks that have direct relevance to the outcome of the broader project, that support their personal goals, and that are meaningful. One non-negotiable is producing deliverables of high quality, although each individual team member's

relationship to those deliverables can vary. Within the Language Learning Research Group, our first task every term is considering what each group member wants to get from that term's experience. We then consider the work we would like to accomplish as a group and divide responsibilities according to interest, educational or professional expertise, and time to devote to the project. Group goals are aligned, and there are shared expectations about what effective contribution looks like. These goals are balanced with group needs and individual interests.

- **Expanded concept of expertise:** Shared ownership means working beyond the interests and expertise of the faculty contributors. All participants work together to move projects forward, and all team members are encouraged to develop necessary skills. For example, we recently moved to the Qualtrics platform to develop and administer surveys. One group member had prior knowledge of the platform, so she took the lead on this aspect of the project and on teaching the rest of the cohort how to use the platform. Disciplinary expertise, narrowly defined, is only one dimension of what group members contribute.
- **Developmental model**: Everyone is capable of and responsible for engaging in work that drives the project. We engage in constant, ongoing assessment of skills and interests, with additional skills training when necessary. In both projects, we rely heavily on team teaching and peer and near-peer mentorship. We likewise draw on university resources to learn new technologies or platforms, with the expectation that faculty also participate in skill development. Undergraduates receive guidance on this process, and these kinds of conversations have been one of the most beneficial parts of the mentored research experience for the undergraduates involved with our projects.
- **Multidirectional mentorship**: Everyone has the ability to mentor and to be mentored at any given time. Participants are not expected to come into either project with either teaching or research experience, but they are expected to be willing participants in the teaching and learning processes necessary to collaborate effectively.

Over the years that we have collaborated, we have identified three broad, process-oriented support structures that form the basis of how we work together, across our work with both the Language Learning Research Group and the Language Teaching Group. Although we present these in a linear fashion, in practice they overlap with and support multiple outcomes.

- **Peer and near-peer mentorship:** This has been perhaps the most important piece of our model. Our projects have worked best when we train student collaborators as "experts" in the project, whether that's teaching pronunciation in Spanish or helping new instructors acquire classroom skills. Sometimes this involves a mindset shift around what individual contributors bring to the group (valuing linguistic backgrounds, for example) and sometimes this means that students spend more time developing specific skills.

  Within both the Language Learning Research Group and the Language Teaching Group, projects are constantly evolving. Students help recruit and train new team members, and the nature of successive, overlapping groups of students is conducive to the student-centered mentorship that drives our approach. Because students develop responsibility over time–and

because group goals are regularly redefined–the burden of support is distributed over time and people, which allows for the sustained, multi-year provision of support in responsive and adaptive ways. Due to the cyclical nature of working with students, our goal with both groups is to plan for succession in a way that avoids an entire cohort graduating without sharing their skills with newer team members. In the Language Teaching Group, students teach their workshops in teams. New facilitators often begin with one-on-one language tutoring sessions, then move into more-developed language workshops. Incoming facilitators are paired with a peer mentor, and we meet weekly as a group to discuss teaching challenges. These discussions center on the immediate needs of that week's lessons, as well as short readings related to broader topics in language pedagogy. We have also developed a library of teaching materials, stored on our LMS platform. Additionally, the Language Teaching Group has a protocol for peer and faculty observation, which makes the feedback and revision process for pedagogy far more visible and actionable for future work in education. This protocol gives student participants a more realistic and refined idea of the variety of skills, timeframes, and understandings required to teach effectively. Facilitators are likewise invited to observe faculty classes. As a result, our group has created a culture that encourages collaborative learning and mutual support, from participants at all experience levels.

Within the Language Learning Research Group, we likewise recruit new members with an eye to the future. For example, we currently have a senior member of the team training newer members on how to use the Qualtrics platform, while other members work on curating a selection of research to be incorporated into literature reviews for upcoming publications. As new members join the group, they can elect to participate in ongoing projects based on their skills and interests, while working alongside more experienced group members. This model allows the newer members of the cohort to gain familiarity with the foundational research of the field while also familiarizing themselves with the project's goals.

