

OFFICE OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP, CREATIVE ACTIVITIES, & RESEARCH
MASON DEPARTMENT SURVEY REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
JULY 2012

The OSCAR Department Survey was administered in spring 2012 to all chairs of academic departments at Mason that offer undergraduate degree programs. The primary goals of the survey were to determine the extent to which academic units are engaged with the goals and activities of the *Students as Scholars* initiative; to ascertain general faculty attitudes and practices regarding undergraduate research and creative activities; and to learn how information about *Students as Scholars* and related activities is being shared with students and faculty at Mason. Additionally, the survey sought to learn how OSCAR can better serve Mason faculty, departments, and students. Survey responses were received by 45 of 50 departments surveyed, for a response rate of 90%.

Good News

- 85% of department chairs believe that providing opportunities for undergraduate scholarship is a priority for their faculty, and 85% believe that upper-division students are capable of performing scholarly work.
- 61% of departments have a capstone course that requires undergraduate scholarship, and 78% offer optional independent study or course credit for independent or faculty-mentored scholarship. However, three departments currently offer no credit-bearing opportunities for undergraduate student scholarship.
- 59% of departments have already applied for an OSCAR Scholarship Development Grant, or plan to do so in the future, and 57% plan to have a Research & Scholarship Intensive (RS) course.
- Students in 85% of departments participated in research or creative activities, and 52% of all departments had students who presented their scholarly work at an off-campus venue last year.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Faculty participation in undergraduate scholarship is recognized unevenly across campus.** 65% of departments said that supervising undergraduate scholarship is not stated as a criterion in annual faculty reviews, however 56% said that it does count positively toward promotion and tenure.
- **Undergraduate scholarship activities are not well tracked.** Although 51% of departments reported that their undergraduates participate in research or creative activities, it is unclear *how many* of their students do so, and to what degree. Many departments send their students off-campus for real-world opportunities, but we do not have enough information about the extent to which students participate or the quality of these experiences.
- **Faculty need support.** While 5 departments offer travel funding or small stipends and 6 offer course releases, most departments offer only collegial recognition for mentoring undergraduate scholars. Faculty need time and funding to purchase supplies that students need to conduct their research or creative work. Term faculty may not be eligible for department funding or course releases.
- **Interdisciplinary programs need attention.** Faculty in interdisciplinary programs may not be rewarded for their work with undergraduate scholars because they lack a departmental home where they could negotiate time and resources, and be recognized for their efforts. Students in these programs may have difficulty locating resources for their projects for the same reason.