Office of Undergraduate Research Restructuring

Update for Faculty Senate Council

2/1/21
Undergraduate Research

• **Undergraduate research is a high-impact transformative experience.** Because UK is an R1 institution, undergraduate research activities should be highly visible, available as a recruiting tool and successes highlighted and celebrated. This will augment the undergraduate educational experience.

• Currently, undergraduate research activities are dispersed and uneven across campus, so there are missed opportunities for efficiencies, communication and measuring/reporting impact.
Timeline

• ~ 2006, a central Office of Undergraduate Research was created
• Dec 2019 first External Review completed by SAL
• Sept 2020 the President moved UGR under the Office of the Vice President for Research
• Oct 2020 – discussed draft reorganization plan with academic leaders (Assoc VPRs, Deans, Assoc Deans for Research, Assoc Deans for Undergrad Education)
UGR Office: Current staffing and External Review

• Three admin staff
  • Student Recruitment and Advising, Faculty Recruitment, Faculty-Student Partnerships
  • Administer Programs to Support UGR
    • Presentation opportunities – Annual Showcase, Posters at the Capital
    • Mentor recognition
    • Research Activities – Summer Research Fellowships, Travel grants
    • Workshops and outreach events

• Comments from 2019/20 UGR External Review
  • The UGR office has a big impact on a limited number of students and faculty
  • Office does not have information about the overall impact of undergraduates doing research at UK
  • Made 15 recommendations, the first ones were to hire a Faculty Director, establish advisory council with reps from all colleges and review/revise Mission, Vision and Goals
UGR Office: OVPR initial assessment

• Improvement needs and issues:
  • More support for student research is needed (only 47.5% of the budget went to programs/students)
  • Need central tracking to know how many students have participated in an undergraduate research experience and breadth of faculty mentors
  • Better communication between the central office and college leadership, OVPR
  • Need consistent Faculty-level leadership
  • Need a clear assessment plan

• How can we better support and raise the profile of UGR activities across campus?
  • Restructuring, reordering the priorities of a central office vs college-level activities
    • Empower each college to develop and promote UGR using available/existing resources to support undergrad student research
    • Use existing college administrative structures (i.e., ADR, Assoc Dean for Undergrad Studies) to administer programs at the unit level to save resources to directly support undergraduate students in research
UGR Central Office vs College-level Activities

**Central Office**
- Coordinate communication across colleges, share best-practices, maintain central website linked to college information
- Presentation opportunities – Annual Showcase, Posters at the Capital, Oswald Comp, etc
- Collect and report data from the colleges; assessment
- Promote UGR through PR and story-telling, workshop presentations
- Coordinate OVPR financial support to colleges to fund student UGR activities

**College-level Offices**
- Student recruitment and advising; help students find research mentors
- Research Activities – awarding student stipend support, travel grants, research supplies – formulaic delivery of funds from OVPR to colleges to support these activities
- Report on funds use and overall UGR activities
- Faculty recruitment and recognition
Timeline

• Sept 2020 the President moved UGR under the Office of the Vice President for Research

• Oct 2020 – discussed draft reorganization plan with academic leaders (Assoc VPRs, Deans, Assoc Deans for Research, Assoc Deans for Undergrad Education)

• Nov 2020 – established college contacts for Undergraduate Research; worked with HR to revise the staffing plan and job description(s)

• Jan 2021 – informed staff of plans, meet with college Undergrad Research advisory group, Assoc Deans for Research and Faculty Senate Council
**Timeline**

- Feb 2 – Campus-wide Communication
  - Announce: Reorganization Plan
  - Faculty Director Search – description and deadlines
  - Summer Fellowship changes – provide college contacts
- ~Early-mid Feb – new staff position should be posted
- Feb 19 – applications for Faculty Director of UGR due
- Feb 22-early March – review applications and hold interviews
- Early-mid March – Faculty Director named
- April 27-29, 2021 – Research Showcase scheduled (virtual)
Next Steps

• Hire the Faculty Director of Undergraduate Research
• Hire the new staff position in the Office of Undergraduate research
• DRAFT Funding Formula to distribute funds to colleges for direct support of undergraduate research
  • Student stipend (summer, semester), meeting travel to present research, support for necessary research supplies
  • We expect that students should be able to work with faculty across campus, not just within their own colleges
  • We will request a plan from each college as to how the funds will be distributed
  • Use a 3-year average of Credit hours completed in research/independent study classes in each college as a proxy for “research activity”
  • Each college receives $10,000 base plus funds in proportion to UG research activity: $500K total from funds currently in Office of UGR (~$300K) plus ~$200K new VPR investment
Faculty Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research (up to 50% effort)

- Advocate for and promote undergraduate research and mentored independent studies across campus. Lead the campus wide communication strategy.
- Provide leadership for the Office of Undergraduate Research and the activities coordinated through the office; supervise office staff (initially one full-time Program Coordinator). Communicate regularly with the Office of the Vice President for Research.
- Update Mission, Vision and Goals of the Office of Undergraduate Research. As the office transitions, consider new activities that could be coordinated from a central office.
- Develop and oversee data collection, data analysis and assessment of undergraduate research activities across campus.
- Support, promote and coordinate with efforts to increase diverse student participation in undergraduate research experiences, such as UNITE and LSAMP and track progress over time.
- Communicate and meet regularly with the College Representative Advisory Group and share best-practice ideas across colleges to enhance research and creative activities campus-wide.
- Represent activities of UGR to other domains, including the Office of the Provost, Student Academic Life, and College leadership.
- Prepare annual reports, budget requests and justifications for the Office of the Vice President for Research.
- Coordinate with college representatives to provide student advisors with the information and resources needed to encourage and assist students in engaging in research and mentored independent studies.
- Solicit and review college plans for support of undergraduates in research within unit disciplines.
- Lead, promote or support, as appropriate, efforts to obtain external funding to support undergraduate research opportunities.