Interacting with Administrators to Enhance Faculty-Student Scholarship

Roger S. Rowlett
Gordon & Dorothy Kline Professor
Colgate University Department of Chemistry

The Basics
- What is my goal?
- What do I need?
- Who do I approach?
- What can I do?

What is my goal?

What is Undergraduate Research?
- Ideal
  - Original, significant scholarship
  - Conducted collaboratively with undergraduate students
  - Leading to publication in peer-reviewed literature
  - Capable of attracting and sustaining funding
- Reality
  - May be limited by institutional or disciplinary factors

What do I need?

The Research Supportive Environment
- Faculty
- Resources
- Time
- Departmental culture
- Institutional policies
- Students

For more information, see Characteristics of Excellence in Undergraduate Research (2012) Roger S. Rowlett, Linda Blockus, & Susan Larson, CUR, Washington, DC.
Faculty
- Commitment to scholarship in collaboration with undergraduates
- Experience and accomplishment in research in graduate and post-doctoral training
- Personal professional development goals

Resources
- Equipment renewal & replacement funding budget line
- Operating supplies budget
- Space
- Instrumentation
- Library holdings
- Administrative support (Grants Office)

Resources
- New faculty startup funding
- Matching funds for external grants
- Internal support for summer research assistantships

Time
- Teaching Load
  - Quantity & “Quality”
  - No summer teaching obligations
- Support staff
  - Laboratory instructors
  - Instrument technicians
  - Postdoctoral fellows or lab technicians

Departmental Culture
- Research-supportive and research-rich curriculum
- Course scheduling
  - Creation of blocks of time during the week
  - No compensated or uncompensated teaching overloads
- Protection from all-university programs and service in early part of probationary period

Departmental Culture
- Budget
  - No division between “teaching” and “research” operational budgets
  - “Inequitable” budgeting
    - Not all research requires the same resources!
- Mentorship
- Leadership by example
Institutional Policies

- Professional development
  - Sabbatical Leave
  - Junior Faculty Leave
  - Professional training grants
- Strategic plan that values undergraduate research
- Teaching credit for supervising undergraduate research
- Undergraduate research explicitly valued in tenure and promotion documents

Who do I approach?

Faculty Colleagues

- Mentors
- Collaborators
  - Internal (change or research)
  - External (research)

Department Chair

- Knows where institutional resources are available
- Can advocate to higher administration
- Can be an excellent sounding board for ideas
- May have discretion to implement some policies internally

Higher Administration

- Ultimate control of resources
  - Space
  - Funding
- Controls institutional policy
  - Tenure & promotion (typically)
  - Professional Development programs
  - Accounting of teaching load

What can I do?
## Strategies for Change

- **Identify peer or aspirant groups**
  - Reference their environment
  - Model their programs

- **Be a problem solver, not a problem finder**
  - Do your homework
  - Have a plan
  - Cost it out
  - Work within the reasonable resource limitations of your institution
  - Initial progress will have to be resource-neutral
  - Give up something to get something else (better)
  - Be creative!

- **Show how undergraduate research is compatible with your institutional strategic plan**
  - Describe the institutional benefits of faculty scholarship and undergraduate research
    - Enhanced student engagement/learning
    - Access to external funding
    - National recognition
    - Student recruiting
  - Think "and", not "or"
    - Integrated teaching-research courses/labs
    - Research-based capstone courses/honors program
    - Undergraduate research is recognized as a "high-impact educational practice" as well as a means of doing high-quality scholarship at a PUI

- **Write a Departmental Mission Statement**
  - Conceive a 5-year Departmental Plan
    - Identify learning goals which may likely include an undergraduate research component
    - Document and commit to specific departmental goals to be achieved
    - Document and commit to specific individual goals to be achieved
    - Review these goals regularly with higher administration

- **Conduct an External Review**
  - Self-study is an opportunity to document your current situation and be reflective of the most urgent priorities for change
  - Third party credibility can leverage your case for change
  - Bring in a facilitator to break down institutional communication barriers

- **Be patient and persistent!**
  - Educational fashions change
  - Administrations change
  - Resource situations change
  - You may have to demonstrate success before you get the resources
    - Consider “trial” or “optional” programs to buy time and resources
    - Nothing succeeds like success

- **Put yourself in a position to initiate change**
  - Consider becoming (gasp!) a chair or member of higher administration
  - Consider accepting appointment to policy-formulating entities on campus
What did you learn?

Got questions?