- **Frequent meetings and related communication:** We emphasize regular communication among all collaborators, and this is an area in which an up-front investment of time pays dividends. We rely on regular meetings to identify project areas that need attention and to distribute work. We have set meeting times, but we also meet during office hours or in one-off, small-group meetings. Meetings can be faculty-student, faculty-faculty, and/or student-student. These meetings are specific to the mentor relationship(s) and allow for greater autonomy in independent work. We also rely on shared meeting notes, such as through Google docs, and on documents shared through our LMS and other platforms. Student collaborators meet to plan their lessons or to advance work on specific projects, and they are responsible for setting these meetings up and reporting back to the group. In this way, student facilitators benefit from multidirectional mentorship; not only do they learn from more experienced facilitators in the program, but they work alongside similarly experienced peers and receive observational feedback from the faculty program coordinators. The distribution of feedback, and, critically, the systems to ensure it is distributed frequently, makes longer-term projects sustainable.
- **Student goal-setting**: Having a formal process in which student collaborators set their own goals for participation encourages ownership of the project and its outcomes. One example is

to have students write "syllabi" for their involvement with the project for each academic term or year. Within the Language Learning Research Group, for example, students help develop the research agenda for the group, which subsequently informs the experiments we run. Within the Language Teaching Group, student facilitators identify projects and bring those to the group. Past projects have included the creation of an advisory group of facilitators from all language sections and a successful grant application to create a campus-wide mentorship program.

**Perspectives from Student Collaborators**

For the student collaborators involved in these projects, including Palacios Figueroa and VanWoerden, the co-mentorship model has resulted in lasting academic and personal benefits. Participation in these projects helped shape their undergraduate careers and their professional trajectories. They credit the content of the projects–the kinds of things the groups actually work on–as well as the co-mentorship organizational structure. Both Palacios Figueroa and VanWoerden have gone on to work in Spanish-language education, and both note that their current professional involvement in second language pedagogy was facilitated by the mentorship relationships that arose from extensive, years-long participation, and the community that investment made possible.

Because our mentorship model for both groups emphasizes shared ownership from the start, when students join these projects, they effectively join a community with shared values and goals. In practice, this means that we ask new students to articulate not only what they bring to the projects, but what they want to get out of their involvement with this work. For students, these questions can be intimidating. Several have voiced that this is the first time in their college experience that they have been asked to think about how to apply their learning in a non-course oriented way. However, we have seen that asking participants to structure their own learning is of particular value both in long-term investment in our projects and in learning outcomes. Indeed, this sense of involvement and ownership results in a deep investment in the team and the outcomes of the project, and many students stay with the projects for multiple academic terms and even occasionally post-graduation. The connection to the projects and faculty members over such a long time allows students to develop more in-depth skills and increase their familiarity with the field.

For student participants, participation in these projects offers a window into what the application of content can look like outside of the classroom, in addition to an opportunity to engage with that content in ways that are not defined by grades or other traditional measures of success. For VanWoerden, the reasons these projects had such meaningful effects on his decision to teach was because of the authenticity and comprehensiveness of the teaching experiences, where curriculum conception, design, and implementation were all entrusted to undergraduates, with peer and faculty support as needed. The collaborative framework shifts perceptions of feedback, including the ability to accept and utilize comments from group members. Since students are deeply involved with the direction of the project and have set their own goals, feedback is more naturally framed as a collaborative reflection on how to best meet those goals. Because no one is positioned as *the* singular expert and all members of the team are recognized as bringing different strengths, a lack of knowledge or receiving constructive criticism feels less like failure or unworthiness of being on the team. It is here that the peer mentoring at the faculty level also deeply benefits students as it provides a structure for role modeling academic humility.

In our discussions, we have come to see intellectual humility as a key component of the co-mentorship model. By this we mean the willingness to learn from others, a belief that every member of the collaboration has something to teach and every member of the collaboration has much to learn, including how to approach tasks and projects when you feel unprepared or uncomfortable and how to ask questions. Working with faculty outside of the traditional student- teacher dynamic expands the range of learning. Co-mentorship thus results in mentorship in the traditional sense, but also in another sense that is more akin to "shadowing" or apprenticeship. It is in these dimensions of mentorship that the psycho-social elements are especially important. Faculty and student participants practice willingness to be uncomfortable in academic and professional collaborations, which goes against many of the traditional norms of the profession. Academia often demands the presentation of expertise, and the absence–or modification–of this expectation leads to positive modeling for students. Not unlike more traditional mentorship models, our co-mentorship model begins with the recognition that we do, in fact, bring different strengths and experiences to the group. Faculty mentors do have more disciplinary knowledge and they do work within the constraints of an academic system that asks them to teach and advise students while also producing research. Similarly, students need to fulfill program and course requirements, and they necessarily have a different relationship to field-specific expertise. These are important differences and cannot be overlooked. Yet within these parameters, the co-mentorship model allows for organizational structures that promote flexibility, creativity, and deeper engagement with disciplinary knowledge and with the learning process itself, for students and faculty alike.

The Language Learning Research Group and the Language Teaching Group emphasize layered mentorship, which stems from a co-teaching model that involves mentor generations working together to share knowledge and experience. In both projects, faculty support facilitates and guides these relationships, providing feedback and opportunities for growth. At the same time, student participants actively engage in independent work and carry out student-student collaborations. Palacios Figueroa and VanWoerden note that involving students in designing activities and supporting each other enriches the learning experience to a degree that would not have been possible had these components remained exclusively under faculty influencAs student participants move on from these projects and participate in post-graduate programs in research, teaching, and study abroad environments, they report a sense of preparedness for navigating new relationships with peers, mentors, and faculty. They attribute this sense to the depth and variety of collaborative supportive mentorship experiences they accessed as contributors to these projects.

The supportive nature of the group contributes to a strong sense of community. Student participants develop durable relationships with faculty and with their peers in the cohort. These relationships matter for feeling supported within a program or at an institution. Having relationships with faculty who know you as an individual over a sustained amount of time allows for the kind of mentorship that encourages students to go beyond what they may have previously imagined themselves capable of. We believe this is why the co-mentorship model shows such promise, particularly in terms of making mentorship more inclusive.

**Conclusion and Future Directions**

One key takeaway from our iterative experiences with mentored undergraduate research is that doing it well creates a positive feedback loop. For us, the key to doing it well has been collaboration

and a group culture in line with the best practices outlined by Kuh (2008) and Shanahan et al. (2015). Because the work is collaborative, it is both more effective and more sustainable. This lowers barriers to participation, which encourages students who might not yet see themselves as "researchers" to join our projects. Students have the opportunity to practice applied learning under the guidance of faculty and near-peer mentors. This scaffolding helps students build skills and gain confidence, which in turn motivates them to continue–and to invite their peers to be a part of the process. In this way, we have built student cohorts that are more diverse than our student body population as a whole, which is one aspect of greater inclusion. At the same time, we have expanded access to mentored undergraduate research to fields–namely, linguistics and language study–that are less likely to offer these kinds of applied experiences at the undergraduate level.

At this point, however, our evidence for the specific impacts of this particular form of mentored undergraduate research in the humanities and social sciences in both the short and longer terms remains anecdotal. We remain in close contact with many of our graduates (including, obviously, our co-authors) and have seen the ways in which their involvement with various projects has shaped their professional trajectories. Similarly, we have observed the ways in which having the opportunity to participate in mentored undergraduate research drives participation in our program offerings, including majors and minors. We believe that this is of particular importance for students from heritage language backgrounds, in addition to female-identifying students and students from historically underrepresented groups. However, we are working to collect more data to document these impacts at our own institution, particularly from a longitudinal and programmatic perspective, and we see a need for additional research at other institutions.

Mentored undergraduate research in the humanities and social sciences is not only possible, it can be a natural outgrowth of our disciplinary and classroom practices. It provides access for historically underrepresented groups, thus bringing the benefits of high impact educational practices to a larger and more diverse pool of students. We see research into questions of possible connections between mentored research and student retention as an important future direction, for us personally and for the field. Our two most important takeaways have been, first, that collaborative approaches open us up to genuine learning from others' expertise, including our students. Second, collaboration with fellow faculty in teaching, mentorship, and research makes the burdens lighter and the joys brighter. We have found these relationships to be energizing and extraordinarily rich, and we encourage others to explore what these processes might look like in the context of their own work.

## References


Blick, A. M., & Drickey, K. M. (2018). Constructing language learning communities in the university setting: An experiment in flipping the teaching and learning paradigm. *Language Beyond the Classroom: A Guide to Community-Based Learning for World Language Programs,* pp. 210-247.

Bowman, M. H., & Stage, F. K. (2002). Personalizing the goals of undergraduate research. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 32*(2), 120-125.

Brush, E., Cox, M., Harris, A., & Torda, L. (2010). Undergraduate research as faculty development. *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly, 31*(1).

Cohen, N. H. (2003). The journey of the principles of adult mentoring inventory. *Adult Learning, 14*(1), 4-7.

Corley, C. R. (2013). From mentoring to collaborating: Fostering undergraduate research in history. *The History Teacher, 46*(3), 397-414.

Corwin, L. A., Graham, M. J., & Dolan, E. L. (2015). Modeling course-based undergraduate research experiences: An agenda for future research and evaluation. *CBE—Life Sciences Education, 14*(1), es1.

Davis, D. J. (2008). The mentorship of a sharecropper's daughter: Being young, gifted, and Black in academe. *The Handbook of Formal Mentoring in Higher Education: A Case Study Approach,* 73-83.

Gallup. (2014). Life in college matters for life after college: New Gallup-Purdue study looks at links among college, work, and well-being. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx

Gregerman, S. R. (2009). Filling the gap: The role of undergraduate research in student retention and academic success. In M.K. Boyd & J.L. Wesemann (Eds.), *Broadening Participation in Undergraduate Research: Fostering Excellence and Enhancing the Impact* (pp. 245-256). Washington, DC: Council on Undergraduate Research.

Haeger, H. & Fresquez, C. (2016). Mentoring for inclusion: The impact of mentoring on undergraduate researchers in the sciences. *CBE—Life Sciences Education, 15*(3), ar36.

Hall, E. E., Walkington, H., Shanahan, J. O., Ackley, E., & Stewart, K. A. (2018). Mentor perspectives on the place of undergraduate research mentoring in academic identity and career development: an analysis of award winning mentors, *International Journal for Academic Development, 23*(1), 15-27.

Hensel, N. (2012). *Characteristics of Excellence in Undergraduate Research*. Washington, DC: Council on Undergraduate Research.

Ishiyama, J. (2007). Expectations and perceptions of undergraduate research mentoring: Comparing first generation, low income white/Caucasian and African American students. *College Student Journal, 41*(3), 540.

Johnson, W. B., Behling, L. L., Miller, P., & Vandermaas-Peeler, M. (2015). Undergraduate research mentoring: Obstacles and opportunities. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *23*(5), 441-453.

Kasprisin, C. A., Single, P. B., Single, R. M., & Muller, C. B. (2003). Building a better bridge: Testing e-training to improve e-mentoring programmes in higher education. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 11*(1), 67-78.

Kaul, G. & Pratt, C. (2010). Undergraduate research learning communities for first-year and lower-division students. *Peer Review, 12*(2), 20-22.

Kinkead, J., & Grobman, L. (2011). Expanding opportunities for undergraduate research in English studies. *Profession*, 218-230.

Klos, N. Y., Shanahan, J. O., & Young, G., eds. (2011). *Creative inquiry in the Arts & Humanities: Models of undergraduate research.* Washington, DC: Council on Undergraduate Research.

Kuh, G. D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. *Association of American Colleges and Universities, 14*(3), 28-29.

Linn, M. C., Palmer, E., Baranger, A., Gerard, E., & Stone, E. (2015). Undergraduate research experiences: Impacts and opportunities. *Science*, *347*(6222), 1261757.

López Figueroa, J. & Rodríguez, G.M. (2015). Critical mentoring practices to support diverse students in higher education: Chicana/Latina faculty perspectives. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2015*(171), 23-32.

Lopez, A. E. (2013). Collaborative mentorship: A mentoring approach to support and sustain teachers for equity and diversity. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *21*(3), 292-311.

McIntosh, T. & Antes, A. 2025. Mentoring and Healthy Research Environments (RCR-Refresher). *CITI Program.* https://www.citiprogram.org/members/index.cfm?pageID=665&ce=1#view

Mekolichick, J. & King Gibbs, M. (2012). Understanding college generational status in the undergraduate research mentored relationship. *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly, 33*(2), 40-47.

Mullen, C.A. (2009). Re-imagining the human dimension of mentoring: A framework for research administration and the academy. *Journal of Research Administration, 40*(1), 10-31.

Nicholson, B.A., Pollock, M., Ketcham, C.J., Fitz Gibbon, H.M., Bradley, E.D., & Bata, M. (2017). Beyond the mentor-mentee model: A case for multi-mentoring in undergraduate research. *Perspectives on Undergraduate Research Mentorship, 6*(1). Retrieved from https://openworks.wooster.edu/facpub/373

Osborn, J.M. & Karukstis, K. K. (2009). The benefits of undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity. In M.K. Boyd & J.L. Wesemann (Eds.), *Broadening Participation in Undergraduate Research: Fostering Excellence and Enhancing the Impact* (pp. 41-53). Washington, DC: Council on Undergraduate Research.

Owerbach, D., & Oyekan, A. (2015). Undergraduate research experience aids progression, graduation rates at Texas Southern University, an HBCU. *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly*, *36*(2), 28-32.

Pfund, C., Maidl Pribbenow, C., Branchaw, J, Miller Lauffer, S., & Handelsman, J. (2006). The merits of training mentors. *Science, 311*(5760), 473-474.

Saye, J.W., Kohlmeier, J., Brush, T., Mitchell, L., & Farmer, C. (2009). Using mentoring to develop collaborative communities of inquiry-based practice. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 37*(1), 6-41.

Shanahan, J.O., Ackley-Holbrook, E., Hall, E., Stewart, K., & Walkington, H. (2015). Ten salient practices of undergraduate research mentors: A review of the literature. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 23*(5), 359-376.

Wasburn, M.H., Wasburn-Moses, L. & Blackman, J. (2007). The P–16 strategic collaboration model: A team mentoring approach. *The Educational Forum, 72*(1).