Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (URSCA)
Proposed ~~Quality Standard~~Guidelines for UW-Superior
May~~March~~ 2015

Background

UW-Superior has adopted the Council on Undergraduate Research's (CUR's) definition of undergraduate research: ***An inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline*.** Our campus uses the phrase "Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity" (URSCA) to provide more inclusive language.

CUR identifies 3 models of URSCA:

1. Students collaborating on or assisting with a faculty member's research or scholarship;
2. Students pursuing their own independent projects, mentored by a faculty member;
3. Students conducting research or creative assignments within the curriculum.

While UW-Superior has students engaged in all 3 models, integrating URSCA into curriculum ensures that all students have opportunities to benefit from inquiry-based learning and it is the subject of this standard.

An URSCA-integrated curriculum engages students in inquiry-based activities along a continuum from introduction at the entry level to independent research, scholarship, or creative projects. The specifics of the continuum will vary from one discipline to another, but best practices are common to all disciplines. An URSCA-integrated curriculum includes both the process of student inquiry and its product, and identifies the pathway along the continuum for students in the discipline.
Below are some of the **recommended best practices**, written broadly for use across all disciplines:

- Maintaining the focus on the process of student inquiry or creativity, rather than the product
- Introducing students to inquiry-based activities early in their studies
- Developing student skills ~~over time~~ by avoiding segregation into specific courses
- Scaffolding of inquiry/research skills and creative techniques throughout the curriculum
- Engaging students in small group and collaborative work
- Providing frequent feedback in an iterative process that allows students to work more independently over time
- Providing opportunities for mentored independent research, scholarship, or creative activity
- Providing opportunities for interdisciplinary research and creative projects
- Providing opportunities for students to share the results of their work

Proposed ~~Quality Standard~~Guidelines for Integration of URSCA into Curriculum

Integration of URSCA is achieved not by designating one or two courses, but by being intentional about the use of URSCA throughout the curriculum. Successful integration of URSCA requires scaffolding and sequencing of academic coursework. Academic programs that select URSCA as a High Impact Practice for majors or minors should be prepared to adopt an integrated curriculum ~~and identify one or more "pathways"~~ for students to reach the identified learning outcomes.

An URSCA-integrated curriculum utilizes URSCA best practices and emphasizes the teaching and use of inquiry-based processes, which are scaffolded throughout the major or minor. An URSCA-integrated curriculum includes all of the following types of courses, with students typically taking one or more of each type of course:

1) Courses in which inquiry and research skills~~, and~~ scholarly tools, and creative techniques appropriate to the discipline are **introduced.** These may include first year seminars, and introductory or survey courses.
2) Intermediate level major content course(s), in which skills are **developed.**
3) Courses in which skills introduced earlier are **mastered.** These may include research methods courses, theory courses, or seminars. Some disciplines may include a separate capstone or independent research course in which the student demonstrates proficiency in the discipline through an independent project.

Recommended Process for Majors/Minors Selecting URSCA for Integration into Curriculum

The following process is provided as a guideline for academic programs that select URSCA as a High Impact Practice for majors/minors. Specific majors and minors may have already addressed some of these steps and will enter the process at varying levels.

1. Program faculty and staff have internal discussions to ~~determine~~articulate what defines research/scholarship in the discipline, and to identify the research/creative/scholarly abilities and proficiencies desired of graduates in this major/minor.
2. The program ~~develops~~articulates student learning outcomes for research, scholarship, or creative activity specific to the discipline and relative to the UW-Superior's Integrated Learning Goals and Outcomes. ~~Some general student learning outcomes for URSCA are provided below, but these will vary between disciplines.~~ URSCA is a good match with outcomes for the Communication and Critical and Creative Thinking Integrated Learning Goals.
3. The program does curriculum mapping to determine where in the curriculum these outcomes are addressed. Where in the coursework for the major or minor are the identified skills/proficiencies introduced, developed, and mastered? Are they appropriately sequenced?

4. The program documents the skills/proficiencies they have identified, the courses where those skills are taught (which may include courses outside of the major/minor), and how those courses will be integrated into the major/minor requirements. The document produced identifies both the skills/proficiencies and the program's plan to teach these at varying levels throughout the curriculum.
5. The program makes any necessary changes to courses, major/minor requirements, and sequencing, and simultaneously works on incorporating URSCA best practices (such as those listed on page 1~~earlier~~).

~~**General Student Learning Outcomes for URSCA**~~

- ~~Understanding of inquiry methods used in the discipline~~
- ~~Competency in information literacy/retrieval skills appropriate for the discipline~~
- ~~Ability to collect and analyze original data or information, and/or analyze information from different viewpoints (discipline specific)~~
- ~~Critical thinking skills, including the ability to formulate questions and articulate arguments supported by evidence~~
- ~~Ability to work both independently and collaboratively with peers and instructors~~
- ~~Ability to communicate research/scholarship and its significance orally and in writing~~
- ~~Ability to apply research/creative questions to real world contexts or problems~~
- ~~Understanding and appreciation of ethical issues associated with scholarship/research in the discipline.~~

Annotated Bibliography for Best Practices

The Council on Undergraduate Research website: www.cur.org

Karukstis, Kerry and Timothy Elgren. *Developing and Sustaining a Research-Supportive Curriculum: A Compendium of Successful Practices.* Council on Undergraduate Research, 2007.

Montana State University website: http://catalog.montana.edu/core-general-curricular-requirements/#knowing_courses

Shanahan, Jenny Olin. "Building Undergraduate Research into the Curriculum." In Hensl, Nancy and Paul, Elizabeth, Ed. *Faculty Support and Undergraduate Research: Innovations in Faculty Role Definition, Workload, and Reward.* Council on Undergraduate Research, 2012.

Helpful Resources for Developing an URSCA Plan for Academic Programs

(This section is a work in progress)

CUR identifies four basic characteristics that define URSCA; these are useful in determining whether student projects qualify as URSCA:

1) It is original, at least to the student
2) It is appropriate for the discipline, scaled to an undergraduate level
3) It is mentored by faculty
4) The results are shared or disseminated

The Arts and Humanities Division of CUR provides these additional specifics to the definition of undergraduate research:

Undergraduate research in the arts and humanities is student-driven, faculty-mentored inquiry, scholarly investigation, and/or creative activity. The undergraduate researcher's work may contribute to outcomes including, but not limited to, individual or collaborative analytical writing; oral presentation; small analytical products; works of visual art; compilations of scholarship; exhibits; musical compositions; plays; performance; public scholarship; and/or peer-reviewed publication. Whatever the research product, its value is generally weighed by standards specific to experts in the field, whether jurors, editors, or reviewers.

Types of courses that may include URSCA:

URSCA–inclusive courses include the introduction and student use of research skills or methods of inquiry that are important in the discipline, but URSCA is not necessarily the central focus of the course. URCSA-inclusive courses may include general education or major courses at any level.

URSCA-intensive courses are those in which research or scholarly or creative work appropriate to the discipline is the major focus of the course. Some formal instruction may also take place, but in general more than 50% of the class time is devoted to the research, scholarship or creative project. Examples include science courses with open labs; art courses with open studios; discipline specific courses in which students spend the majority of their time doing research or creative work; and courses In which students demonstrate proficiency through an independent project.