Students as Scholars

Intentional learning through undergraduate research and creative activities

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George Mason University

- Public comprehensive doctoral institution; high research
- 33,000 total students, more than 20,000 undergraduates
- 198 degree programs at 3 distributed campuses, 75 undergraduate degree programs
- Diverse student population; high transfer
- Undergraduate research was adopted as our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) initiative
Students as Scholars at Mason

Students as Scholars aims to foster a culture of student scholarship through increased participation in and celebration of scholarly activities.

Students will see their education as a process of scholarly inquiry, where scholarship is valued as a core practice of the Mason student experience.
Primary Activities

- Helping students find a project and mentor
- Funding undergraduate research and creative projects
- Providing student travel grants
- Facilitating faculty and curriculum development
- Hosting the annual Celebration of Scholarship
Undergraduate Research

- High impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008)
  - Increased student engagement
  - Improved retention

- Positive student outcomes
  - Written and oral communication skills
  - Academic performance
  - Critical thinking
  - Choice of major and career
  - Motivation and plans for graduate education
  - Personal development
Limitations of Current Research

- Research has largely focused on STEM fields
- Primarily self-reports and surveys
- Either too large for in-depth insight (e.g., NSSE) or too small for generalization
- Primarily focused on structured independent experiences, not on classroom experiences

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Student Learning Outcomes

- Discovery of Scholarship
- Scholarly Inquiry
- Creation of Scholarship
Student Learning Outcomes

**Creation of Scholarship**
- Create an original scholarly or creative project
- Communicate knowledge from an original scholarly or creative project

**Scholarly Inquiry**
- Articulate a scholarly question; engage in key elements of the scholarly process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results of scholarship within a broader context

**Discovery of Scholarship**
- Understand how knowledge is generated and disseminated through scholarship, and the importance of scholarship to society
Undergraduate Education and Students as Scholars Outcomes

- Departments receive funding and learning community support to redesign undergraduate curriculum, both major and gen ed

- Participating departments have started with Research and Scholarship Intensive courses and realized that they need to build the core

- Advanced composition has been major focus for building skills through general education

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Assessment Model
Program Rubric

Review of Student Work
- URSP and RS Work Samples
- Inquiry Course Work Samples
- ENGH 302 Metacognitive Review Rubric
- Discovery Course Work Samples

Surveys
- Discovery + Course
  or
- Discovery + ISE Set
- Discovery + Course Set
- Discovery Set

Course/Curriculum Development and Review
- Academic Program Learning Outcomes Assessment
- RS Course Portfolio Review
- ENGH 302 Course Portfolio Review
- Curriculum Review

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Rubrics for program planning and development gives structure to your program and expectations for performance (and resources)
- By achieving consensus on criteria, program stakeholders have a shared vision and goals
- The levels of quality can help us reflect on the progress of the program in meeting its goals
- A program rubric can define what it looks like to meet your program outcomes
Mason’s Program Rubric

- Developed by faculty
- Levels of learning

How it is used
- Communicates the institution’s expectations for programs, curriculum, and student learning
- Guides assessment strategies for different levels
  - Development of survey instruments
  - Assessment of research courses
  - Collective student work
Transforming the Undergraduate Curriculum: Advanced Composition

- English 302: Intensive practice in writing with emphasis on research related to student’s major field (enroll by field)
- Students as Scholars guides learning outcomes
- Course activities
  - Discipline-related “awareness” project
  - Analysis of scholarly publication in major field
  - Research paper
  - Metacognitive essay
Metacognitive Essay

- Student reviews own research paper and analyzes argument, use of evidence, inquiry process, growth as scholarly writer, and application to professional field.

- Student explains how their work contributes to a scholarly conversation in their field.

- Rubric
  - Developed from SaS program rubric
  - Faculty expect student performance will be emerging to competent/proficient

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## Review Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO #2: Understand research methods used in a discipline.</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO #4: Articulate and refine a question.</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO #7a: Apply appropriate scholarly conventions during scholarly inquiry.</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4-point scale: 1=Novice; 2=Emerging; 3=Competent/Proficient; 4= Advanced

N=341 ratings

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## Overall Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>45.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>37.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent (Proficient)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=341 ratings
Next Steps: Improving Scores

- Review of work from 100-level composition courses
- Faculty development at all levels in composition program
- Degree programs work with Writing Across the Curriculum program
- Collaboration between RS course faculty and library (Assessment in Action project)
On Your Campus

Small Group Discussion

- How well do these concepts map to your program or campus? Are there disciplinary differences or other challenges to using common criteria?

- How could the rubric be adapted to meet your needs?

- What would be the process for developing a rubric like this for your institution? How might faculty and students be involved?

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Discussion and Questions

Assessment materials available at

assessment.gmu.edu

Students as Scholars

oscar.gmu.edu