

Annual Report of the Council on Undergraduate Research 2022-2023

Council on Undergraduate Research membership for 2022-2023:

- Matthew Ayres, Biological Sciences (Chair)
- Ethan Lewis, Economics
- Peter Mucha, Mathematics
- Paul Young, Film & Media Studies
- Lisa Baldez, Government
- Carolyn Dever, English
- Brian Melzer, Tuck School of Business representative)
- Paul Barr, Geisel School of Medicine representative
- Lee Lynd, Thayer School of Engineering representative
- Jane Lipton, Chemistry (Dean of Faculty representative)
- Roger Sloboda, Biology (Provost representative)
- Jed Dobson, Institute for Writing and Rhetoric (COI representative)
- Margaret Funnell, Assistant Dean of Faculty for Undergraduate Research

The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUGR) met once during this academic year. As noted in previous reports, the size of the Council (13 in total) makes it difficult to schedule meetings. The Council also engaged in discussion via the discussion board on the Council Canvas site. That Canvas site was established this year in an effort to share information, improve communication, and ensure that Council members have easy access to relevant information.

Council discussion topics

Discussions this year were in two main areas, and some key takeaways are as follows:

1. Membership of the Council

- The Council is too large which makes it difficult to schedule meetings and have productive discussions during meetings.
- There are some representatives who do not need to be regular members of the Council. For example, there is a representative of the Council on Instruction (COI), but most of the CUGR role is focused on co-curricular research. If there were a topic that involved the curriculum, and COI representative could be invited.
- Some members feel that they cannot adequately represent the the group they are representing. For example, Geisel has multiple components and types of faculty appointments, and it may be that only senior Geisel leadership can speak to all issues and constituencies.

2. Functions of the Council

- The Council is intended as an advisory board for undergraduate research across the institution, but it is often difficult for the Council to differentiate between undergraduate research in general and UGAR (Undergraduate Advising & Research).
- Some of the functions listed in the OFDC are overly specific and should be removed (e.g. determine selection criteria for research programs administered by UGAR).
- Some functions seem useful, but Council members do not feel that they have the knowledge or expertise to implement them (e.g. act as an advisory body to faculty submitting grant proposals that involve undergraduate research).
- Some of the functions are better understood and implemented at a senior leadership level rather than by a Council (e.g. travel safety policies).

Other issues related to undergraduate research

The Council identified a number of important issues related to undergraduate research but felt that these were better addressed outside of the structure of College Councils:

- College travel safety policy: implications for faculty and for academic departments and programs. Because faculty are the mentors for undergraduate researchers, they have responsibility for undergraduates traveling for research.
- Student stipends for research: general principles, equity, and legal/tax requirements. There are multiple offices and academic departments/programs that provide funding for undergraduate research, and there are no central institutional guidelines about that.
- Honors thesis funding: process and equity. Some academic departments and programs provide funding for honors theses and some do not. Some have access to more funding than others. Some vet honors thesis funding applications and some do not. That landscape can result in inequities.
- Highlighting undergraduate research: representing the depth and breadth of student research and opportunities to engage with faculty. External ranking systems do not recognize Dartmouth as being in the upper echelon of institutions for undergraduate research, and that is likely at least in part because there are not robust systems for highlighting undergraduate research.

Recommendation

It is our recommendation that the Council on Undergraduate Research be discontinued. After the planning phase of the Future of Arts and Sciences project is complete, we recommend a discussion about whether a reconstituted group would be useful and if so, what type of group that would be (e.g. College Council, Arts & Sciences Committee, advisory group). Dean of Faculty Elizabeth Smith has been informed of this recommendation and is in agreement.