The Importance of Mentorship in Undergraduate Research

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"The Elon faculty embrace the idea that scholarship and teaching are inseparable because scholarship is the foundation of teaching. The scholarly and professional activities of faculty connect them to a vital intellectual community beyond the walls of Elon, ensure their continuing development as enlightened seekers, contribute to the body of knowledge and wisdom, and renew their enthusiasm to engage students. The Elon community is committed to creating an environment that allows the faculty to excel as teachers, scholars, and mentors."

http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/teacsch.xhtml

Why the Interest?

"Undergraduate research may be the epitome of engaged learning"

David Lopatto (2006)

Ten salient practices of undergraduate research mentoring

1. Strategic pre-planning to respond to students' varying needs and abilities throughout the research process.
2. Set clear, scaffolded expectations.
3. Teach the technical skills, methods, and techniques of conducting research in the discipline.
4. Balance rigorous expectations with emotional support and appropriate personal interest in students.
5. Build a sense of community among members of the research team.
6. Dedicate time to one-on-one, hands-on mentoring.
7. Increase student ownership of the research over time.
8. Support students' professional development through networking and explaining norms of the discipline.
9. Create intentional, laddered opportunities for peers and "near peers" to learn mentoring skills and to bring larger numbers of undergraduates into scholarly opportunities.
10. Encourage and guide students to share findings in presentations and writing.

Shanahan, Ackley-Holbrook, Hall, Stewart, & Walkington (2015)

What practices do mentors think they do well and which ones do they struggle?

Academic Identity and Career Development Recommendations (Hall et al., 2018)

1. Emphasize the importance of undergraduate research mentorship and its powerful blending of roles for faculty members
2. Ensure that faculty see mentoring as leading to enhanced research productivity
3. Develop reward systems to acknowledge the importance of undergraduate research mentorship
4. Create opportunities to share excellent practice in undergraduate research mentorship

Future Directions

Examination of Mentee data of award winning mentors
- What do they say about their mentors?
- What lessons can we learn?

Recently received a grant from the Colonial Academic Alliance with Drs. Tony Weaver and Caroline Ketcham
- Examination of High Impact Practices in Collegiate Student-Athletes
- How can we expand these experiences?
- What are best practices for institutions to employ?

Former men’s soccer student-athlete, Drew Gardner after presenting his undergraduate research at Posters on the Hill, 2011

Our Question?

What are effective/salient practices of award winning undergraduate research mentors?