CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

AA-002-112

Creation of URFAC to Increase Alignment with Teacher-Scholar Model

Academic Affairs Committee  
Date:  February 20, 2012

Steering Committee
Received and Forwarded  
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Academic Senate  
Date:  March 7, 2012
First Reading
Date:  April 11, 2012
Second Reading
Background

Undergraduate Research is now widely embraced across US higher education as a high-impact practice that increases student learning, self-confidence, and scholarly engagement. "Undergraduate research" can be defined so that it encompasses all disciplines: [http://www.csupomona.edu/~urbronco/whatis.shtml](http://www.csupomona.edu/~urbronco/whatis.shtml). Students involved in undergraduate research are more likely to graduate from college, pursue a post-graduate education, and succeed in their chosen careers.

This referral calls for the establishment of an **Undergraduate Research Faculty Advisory Council (URFAC)** at Cal Poly Pomona to coordinate and enhance opportunities for mentored undergraduate inquiry and scholarship across all eight colleges.

URFAC would build on the success of the faculty-led UR Bronco Project ([http://www.csupomona.edu/~urbronco/](http://www.csupomona.edu/~urbronco/)) that established a foundation for cross-disciplinary dialogue and coordination of undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activities on campus. The UR Bronco Project was the outcome of Cal Poly Pomona’s participation in the 2008 CSU Workshops on Institutionalizing Undergraduate Research sponsored by the Washington D.C. based Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR).

UR Bronco has accomplished all short-term goals described in its Action Plan (see web site). The establishment of a formal URFAC as a university-level committee with faculty appointed according to standard Senate procedures would allow our campus to continue addressing long-term goals by creating a centralized campus program to support undergraduate research, ensuring that it remains a permanent part of campus culture.

**Role of undergraduate research:** Undergraduate research is a cornerstone of the Cal Poly Pomona *Learn by Doing* tradition and is inherently intertwined with effective teaching. The campus has many externally-funded programs that support undergraduate research including McNair Scholars, MBRS-RISE, CSU-LSAMP, and CCRAA. Faculty members from many disciplines also engage undergraduates in research and other creative activities with and without external funding. All of these forms of engagement with faculty have been shown to improve student retention, graduation rates, and postgraduate success and, hence, to support the strategic plan of the university and all three components of CPP’s Teacher-Scholar model.

**Role of URFAC:** Although undergraduate research is part of campus tradition and culture, we lack a formal faculty advisory council to support and assess undergraduate research activities and there is considerable potential to expand opportunities for undergraduates to become involved in various aspects of research and creative activities. Experiences at other universities have shown
that the success of undergraduate research programs is greatly enhanced by some form of centralized coordinating body. Existing Cal Poly Pomona undergraduate research programs have been duplicating efforts and only recently have begun to work together.

To address these and other issues, URFAC, as proposed, would be charged to:

- Advise and assist the AVP for Research with matters related to undergraduate research, including the selection of students representing the campus in the CSU system-wide student research competition;
- Increase, coordinate and publicize opportunities for students to participate in research experiences on and off campus;
- Facilitate coordination among campus programs designed to provide and enhance undergraduate research experiences;
- Assist with the assessment of the effectiveness and outcomes of campus programs designed to increase undergraduate research experiences;
- Coordinate, support and publicize opportunities for students to participate in presentations and symposia both on and off campus, including the CSU system-wide student research competition and SCCUR. Consider the development and implementation of a campus-wide event;
- Serve as campus representatives in CSU system activities related to undergraduate research (e.g. symposia, grant writing, workshops and the new CSU undergraduate research Consortium);
- Work with the Faculty Center for Professional Development to establish learning communities to share strategies for undergraduate research mentoring across disciplines and to study ways in which such learning experiences can be incorporated into the curriculum;
- Publicize undergraduate research achievements to the wider community (e.g., elected representatives, donors/benefactors, parents, alumni, industry, prospective students, faculty and employers).

Organization of Undergraduate Research Faculty Advisory Council (URFAC): It is proposed that URFAC be established as a faculty advisory board representing all colleges and major funded undergraduate research (UR) programs. URFAC would elect a new chair every year and advise the AVP for Research on UR matters.

The following are proposals regarding membership of URFAC:

1. Each college will be represented by at least one, and no more than two faculty members. The Principal Investigators of externally-funded programs supporting undergraduate research (e.g. McNair Scholars, MBRS/RISE, CSU-LSAMP) would be ex-officio, voting members of URFAC.
2. College representatives on URFAC will volunteer to serve and submit an application that describes their qualification for the committee, including an explanation of their experience with, and commitment to, undergraduate research experiences. College representatives will be appointed by the
Executive Committee of the Academic Senate according to its standard procedures;

3. The AVP for Research will be an *ex-officio*, non-voting member of URFAC;

4. College representatives to URFAC will be appointed for terms of two years and incumbents will be eligible for reappointment an unlimited number of times;

5. Representatives from each college will have staggered terms and the initial appointments for one and two-year terms will be made randomly. There will be no limit on the number of consecutive terms a person may serve as a member of URFAC.

6. The chair of URFAC will serve a one-year term and be elected by the membership at the start of the academic year. There will be no limit on the number of consecutive terms a person may serve as chair of URFAC.

**Resources Recommended and Consulted**

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<th>Recommended</th>
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Discussion

Essentially, the creation of URFAC will formalize UR Bronco as a university level committee under the oversight of the Senate. The Academic Affairs Committee considered various alternatives for URFAC, as discussed under the parallel referral on the URC. These included merging the two activities under a unified committee or transferring some of the responsibilities of the URC to URFAC. However, the committee considered that broadening the remit of URFAC would impair its unitary focus on undergraduate research.

Similarly, with regard to the proposed inclusion of assisting the AVP for Research with the selection of students representing the campus in the CSU student research competition, this has formally been a remit of the URC. However, since this competition includes both undergraduates and graduates this is an activity that spans the boundary between the URC (or the Council for Graduate and Faculty Scholarship [CGFS] as now proposed) and URFAC. Hence, the Committee considers that rather than formally reallocating this responsibility, the selection of students could be made jointly by the reformed URC/CGFS and URFAC under the guidance of the AVP for Research.

Although there remains some intersection of responsibilities between the URC/CGFS and URFAC, the Committee considers this is best handled by overlapping memberships. While this is currently the situation, it should be mandated for the future as a guarantee.

The committee therefore concluded that the proposal in the referral has merit should be adopted largely as it stands. One minor modification is that to ensure future co-ordination between the new URC/CGFS and URFAC, we recommend that it should be stipulated that at least one elected member of the URC/CGFS be represented on URFAC and that similarly that at least one member of URFAC be represented on the URC/CGFS. This may be fulfilled through overlapping memberships or by officers of one body acting in an ex-officio role on the other.

Recommendation

The committee recommends that UR Bronco activities be formalized as the Undergraduate Research Faculty Advisory Council (URFAC). The role of URFAC will be to:

- Advise and assist the AVP for Research with matters related to undergraduate research, including the selection of students representing the campus in the CSU system-wide student research competition;
- Increase, coordinate and publicize opportunities for students to participate in research experiences on and off campus;
- Facilitate coordination among campus programs designed to provide and enhance undergraduate research experiences;
• To provide a service to the campus for assessing undergraduate research outcomes and to create a centralized source of campus-wide assessment data on undergraduate research that can be used to support faculty/programs seeking external funding.
• Coordinate, support and publicize opportunities for students to participate in presentations and symposia both on and off campus, including the CSU system-wide student research competition and SCCUR. Consider the development and implementation of a campus-wide event;
• Serve as campus representatives in CSU system activities related to undergraduate research (e.g. symposia, grant writing, workshops and the new CSU undergraduate research Consortium);
• Work with the Faculty Center for Professional Development to establish learning communities to share strategies for undergraduate research mentoring across disciplines and to study ways in which such learning experiences can be incorporated into the curriculum
• Publicize undergraduate research achievements to the wider community (e.g., elected representatives, donors/benefactors, parents, alumni, industry, prospective students, faculty and employers).

Organization of URFAC
URFAC is to be established as a faculty advisory board representing all colleges and major funded UR programs. URFAC will elect a new chair every year and advise the AVP for Research on undergraduate research matters.

Membership of URFAC will be governed by the following requirements:
1. Members of URFAC shall be full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty at Cal Poly Pomona. Each college and the university library will be represented by at least one, and no more than two faculty members. College and library representatives on URFAC will be volunteers who apply to serve. They will submit an application to the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate that describes their qualifications for the committee, including an explanation of their experience with, and commitment to undergraduate research. Applicants will be appointed by the Executive Committee according to its standard procedures.
2. College representatives to URFAC will be appointed for terms of two academic years and incumbents will be eligible for reappointment an unlimited number of times.
3. Representatives from each college will have staggered terms and the initial appointments for one and two-year terms will be made randomly. There will be no limit on the number of consecutive terms a person may serve as a member of URFAC.
4. The chair of URFAC will serve a one-year term and be elected by the membership at the start of the academic year. There will be no limit on the number of consecutive terms a person may serve as chair of URFAC.
5. The following will also be represented on URFAC in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity: the AVP for Research; the Principal investigators of
externally-funded programs supporting undergraduate research (e.g. McNair Scholars, MBRS/RISE, CSU-LSAMP); a representative of the library staff, a representative from the Faculty Center; and a member of the URC/CGFS.