Webinar Title: *Broadening Undergraduate Research beyond the STEM Disciplines*
Recorded on November 14th, 2014
Organized and Facilitated by Lee Coates, Biology, Allegheny College and Michael Roberts, Psychology, DePauw University
Presenters: Jenny Olin Shanahan, Bridgewater State University, Amelia Carr, Allegheny College, Briana Lewis, Allegheny College and Ian MacInnes, Albion College

**Webinar Summary:**
After a short introduction by Michael Roberts, Jenny Olin Shanahan began by describing some of the benefits of student-faculty collaborative research (SFCR) in the humanities for both students and faculty (see her list of citations below). Faculty mentors report that students who participate in SFCR

- show gains in developing oral and written presentation skills
- can think creatively and find solutions to problems
- collaborate in teams more productively than students who haven’t participated in SFCR
- have better analysis and sharpened observation skills.

The benefits to students go beyond these skills and are often specific to the project. These are skills that are helpful in a tight job market and employers want these skills. These benefits are seen in all students who participate in UR, no matter the discipline, demographic group and institution type. Women, under-represented minorities and first-generation college students show the most gain.

Mentorship also has benefits to the faculty members. There are two major gains: personal satisfaction and intellectual/professional gains. Faculty who mentor UR report higher job satisfaction and greater engagement with the community. On the professional side, there is an enhanced effectiveness in teaching (with a better evaluations seen) and advancement of scholarly output. Faculty also report a motivation to stay current in the academic field.

The second presenter, Briana Lewis spoke of the challenges of working with students in the Humanities and gave an example of a specific project that she has been working on with students in French. Students were organized as a “think tank” to read and get initial impressions of the text. The notes were recorded in a Google Document along with comments and discussion. This format encouraged collaboration and went against the idea of the “lone genius” that is often found in Humanities research. (*We apologize that the audio during much of Briana’s presentation was of poor quality.*)

The third presenter, Amelia Carr described the Mellon Grant that Allegheny College
received to fund collaborative UR in the Humanities (www.allegheny.edu/mellonhumanities). The faculty of Allegheny (at all levels, junior and senior) have participated in the project. A brochure that outlines Best Practices at Allegheny can be found on the website under the “Best Practices” tab.

The fourth presenter, Ian MacInnes spoke of the success that Albion College has had in funding SFCR internally. Existing endowed funds were pooled to create a single entity to support UR across the campus. This single fund can be supplemented with regular institutional budgets. When there is increased demand for SFCR, it becomes a college-wide question and not just one for a single department or division. It also becomes a single, attractive focus for fundraising and donors.

There are several entities that support SFCR in the Humanities. These include the GLCA Digital Liberal Arts Program, the Library of Congress Program (http://glca.org/images/Revised%20102113%20Request%20for%20Proposals%209-18-2013.pdf), the ACM (http://www.acm.edu/programs/14/newberry/index.html), and the Massachusetts Historical Society (http://bostonsummerseminar.org/call-for-proposals/). There are external experiences that students in the Humanities can participate in. These include internships at the Smithsonian and others.

Ian MacInnes also shared Albion College’s handbook language regarding the incorporation of SFCR in tenure and promotion processes. The language is included in the “Teaching” section of Faculty responsibilities: “Also valuable are… working with students on projects involving research, scholarship or creative activity.” In addition to tenure and promotion, faculty are acknowledged for their work with students by way of awards, merit awards, bonuses and other formal recognitions. It is important to recognize the importance of UR when interviewing and hiring new faculty.

After the four presenters worked through their prepared materials, listeners asked many questions.
1. CUR’s definition of UR seems best suited to the sciences. What do you say to humanities faculty who express concern about the definition?
Jenny Olin Shanahan answered the question by giving the CUR definition of undergraduate research: “Scholarly work by an undergraduate mentored by a faculty member that makes an original, intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.” The understanding of “original contribution” has been shifting from a requirement of “peer-review” to that of an authentic process of discovery.
2. What do scholars look like? How do we get past the "lone genius" model in the humanities?
Briana Lewis (Allegheny College) reports that there are many different models for moving past this including students as authentic bibliographic researchers, reading groups with concrete outcomes. Briana noted that colleagues have used the book *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* by Kathleen Fitzpatrick as a starting point in some of these discussions about valuable contributions by undergraduates. Ian MacIlnnes (Albion College) reported that the Humanities have moved beyond this model as a whole by participation in conferences, and shared publications.

3. What types of models are present for showcasing SFCR and the collaboration of Faculty and undergraduates?
Ian MacIlnnes (Albion College) reported that at Albion College faculty making presentations in the sciences often mention the contributions of students to the research, but that happens much less often in presentations by faculty in the humanities. Briana Lewis (Allegheny College) says that students are required to present as part of their summer research program. Jenny Shanahan (Bridgewater State University) mentioned that there is a two day faculty showcase where collaborative research is presented as part of the a whole. Heather Fitzgibbon (Wooster College) reports that there is a panel that highlights Faculty-UR research where the faculty sets up the research project but then the student continues the presentation. They are keynote sessions of senior research symposia.

Many thanks to the presenters, organizers and facilitators for their work to offer this webinar. Thanks to Albion’s technology staff, Lisa Lewis and Vanessa McCaffrey for the Webex hosting. Thanks to GLCA for the financial support for this webinar project.

References from Jenny Olin Shanahan:


