ASSESSMENT REPORT

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT CHAIR SURVEY ON STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

JULY 2016

OFFICE OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP, CREATIVE ACTIVITIES, & RESEARCH
DEPARTMENT CHAIR SURVEY ON STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP
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Background

The OSCAR Department Chair Survey was developed by the Office of Institutional Assessment and the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, & Research (OSCAR) initially in spring 2010. It was revised with each administration, in 2012, 2014, and 2016, each time reflecting the evolving programmatic and formative assessment needs of OSCAR. The primary goals of the survey are 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 solicit feedback about future directions for the initiative. See Appendix A for the 2016 instrument.

The OSCAR Department Chair Survey was administered in late April and May 2016 to all chairs and directors of academic departments and interdisciplinary programs at Mason that offered undergraduate degree programs as of spring 2016. The Honors College was also asked to participate; although it does not offer a degree program, it serves a large number of undergraduates through course delivery, and research support, mentoring. A department-specific link to the online survey was sent to each chair or director, who was instructed to either complete the survey or forward the link to a designated respondent (such as the coordinator of the undergraduate program). Of the 51 academic units targeted, 45 completed the survey for a response rate of 88%. See Table 5 in Appendix B for this list.

Data Analysis and Results

Data were aggregated and frequencies were reported for each survey item. The survey did not require individuals to respond to every item; however, most respondents completed all items. Percentages for each item are listed with the corresponding frequency in parentheses. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Beliefs About the Current Culture and Practices Regarding Undergraduate Scholarship in the Department

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement on four items relating to their unit's culture and practices regarding undergraduate scholarship (see Table 1). Most (93%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that providing opportunities for undergraduates is a priority for their faculty, and all but three respondents believed that their upper-division students could do scholarly activities if given the opportunity. Supervising undergraduate scholarship is stated as a criterion for annual faculty review in 18 of the 45 responding departments (41%), up from 14 departments in 2014. Twenty-nine (68%) reported that faculty are rewarded for supervising undergraduate scholarship in promotion and tenure or annual review, a finding that has not changed since 2014.

It should be noted that some of the academic units targeted for this survey are interdisciplinary degree programs, and their faculty are evaluated in their respective home units. The two directors who responded to this survey but not to this item direct interdisciplinary programs (see Table 1). Faculty review and promotion and tenure are issues that OSCAR and *Students as Scholars* may wish to further investigate with individual academic units.

Table 1. Participant Beliefs About the Current Culture and Practices Regarding Undergraduate Scholarship in the Department

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Providing opportunities for undergraduate scholarship is a priority in my department (n=45)	56% (25)	38% (17)	7% (3)	0	0
The activity of supervising undergraduate scholarship is stated as a criterion in my department's yearly faculty review (n=44)	11% (5)	30% (13)	45% (20)	5% (2)	9% (4)
The activity of supervising undergraduate scholarship counts positively towards faculty promotion and tenure in my department (n=43)	28% (12)	40% (17)	21% (9)	2% (1)	9% (4)
Upper-division students in my department are able to perform scholarly activities if given the opportunity (n=45)	60% (27)	31% (14)	0	2% (1)	7% (3)

Frequencies are noted in parentheses; percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Students as Scholars Program Outcomes

Participants were asked to report on how their department "fits" or identifies with the *Students as Scholars* program outcomes (see Table 2). Overall, most responded positively, reporting that their department fits at least "somewhat" with the outcomes. Respondents were the most likely to report that their undergraduate students who have participated in student scholarship are prepared for the future (91% "completely" or "mostly"). Degree programs may be offering more opportunities for undergraduate scholarly activity than in 2014, with 56% of chairs reporting that their programs do this "completely" and 33% reporting "mostly."

