

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA - CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor
for Academic Affairs

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October 29, 2008 *Revised**

2008-09 Working Group on Undergraduate Research

Jennifer Bernhard, Electrical and Computer Engineering, *Co-chair*

Wayne Pitard, Religion and Spurlock Museum, *Co-chair*

Cheelan Bo-Linn, Center for Teaching Excellence

*Victor Mullins, College of Business

Lisa Hinchliffe, Library

Ronald L. Jackson II, College of Media

Julie Hengst, Speech and Hearing Science

Darrel Kesler, Animal Sciences

Susan Larson, College of Engineering

Yi Lu, Chemistry

Deana McDonagh, Art and Design

Michaelene Ostrosky, Special Education

Umesh Thakkar, National Center for Supercomputing Applications

Peter Mortensen, Office of the Provost, *Staff*

Julie Bai, Office of the Provost, *Intern*

* *Victor Mullins was substituted for John Clarke as of 10/31/08*

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the 2008-09 Working Group on Undergraduate Research. As you know, the enrichment of faculty-mentored research, scholarly, and creative opportunities for undergraduates is a priority named in the *Campus Strategic Plan*. Illinois students are depending on this enrichment as they prepare to assume leadership roles in workplaces and communities upon graduation. Your group will take important steps toward ensuring that research is a visible and meaningful component of the undergraduate curriculum and co-curriculum. I am pleased to report that Jennifer Bernhard (Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering) and Wayne Pitard (Professor, Religion and Director, Spurlock Museum) have agreed to co-chair the working group.

Last year, following the lead of the *Campus Strategic Plan*, a faculty working group organized Illinois' first campus-wide Undergraduate Research Symposium, which was held in the Illini Union on May 29. The working group also surveyed colleges and departments to learn to what extent there is organized support for undergraduate research—broadly conceived—across campus. The success of the symposium and findings from the survey suggest that we should institutionalize the annual research symposium, and that we should be more intentional and

systematic about linking undergraduate research opportunities to the disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiries of faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and advanced doctoral students.

In view of the 2007-08 working group's report, your group's charge in 2008-09 is three-fold:

1. *Organize the second annual campus-wide Undergraduate Research Symposium.* Space in the Illini Union has been reserved for an all-day event on Tuesday, April 7, 2009. As you develop plans for the symposium, I ask that you consider the possibility of stressing entrepreneurship in support of interdisciplinary research as a theme for one strand of poster and concurrent sessions. This theme aligns with a cross-campus effort to support a more entrepreneurial approach to interdisciplinary and translational research. Associate Provost Feniosky Peña-Mora would be happy to meet with your group to explain this "intrapreneurship" initiative. Finally, I ask that the symposium include students from our Parkland Pathway to Illinois initiative, either as participants or guests. Dan Cullen, Assistant Director, Admissions can provide guidance, as can Kris Young (or her designee), Vice President for Academic Affairs, Parkland College.
2. *Provide advice on implementing the final recommendations of the 2007-08 Working Group on Mentored Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Creative Experiences.* The 2007-08 working group recommends establishing an office to continue the process of institutionalizing campus support for undergraduate research. Please recommend a plan, for implementation in 2009-10, that would accomplish the aims described by the 2007-08 working group. As you develop your plan, consider additional responsibilities that might be assigned to an Office of Undergraduate Research: e.g., involvement in the national Council on Undergraduate Research; leadership in the pursuit of federal and foundation funding that is intended to increase access to undergraduate research experiences; and participation in the Carnegie Foundation's cohort on undergraduate research and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Alternatively, you might consider an existing office or unit that may have the capacity to take on the functions associated with promoting research opportunities for undergraduates. We want to consider a range of ways that the progress of the undergraduate research initiative can be sustained, despite a challenging financial context across the campus.
3. *Consult with colleagues who are developing an incubator for student innovation.* Last spring, a proposal was put forward to create an Incubator for Student Innovation. The proposal's co-authors are Michael Andrejasich (Associate Dean, FAA, and Professor, Architecture), Andrew Singer (Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Director, Technology Entrepreneur Center), and Neil Kelleher (Professor, Chemistry, Bioengineering, Medical Biochemistry, and the Institute for Genomic Biology). Please work with Andrejasich, Singer, and Kelleher as they seek to create broad access to and visibility for the incubator.

In all of your work, I ask that you imagine how undergraduate research at Illinois might be showcased in ways that complement the institution's unique strengths.

I have asked Julie Bai, an undergraduate intern in the Provost's Office, to assist your group. Her assistance will be especially valuable as you prepare for the spring symposium. Peter Mortensen, Associate Provost Fellow, will provide guidance from the perspective of my office, and Jane Baumgartner will provide staff support. Again, many thanks for your willingness to support undergraduate education through your contributions to this working group. I look forward to the Undergraduate Research Symposium on April 7, and to receiving a final report on your activities by May 15, 2009.

Sincerely,

Linda Katehi
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs