

**From: UA Faculty and Staff Mailing List on behalf of Perspectives from the Provost**  
**Sent: Thu 2/2/2006 2:53 PM**  
**To: UA-MAIL@LISTS.UAKRON.EDU**  
**Subject: Strengthening our community via student-faculty research**

**February 2, 2006 [perspectives@uakron.edu](mailto:perspectives@uakron.edu)**

A community of scholars: strengthening our community via collaborative student-faculty research by Billi Faye Copeland, director, McNair Scholars Program and STARS campus coordinator

BY INTEGRATING TEACHING AND RESEARCH, universities such as UA are enriching the learning experience for students while creating an array of opportunities for faculty and the institution.

Student research, of course, is how students apply knowledge gained in the classroom to explore problems and to increase intellectual capacity. But studies have also shown that student research improves retention<sup>1</sup> by promoting "students' inclusion in the community of scholars. As they become collaborators with their mentors or colleagues within a research group, students become junior partners in the research enterprise."<sup>2</sup> Faculty members benefit, too. As iron sharpens iron, the University will continue to attract the best and brightest faculty to teach the best and brightest students via collaborative research.

There are many programs on our campus that have successfully integrated teaching and research. Programs such as Dr. Coleen Pugh's National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates (NSF-REU) in polymer science and Dr. Judith Palagallo's NSF-REU in math help foster intellectual partnerships via collaborative student-faculty research. More recently, Dr. Bill Donovan, chemistry, was awarded a collaborative grant for an NSF-Undergraduate Research Center. This program is unlike the rest in that it seeks to introduce the inquiry-based model as a curriculum overhaul, rather than independent research experience. Additionally, there are many other projects that support student research on our campus. For the past two years, the vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School, George R. Newkome, has hosted a campus-wide multi-disciplinary forum to showcase student research - the [Conference on Undergraduate and Graduate Student Research](#).

Student research opportunities also advance society. As faculty and administrators, we need to prepare students to the best of our ability to solve homelessness, to study the effects of violence, to cure AIDS and other diseases, to develop polymers that enable precise drug delivery and to create works of art that improve the quality of life. Research is the vehicle.

On our campus, there is an informal network of faculty who support student research and we collaborate extensively. On occasion, I field questions on the most time consuming aspects of student research, administrative/fiscal project management, student

management and impart strategies. I advise those on campus who are considering pursuing a grant for student research and assist with recruitment.

But my primary responsibility lies with the McNair Program, the federally funded TRIO program that promotes undergraduate research, and the Ohio Board of Regents Student Achievement in Research and Scholarship A community of scholars: strengthening our community via collaborative student-faculty research by Billi Faye Copeland, director, McNair Scholars Program and STARS campus coordinator

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UA has hosted a [McNair program](#) since 1999. The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program is one of several programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education that serves first-generation, under-represented and economically disadvantaged scholars. Nationally, there are 179 McNair programs that serve more than 4,500 undergraduate research fellows. The goal of the program is to help diversify the American professoriate, and we accomplish that by exposing undergraduate students to graduate-level research, one-on-one faculty mentoring, the culture of academia, and the life of a Ph.D.

Similarly, the Ohio Board of Regents' Student Achievement in Research and Scholarship (STARS) program provides students with academic counseling, independent research opportunities, conference participation and travel scholarships, networking opportunities, and assistance in applying to graduate school.

These programs will help keep student-faculty research robust on this campus, and that is good news for all of us.

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<sup>1</sup> Merkel, C. "Undergraduate Research at the Research Universities." *New Directions on Teaching and Learning*, Summer 2003, Vol. 93, 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.41.

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"Perspectives from the Provost" is sent out weekly during the fall and spring semesters. We welcome your comments. Send them to [perspectives@uakron.edu](mailto:perspectives@uakron.edu).