Table 2. Department Views on *Students as Scholars* Program Outcomes

Item	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Not at all	Not sure
Student scholarship is pervasive in my department	18% (8)	38% (17)	33%(15)	11% (5)	0
My department's undergraduate degree programs offer opportunities for scholarly inquiry, creative activities and/or research	56% (25)	33% (15)	11% (5)	0	0
My department's faculty support undergraduate students in scholarly inquiry, creative activities and/or research	36% (16)	53% (24)	9% (4)	2% (1)	0
My department's undergraduate students participate in scholarship, creative activities and/or research	29% (13)	29% (13)	42% (19)	0	0
My department's undergraduate students have opportunities to communicate the results of their research or creative activities	47% (21)	27% (12)	24% (11)	0	2% (1)
My department's undergraduate students who have participated in student scholarship are prepared for their career goal and/or advanced study	40% (18)	51% (23)	7% (3)	0	2% (1)

Frequencies are noted in parentheses; percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding (n=45 for all items)

Department Plans to Participate in Undergraduate Scholarship

Chairs were asked to report on their department-level activities and plans regarding participation in the *Students as Scholars* initiative. More than one-third (17 units) reported that they had already received an OSCAR Scholarship Development Grant application in the past, and five departments plan to apply for a grant. The sum of these figures represent almost half of all departments with undergraduate degree programs, thus exceeding OSCAR's initial goal of 35% for the first five years of the initiative.

Most departments with undergraduate programs have either received (27 departments) or plan to apply (9 departments) for at least one Research and Scholarship Intensive (RS) course for their students. The finding that six departments were "not sure" whether their department would apply for an RS course designation, and another three had no plans to apply may be a concern for OSCAR to reach its target of 100% by the end of 2016. See Table 3.

Table 3. Department Plans to Participate in Undergraduate Scholarship

Item	Received	Plan to apply	Have no plans to apply	Not sure
Scholarship Development Grant (SDG)	38% (17)	11% (5)	7% (3)	44% (20)
Research & Scholarship Intensive course (RS)	60% (27)	20% (9)	7% (3)	13% (6)
External funding (e.g. grants, contracts, fellowships, or other sponsored awards) that includes support for undergraduate student scholarship	42% (19)	22% (10)	13% (6)	22% (10)

Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents could select "all that apply" (n=45)

Comments and Suggestions

Survey respondents were given an opportunity to respond to open-ended items. Comments were analyzed for themes, and are summarized by item below.

Item 4: *In what ways have the first five years (2011-2016) of the Student as Scholars initiative impacted your department?*

- Theme 1: Increased opportunity for undergraduate research (18)
    - Built research foundation for students
    - More opportunities to present at scholarly meetings
    - *"Direct experiences in advanced research opportunities that strengthen their future career outlook"*
    - *"Have benefited enormously from working closely with faculty mentors"*
    - Received support for research (e.g., funded research, resources for conferences)
- Theme 2: Improved department/university attention to undergraduate research (13)
    - Redesigned curriculum and created more RS/inquiry courses
    - Added a credit options for independent research
    - Received more support and endorsement for what we have already been doing (i.e., undergraduate research)
- Theme 3: Increased faculty involvement in undergraduate research (7)
    - Created a dialogue among faculty
    - Raised awareness and helped faculty to think through how to incorporate scholarship into undergraduate program
    - Funding from OSCAR enhanced faculty research
    - Brought faculty attention on the importance of undergraduate research
- Theme 4: Great impact but only for a small number of students (4)
    - A small number of faculty have been supportive

- o   No department-wide initiative

"The Students as Scholars initiative has had a large impact in getting students involved in research."

"The SAS initiative has focused the department attention on expanding undergraduate research training and opportunities and to engage students in research activities."

Item 5: *From your perspective, to what extent has the Students as Scholars initiative transformed Mason's culture regarding undergraduate research?*

- Theme 1: *Students as Scholars* has formalized an existing culture (13)
    - o   Validates or builds on work already being done
    - o   Increases the priority for undergraduate research
    - o   Provides a focus and incentives to faculty and students
    - o   Increases visibility
- Theme 2: "Tremendous impact"; "significantly transformed"; "amazing job" (11)
    - o   Has changed attitudes toward undergraduate research
- Theme 3: Has created opportunities for undergraduates (9)
    - o   Creates interest and opportunities in specific subject areas
    - o   Makes research more accessible to students
- Theme 4: Has provided support for departments to get projects going (5)
    - o   *"It is a chance to gather intellectual and creative resources for collaboration."*
    - o   Motivates faculty
    - o   Provides travel funds to support underrepresented programs
- Theme 5: Has not transformed culture/it's too early to make a clear statement, but is contributing in a positive way (3)
    - o   Related theme: Has not had much of an impact in respondent's department or college (3)

"The Students as Scholars initiative has instilled a culture of undergraduate research as a natural component of the undergraduate educational experience. Mason students seem to recognize that undergraduate education is more than just attending lectures. This culture of undergraduate research has helped attract prospective students to Mason's programs, and has been an effective recruiting tool."

