

Introduction

Shauna Reilly, Northern Kentucky University

doi: 10.18833/spur/8/1/7

The themed Fall 2024 issue of *Scholarship & Practice of Undergraduate Research (SPUR): Career Readiness* features content addressing career skills obtained through undergraduate research. The collection offers two open-to-read articles that contribute to our understanding of the current state of career readiness as achieved through undergraduate research and transferable skills. It also includes four additional articles, including writing skills, career readiness from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) programs, mentoring; and transfer students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Career readiness has been a subject undergoing intense study in academia and the Council on Undergraduate Research has created a task force to address this issue. The taskforce composed of Amanda MacDonald (Virginia Technical University), Jeanne Mekolichick (Radford University), Eric Hall (Elon University), Kristin Picardo (St. John Fischer University), and Rosalie Richards (Stetson University) provide an overview of the literature surrounding undergraduate research and career readiness. This article provides a systematic overview and demonstrates the need for further research to propel the literature forward and provide deeper insight into the work behind career readiness as well as the need to keep addressing this issue given the increasing pressures in higher education to provide return on investment, particularly in the area of career preparation.

Charles Gunnels and colleagues (Florida Gulf Coast University) explore the skepticism around higher education and career readiness. In this piece, they explore a quality improvement plan that connects undergraduate research throughout the curriculum as a vehicle for career-ready transferable skills. Utilizing this program and trumpeting the value of undergraduate research, this team shows the 21st-century skills that students gain from participating in student research.

Thomas Polk (George Mason University) continues the thread of career readiness by looking specifically at the value of writing in building these skills. This piece provides evidence that writing skills are valued career competencies among employers and that undergraduate research provides the vehicle to hone those skills. As such, Polk

provides recommendations for mentors on how to more fully develop this competency through undergraduate research.

Andrea Weidman (University of Kentucky), Abigayle Parham (University of Kentucky), Molly Fisher (Rowan University), and Jennifer Wilhelm (University of Kentucky) delve into the world of REUs with their contribution. They find that students strengthen their career readiness research and presentation skills throughout these NSF-funded summer programs. By focusing on skills gained through research and how they can apply to career readiness, the authors also connect student and program success in their analysis.

Beverly Kahn (Farmingdale State College, SUNY) takes a slightly different approach by looking at subgroups of students (namely minoritized, low-income and first-generation), and mentoring effects in undergraduate research through a program of research aligned mentorship. Kahn finds that this program of intentional mentoring decreases time to graduation and increases retention and grade point average. Thus, this mentoring program sets students up for career success and creates confidence and bonds with faculty that are instrumental in the students' success.

Finally, Kimberly Schneider (University of Central Florida), Michael Aldarondo Jeffries (University of Central Florida), Colleen Smith (North Carolina Central University), Donna Chamely-Wiik (Florida Atlantic University), William Kwochka (Western Carolina University), Daniel Meeroff (Florida Atlantic University) and Evelyn Marquest Frazier (Florida Atlantic University) explore transfer students and their adaptation and success as a result of research mentoring. The authors of this study explore the value of engaging incoming transfer students in STEM in a year-long undergraduate research learning community where they build skills and connections to assist in persistence and graduation. This article explores a less studied body of students in undergraduate research but also the progress and talents of these students within a program that sets them up for career readiness.

These articles provide readers with an examination of the additional value that student research brings to career readiness and provide a wide dissection of the work currently being done in this area. While there is so much more work to be done to elevate this work, these pieces make meaningful contributions to the literature that should provoke additional discussion and investigation.