

**Scholastic Enhancement Program
Undergraduate Research Option
(SEP/URO)
2006-07 Annual Report**



Background

The Scholastic Enhancement Program (SEP) and the Parents Office in the Division of Student Affairs began an undergraduate research option living learning community for first-year SEP students in the Fall of 2005. SEP provides admission, academic and personal guidance, and support for targeted students to ensure their completion of a degree program through coordinated services in cooperation with faculty and staff campus-wide.

The SEP undergraduate research option (URO) living learning community is a program component offered to first-year students. It is designed after successful programs offered at the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. This living learning community provided a select number of students the opportunity to live together while actively learning via their participation in faculty-directed research projects. This is the second year for SEP/URO.

Purpose

The purpose of the program is to engage first-year students in faculty research early in their academic experience. This, in turn, is intended to increase their participation in other research activities at Miami University. Faculty sponsors were responsible for identifying aspects of their own research that could engage a first-year student researcher. Their role with SEP staff assistance was to guide the student through an inquiry-base learning experience.

Student Participants

In the 2006 fall semester, eight students selected the SEP/URO living learning community as their first-choice residential option. Seven (7) students were African American and one (1) was Caucasian. All students were from Ohio, including the surrounding areas of Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. They came from a wide range of declared majors, including early childhood education, marketing, engineering, mathematics and statistics, English literature, exercise science and speech pathology. In the first few days of fall semester, one student asked to drop out of SEP/URO after she had already been paired with a faculty member. The student indicated that she did not want to be in the program and was not aware she had signed up for it. She corresponded with the Associate Dean of Students and was released from URO.

During the spring semester, all seven students continued with SEP/URO. The students attended every weekly workshops held through the semester, and all of them presented their poster and finding during the Undergraduate Research Forum held in April.

Faculty Sponsors and Assessment

We had ten faculty sponsors who submitted a project proposal form this year. Due to the low numbers of students involved, we ended up using only seven of the ten. They represented the

following departments: teacher education, educational leadership, psychology, speech pathology, zoology, and physical education, health and sports studies.

Unlike last year, an assessment survey was not administered at the end of the fall semester. A survey was sent out to participating faculty at the end of the spring 2007 semester. As of the writing of this report, all of the surveys have yet to be returned.

Results from Student Assessment Questionnaire

At the end of spring 2007 semester, the student participants were asked to evaluate and reflect on the completion of their first-year research experience with the undergraduate research program.

According to the students' assessment on the SEP Undergraduate Research Option, many indicated that it played a major role in the satisfaction of their first-year experience and academic success. Six out of the seven students (86%) stated that participating in URO enhanced their analytical, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Six out of seven students (86%) said that the experience facilitated a successful research partnership and connection with their faculty sponsor. Again, six out of the seven students (86%) felt that their faculty sponsor provided personal and academic support. Four of the seven students (57%) responded positively to how their experience helped advanced their interpersonal skills and 71% said that participating in the URO Living Learning Community enhanced their ability to interact, network, socialize and collaborate with other students. 57% pointed out that URO provided leadership opportunities for them.

This year's students did not put in as much hours studying. The questionnaire revealed that 70% of the students that remained in the program for a full year put in ten hours or less studying. Compared to the students last year, this is remarkably lower.

There was an emphasis on incorporating more social activities for the students to connect outside of the workshops. Unlike last year, there were two social events, the ropes course and rock climbing, included to promote more community and teambuilding amongst the group outside of research. Students responded favorably to the activities that were scheduled for each semester. They liked the social interaction outside the classroom. They also enjoyed holding the end-of-semester celebration in the fall at Nicole Cobb's home.

The results can be seen in quantitative terms by considering the grade point averages attained by the students during the fall and spring semester. During the fall semester, none of the seven students earned below a 2.0 grade point average. Six of the seven students (86%) earned a grade point average of 2.5 or greater with two of the six (33%) above a 3.0 grade point average. Again, by the end of the spring semester, none of the seven students (0%) earned anything below a 2.0 grade point average; six of the seven students (86%) earned a grade point average of 2.5 or greater, and four of the six (67%) earned a grade point average of 3.0 or greater.

Fall 2006	Spring 2007	CUM GPA
2.78	2.86	2.82
2.19	3.04	2.68
2.97	2.98	2.98

3.41	2.39	2.80
2.71	3.40	3.07
2.84	3.22	3.00
3.05	3.53	3.26

It follows that their cumulative grade point averages at the end of the first year also improved. None of the seven students earned a cumulative grade point average below a 2.5. The lowest cumulative grade point average was 2.68 and the highest is a 3.26. Three of the seven students (43%) earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher. That is more significant than last year. These grades verify that the program does have an immediate positive impact on students' satisfaction and academic achievement.

Involvement in SEP/URO culminated in the Undergraduate Research Forum held in April. All seven students along with their faculty sponsors were listed in the 13th Annual Undergraduate Research Forum. Like last year, all seven posters were most impressive. Two of our SEP/URO students wrote a featured article on what research meant to them and how being involved in SEP/URO has changed their perspective on research and on working with faculty.

The SEP/URO experience clearly taught students how to conduct research, collect data, and utilize the library. It introduced and provided resources that they would not have been exposed to in their first year and gave them the opportunity to interact with faculty on a more personable level. As a result of their participating in SEP/URO, one student from last year (Class 13) presented a poster and has continued to do research in his field of dietetics. Three of the seven students (43%) said they will seek future research opportunities as an undergraduate at Miami.

2006-07 Scholastic Enhancement Program: Undergraduate Research Option

Taryn D. Alexander, Early Childhood Education Major

Advisor: Kathy McMahon-Klosterman, Department of Educational Psychology
Teachers and Parents Attitudes Towards Individualized Education Plans

Ronald M. Blassingame, Marketing Major

Advisor: Ray Terrell, Department of Educational Leadership
Diversity In Athletics: In Executive Positions

Kimberly M. Hunter, Mathematics & Statistics Major

Advisor: Amanda Diekman, Department of Psychology
Possible Selves

Obiagela D. Iloka, Engineering Management Major

Advisor: David J. Berg, Department of Zoology
*Genetic Variation in *Lampsilis Cardium* from the Upper Mississippi River and Lake St. Clair, Using Mitochondrial DNA Sequences*

Hannah B. Oyawale, English Literature Major

Advisor: Alice Kahn, Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology
Waardenburg Syndrome: A Website

Antoinette Q. Williams, Microbiology Major

Advisor: Joyce J. Fernandes, Department of Zoology

Development of Adult Neuromuscular Junctions in The Fruitfly

Ashley B. Toth, Exercise Science Major

Advisor: Rose Marie Ward, Department of Physical Education, Health and Sports Studies

Eating in Stages: College Student Eating Disorder