"OSCAR has been the most important initiative in my…years at Mason."

Collaboration with Campus Initiatives

Chairs were asked to select which existing institutional initiatives OSCAR and *Students as Scholars* should support, and then which three initiatives should receive priority. Table 4 lists the initiatives in order of the most selected "important directions." The top priorities are designated with "**" for the most selected, and "*" for the second most selected.

Table 4. Collaboration with Campus Initiatives

	Important Directions	Top 3 Priorities	
Relationship between research and writing	33	17	**
Pathways to graduate education and careers	32	24	**
Graduate student research (materials, workshops, etc.)	32	15	**
Multi-disciplinary projects and curricula	29	15	**
Community engagement	29	13	*
Student leadership development	27	9	*
Alumni connections	24	6	
Pipeline from community college to Mason	23	4	
Entrepreneurship initiatives	20	7	
Global and international engagement	20	8	
Retention initiatives	19	4	
Campus diversity issues	16	4	
Multi-lingual learners	9	2	

Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents could select "all that apply" (n=45)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, it appears that faculty in undergraduate degree programs at Mason are increasingly positive about the aims and activities of OSCAR and *Students as Scholars*, and department chairs believe that their departments are offering more opportunities for students to participate in research or creative activity. An issue that continues to be a primary concern is how faculty work with undergraduates is rewarded in annual evaluation and in the promotion and tenure process. If faculty are to devote time and effort to mentoring undergraduates, they must consider it to be a worthwhile endeavor that supports their own professional success as well as that of their students. It is also important to acknowledge that faculty are looking to OSCAR as a source of financial support for their own scholarly work, or as a source of resources for the department to be able to offer more opportunities for students. Faculty may also see OSCAR as a place where they are recognized and rewarded for their work. These findings have implications for the future allocation of resources for undergraduate research; if OSCAR is the only source of funding for undergraduate research activity, then it offers a tenuous foundation for the work in academic programs.

As OSCAR and *Students as Scholars* mature, faculty can provide direction for the collaborations that will best strengthen this foundation and support student success. The findings from this survey point to the desire for support in promoting pathways to graduate education and careers, and the relationship between research and writing, among others. The finding that OSCAR and *Students as Scholars* plays an important role in providing a higher level recognition and awareness of existing faculty activity should not be overlooked; this recognition supports student recruitment and retention efforts as students see potential areas of engagement on campus. As the institution strives to enhance its status in research, it is essential to continue supporting this work at the institutional level. As one chair noted in the survey, "Part of being a Research I University is infusing research throughout our curriculum."

Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, & Research (OSCAR)
Department Chair Survey on Student Scholarship

In 2009, the Mason community adopted a university-wide initiative* to improve student success through increased participation in and celebration of undergraduate research and creative activities. In addition to supporting individual opportunities for undergraduate projects, Students as Scholars engages in extensive faculty and curricular development to create courses that meet learning outcomes at three developmental levels: discovery, scholarly inquiry, and creation of scholarship.

Every two years, we ask for information from department chairs about departments that serve undergraduate degree programs. The results are used by the Students as Scholars QEP Leadership Council to enhance and improve our programs to provide opportunities for your students and support for your faculty as we promote student scholarship.

Please note that individual department responses to these questions will be kept confidential, although some of the data will be aggregated and shared with the Mason community. We may contact you for further information about your answers. We appreciate your feedback.

Thank you! If you have questions about this survey, please contact Bethany Usher, Director of Students as Scholars, at busher@gmu.edu, or Stephanie Hazel in the Office of Institutional Assessment at shazel@gmu.edu or by phone at 703.993.5106.

* This initiative is Mason's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), as required by the institution's accreditation agency, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

DEFINITION: Student Scholarship

Student scholarship is the process of undergraduates generating and sharing knowledge or creative works. It includes undergraduate research and creative activities, as conducted within your discipline.

