



Guest Editorial

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During your undergraduate education many people will talk to you about why you should conduct research or creative scholarship and all of their reasoning will be solid. “Do research because it’s at the core of a liberal arts education,” harkens the endowed professor. “Do research because you will gain important skills and learn to think more critically,” implores the academic adviser. “Do research so you can build up your credentials and make yourself more marketable,” suggests the career adviser. I am guilty of using all of these reasons to encourage undergraduates to conduct research or creative scholarship. I don’t feel guilty about it because there is a bevy of evidence that supports these assertions. Undergraduate research is the quintessential high impact learning practice, resulting in positive gains in important indicators of student success from persistence to skill acquisition to increased interest in academic pursuits to critical thinking. But that evidence has been around for decades now, and despite its appeal, participation in undergraduate research is still relatively low when viewed in contrast to its benefits. So I am going to try and appeal to a different motivating factor. I’m not going to say you should do research or creative scholarship to benefit yourself, I’m going to encourage you to conduct research and explore all forms of creative scholarship so you can save the world.

It is no secret that there is a general feeling of uneasiness about the future amongst millennials. The current generation of college students faces what appears to be an array of diverse, complex and wicked problems, including everything from climate change to pandemics to college debt and underemployment to extreme poverty and homelessness. And while sitting through lectures, earning good grades and receiving a baccalaureate degree will help prepare you to enter the work force as an effective professional, that qualification alone is not enough to tackle the issues you will face. The world needs ambitious thinkers and innovators. It needs big data explorers and disrupters. It needs compassionate and creative organizers, planners, and designers. And it needs learned public servants and nuanced policy makers. In short, the world needs people with a researcher’s mentality and tenacity. So the next time you experience that intellectual itch during a class or while reading a text, consider exploring it further. Begin now to foster an inquiring mind; it will reap benefits down the road that you cannot currently conceptualize.

From this perspective, when your network of faculty mentors, instructors and advisors suggest that you should consider conducting research or creative scholarship, they are asking you, in part and implicitly, to be selfless. They are encouraging you to pursue your interests while considering the greater good. And they are urging you to make discoveries that can improve the human condition. If you want to prepare yourself to save the world, conducting

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research and creative scholarship is as good of a place as any to start. We are all depending on it.

Fortunately, at the University of Oregon, there are many opportunities to get involved in research; whether it is in a lab, in the studio, at an archive, out in the field, at an incubator or in a study carrel at the library. There is also a suite of resources available to support your research activities. You can apply for an Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) Mini-grant to obtain up to \$1,000 in financial support for materials, supplies and/or travel that is necessary to conduct research or creative scholarship. You can also apply for the Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI) Fellowship and receive a \$5,000 stipend to conduct research or creative scholarship over the summer. Both of these programs are open to students from every academic discipline on campus.

There are also research programs that are more discipline specific, such as the Presidential Undergraduate Research Scholars program for students majoring in chemistry, physics, geological sciences and mathematics, or the Humanities Undergraduate Research Fellowship program for students conducting humanities related research. These programs only scratch the surface of the list of opportunities available to you at the University. On campus there are over twenty research programs to apply to and there are hundreds more open to you at institutions in the United States and around the world. You are only limited by your ambition and your time here, so make it count.