DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

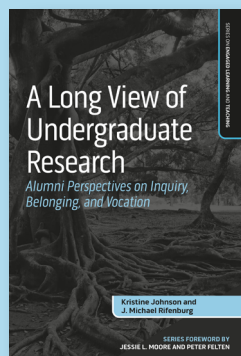ELON UNIVERSITY | CENTER FOR Engaged Learning

In *A Long View of Undergraduate Research*, alumni from across the disciplines shared their undergraduate research experiences. These stories, which we relayed under the categories of inquiry, belonging, and vocation, inform the design and implementation of current and future undergraduate research programs.

Drawing largely from Chapter 5, "What Alumni Taught Us," this guide helps faculty and staff who are designing, implementing, and refining undergraduate research experiences on their campuses. These questions can be used for individual reflection and planning or for group discussion.

Expand Access by Clearing the Path

Alumni told us that colleges and universities should clear the path to undergraduate research. Undergraduate programs should address financial and personal, expanding our conception of undergraduate researchers and making research opportunities plentiful, visible, and inviting.

1. What funding is available to support the time and labor of undergraduate research? Could you work with the university advancement office?
2. How could undergraduate research opportunities be woven into general education courses, which serve a wide range of students and provide on-ramps to other courses in the major?
3. How are undergraduate research opportunities communicated to students?
4. Who could you connect with to understand summer student housing?

Foster Vocation by Translating the Experience

Alumni developed competencies that can and should be compelling in the job market and the workplace. Undergraduate research programs should do more to help students translate their undergraduate research experiences into workplace or graduate school readiness.

1. When in the research experience can students begin to list the intellectual and practical skills honed through their project?
2. How can the campus career office help students articulate the skills developed in their research experience in cover letters, resumes, and interviews?
3. Which campus and community partners might you invite to an undergraduate research showcase at your campus?

Support Inquiry by Honoring the Process and Celebrating the Product

Alumni benefited when mentors, research programs, and entire institutions created conditions for intellectual gains and identity development. Alumni whose mentors and institutions honored the research process and celebrated its products were well-positioned for meaningful inquiry and fulfilling projects.

1. What processes and people are in place to help students navigate the overwhelming but exciting early stages of developing an undergraduate research project?
2. How might programs communicate that challenges, setbacks, failures—and the resulting negative emotions—are normal? How might research timelines be developed to account for this reality?
3. What local, regional, or national opportunities exist for undergraduate researchers to circulate and showcase their work?