1. Please answer the following questions based on the current culture and practices in your department:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
a. Providing opportunities for undergraduate scholarship is a priority in my department	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. The activity of supervising undergraduate scholarship is stated as a criterion in my department's yearly faculty review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. The activity of supervising undergraduate scholarship counts positively towards faculty promotion and tenure in my department	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Upper-division students in my department are able to perform scholarly activities if given the opportunity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Students as Scholars Program Outcomes:
   The following outcomes are used to determine Mason's success in fostering a culture of student scholarship. Where do you think your department fits in terms of these outcomes?

	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Not at all	Not sure
a. Student scholarship is pervasive in my department	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. My department's undergraduate degree programs offer opportunities for scholarly inquiry, creative activities and/or research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. My department's faculty support undergraduate students in scholarly inquiry, creative activities and/or research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. My department's undergraduate students participate in scholarship, creative activities and/or research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. My department's undergraduate students have opportunities to communicate the results of their research or creative activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. My department's undergraduate students who have participated in student scholarship are prepared for their career goal and/or advanced study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Please tell us about your department's plans to participate in undergraduate scholarship. Has your department already received the following:

	Received	Plan to apply	Have no plans to apply	Not sure
a. Scholarship Development Grant (SDG)	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Research & Scholarship Intensive (RS) course	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. External funding (e.g. grants, contracts, fellowships, or other sponsored awards) that includes support for undergraduate student scholarship	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.	In what ways have the first five years (2011-2016) of the *Students as Scholars* initiative impacted your department?
Comments:	

5.	From your perspective, to what extent has the Students as *Scholars initiative* transformed Mason's culture regarding undergraduate research?
Comments:	

6. At Mason, there are always new initiatives that compete for recourses. *Students as Scholars* and OSCAR are committed to supporting undergraduate student scholarship through individual student and faculty curricular support, but we also want to expand our collaborations in ways that benefit our students and faculty. Which of the following campus initiatives do you think Students as Scholars should connect with and support?

   Please rate the following suggestions shared by the QEP Leadership Council, and add your own.

	Select the options you think are important directions Select all that apply	Select the options you believe should be the top 3 priorities Select 3
a. Alumni connections	☐	☐
b. Campus diversity issues	☐	☐
c. Community engagement	☐	☐
d. Entrepreneurship initiatives	☐	☐
e. Global and international engagement	☐	☐
f. Graduate student research (materials, workshops, etc.)	☐	☐
g. Multi-disciplinary projects and curricula	☐	☐
h. Multi-lingual learners	☐	☐
i. Pathways to graduate education and careers	☐	☐
j. Pipeline from community college to Mason	☐	☐
k. Retention initiative	☐	☐
l. Relationship between research and writing	☐	☐
m. Student leadership development	☐	☐
n. Other	☐	☐

Table 5. List of Survey Respondents, by College/School

College/School	Department/Unit
Business	Accounting
	Finance*
	Information Systems & Operations Management
	Management
	Marketing
Conflict Analysis & Resolution	Conflict Analysis & Resolution (undergraduate program)
Education & Human Development	Recreation, Health & Tourism (Division of Health and Human Performance)
	Recreation, Health & Tourism (Division of Recreation, Health & Tourism)
Health and Human Services	Health Administration & Policy
	Nursing
	Global and Community Health
	Social Work
Honors College	Honors College
Humanities & Social Sciences	Bachelor Individualized Study
	Communication
	Criminology, Law, and Society*
	Economics
	English
	Global Affairs
	History & Art History
	Latin American Studies
	Modern & Classical Languages
	School of Integrated Studies (formerly New Century College)
	Philosophy
	Psychology
	Religious Studies
	Russian & Eurasian Studies
	Sociology & Anthropology
School of Policy, Government & International Affairs	Public & International Affairs
Science	Atmospheric/Oceanic/Earth Science
	Biology
	Chemistry and Biochemistry
	Environmental Science & Policy
	Forensic Science
	Geography/Geoinformation Science
	Mathematics*
	Physics and Astronomy
Visual & Performing Arts	Computer Game Design
	Film & Video Studies
	School of Art
	School of Dance

College/School	Department/Unit
	School of Music
	Theatre*
Volgenau School of Engineering	Bioengineering
	Civil, Environmental & Infrastructure Engineering*
	Computer Science
	Cyber Security Engineering
	Electrical & Computer Engineering*
	Information Sciences and Technology
	Mechanical Engineering*
	Systems Engineering & Operations Research

*Did not complete survey