Effective Practices for Research Mentors

LUROP, the Loyola Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, aims to facilitate quality undergraduate research between students and mentors and to bring students into a community of scholars within their field. Here are some effective practices LUROP promotes for research mentors.

- Approach mentoring in part like teaching, training students in the skills they need to succeed in their research project. See LUROP’s list of learning objectives for undergraduate researchers for a general list of the skills you should consider teaching your researchers.

- Set clear expectations for the student’s role (work habits, time commitment, etc.), and your goals for them as a researcher. Listen to their own expectations and goals, and formalize your working relationship through a learning agreement/research contract. See LUROP’s sample research learning agreement for an example.

- Provide regular, constructive feedback, and expect regular communication from your researcher. Consider weekly meetings and monthly reports.

- Make yourself available to your researcher for questions and advice, and spend an adequate amount of time with them to cultivate their academic communication skills.

- Even if students are working as part of a collaborative team or assisting you with your project, work with your researcher to carve out a niche over which they have responsibility and take intellectual ownership.

- Train your researcher in research ethics and responsible conduct.

- Let your student researcher know about opportunities to present their research at conferences and help equip them to deliver effective research presentations.

- Assist your researcher in building a professional network—introduce them to colleagues and graduate students who may serve as additional mentors, consider taking them to professional conferences provide opportunities, and introduce them to honors societies and professional organizations.

- Help students make connections between their research and their coursework.

- Discuss graduate school and career options with your researcher where appropriate, offer useful advice about their professional career.

- Involve your researcher in—or inform them about—the procedures that support their research, including IRB and other compliance requirements and financial paperwork.

- Meet with other research mentors to discuss effective practices.

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