

Responses to 2025 Office of Undergraduate Research Program Review

Background:

On March 12-13, 2025, the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) underwent a thorough program review. The team reviewed a substantial self-study document prepared by Therese Cavlovic, Director of OUR, and Erin Kendall, Program and Outreach Coordinator for OUR. The review team also met with various stakeholders including:

- Faculty mentors
- Undergraduate Research Students
- Undergraduate Research Scholarship Recipients
- HIP directors
- Executive Leadership

The program review team consisted of two internal faculty members and one external consultant who has expertise in reviewing and understanding undergraduate research programs and opportunities. The team consisted of:

- Janice DeCosmo, Ph.D., University of Washington (retired). Janice served as the chair of the program review team.
- Adolph Yonkee, Ph.D., Weber State University, Earth and Environmental Sciences
- Aaron Ashley, Ph.D., Weber State University, Psychological Sciences

The review team took a SWOT approach to assessing the programs and operations of the Office of Undergraduate Research. The team concluded that OUR supports undergraduate research through an impressive portfolio of programs that is quite ambitious for the size of the staff and resources available to the overall program. However, this can also be seen as a potential threat as resources are spread too thin to be sustainable. The team noted several weaknesses that provided opportunities for improvement that drew on OUR's strengths.

OUR's response will focus on the review team's recommendations that were formed on the basis of the SWOT analysis.

The review team recommended six areas for improvement:

1. Increase awareness and access to research opportunities for students.
2. Raise participation and provide more robust support for faculty mentors.
3. Work with university development to raise funds for OUR programs.
4. Implement data tracking systems to better document undergraduate research activities across campus.
5. Focus OUR vision on student access and learning to better align with WSU priorities.
6. Assess and potentially re-allocate OUR staff and resources to focus on areas of greatest impact for students.

For each of the above, the team provided a host of strategies that could be employed that are reflective of our strengths and weaknesses. Tables 1-6 list each strategy for each of the above areas, accompanied by a response and a strategy for implementation.

The plan of action entails 5 key activities that align with each strategy presented in Tables 1-6:

Leveraging GivePulse as a UR database of activities (recommendations 1, 2, 4)

1. Faculty create events
2. Data from these events will be used to track co-curricular activities not tracked by an OUR program
3. Tracking of hours and students will be reported to Deans
4. Tracking of hours and students will be used to create milestone awards for faculty mentors

Undergraduate Celebration Lunch (recommendations 1, 2, 3)

1. Establish a celebration lunch at the beginning of fall semester (replacing the Welcome celebration dinner for Research and Summer Fellows). Includes Fellows, Undergraduate researchers, mentors, administration, donors, and students who are interested in learning more

CATS video productions (recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5)

1. Message from the Director to be shared at College opening meetings
2. Showcase UR on campus and post on OUR's website
3. Faculty spotlights (annually)
4. Share with Development Office
5. Will align student experiences and faculty spotlight to reflect a revised vision

Create College-oriented "Research Cafes" (recommendations 1, 5)

1. A living vision: Student-organized, led by OUR ambassadors, research cafes that includes current UR students and those who would like to learn more. OUR funds treats.
2. Recruit OUR ambassadors from each College

Vision alignment (recommendation 5)

1. Establish a vision that connects Weber principles of student access, connectedness, partnerships, etc.

Calendar

Plan of Action items

Date*	Item
May 2025	Identify students for videos to showcase
	Recruit ambassadors with and without HIEE Pays
	Welcome Lunch Planning/Save the date
	Identify Pilot Research Cafes
	Strategy of Research Cafes
June 2025	Meet with Development for donor invites to lunch
	Letters to Deans noting UR accomplishments
	Provide resources to mentoring
	Reach out to grad programs on feasibility of grad student mentors
	Work with Enterprise Applications on creating searchable online journal
July 2025	Lunch invitations to donors, admin, fellows, students, HIEElight students
	Director video for college opening meetings
	Initiate discussions with Wildcat Advantage for integration with Report Gallery for GivePulse events (co-curricular)
July 15, 2025	OUR staff meeting on resource allocation.
August 2025	Canvas module for first year students with interest in UR
	Meet with ambassadors on hosting research cafes
	GivePulse events
	Identify faculty mentor milestone award criteria
	New Vision statement
	Grant revisions, explicit mention of departmental matching
By end of fall 2025 semester, completion of	CATS student videos to showcase
	Research Cafes
January 2026	Student videos live on OUR website
	Identify faculty to spotlight in CATS video
By end of March	Faculty spotlight video completed
By end of spring semester, completion of	Faculty spotlight video posted on OUR website
	Volume 20 ERGO, online

* When no specific date is mentioned, it is assumed by end of month

Table 1: Increase awareness and access to research opportunities for students.

Strategy Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
1. Short videos of students doing/discussing research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify students from various disciplines/utilize UR committee for recommendations. 	Identify: by May 2025.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with CATS for production. 	CATS Production: Fall 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a designated page on OUR's website and post videos on website 	Live: by January 2026
2. Reach First Year Students (e.g., partner with FYE)	<p>We currently work with the recommended areas. We provide information for how to get involved with UR. Will strategize with Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>We will create a module in Canvas (see 4 below) with the information on getting involved.</p>	<p>Meet with Leigh Shaw, Director of Undergraduate Studies (FYE): May 2025</p> <p>Canvas Module: August 2025</p>
3. Establish Undergraduate Research Day	<p>OUR hosts a welcome dinner at the beginning of AY. We host Fall Research Symposium, and are a big player in the Spring Symposium. It does not seem feasible to add to the symposium days or create a new day, but rather, we will <u>move the welcome dinner to a lunch</u> that invites Fellows, Summer Fellows, Donors, and Administration.</p> <p>In order to engage students early, we will invite students to the lunch who express interest in learning more about UR research when they apply to Weber State and/or work with Wildcat Advantage (WA) as a HIEE-light.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning: May 2025 (tentative date: week of Sept 14, 2025) Save the Date: by June 2025 Coordinate with Advancement: June 2025 Invitations: end of July 2025
4. Provide Canvas Module	See 2 above	
5. Information Sessions (utilize staff/ambassadors)	<p>Pilot "Research Cafes" in one or two colleges. See 6 below. A research café involves inviting students to meet about research opportunities and learn what others are doing. (more in item 6 below).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pilots: May 2025 Identify "what" happens in a café: May 2025 Meet with ambassadors and WA on a strategy: By Aug 2025 First cafes commence fall 2025.
	Create a video that can be presented to faculty at opening meetings	Work with CATS to create video: July 2025
6. Foster building of student research community	<p>Investigating college-based "research cafes" (see 5 above). OUR has attempted to create a community in our library location, but it has not been successful. We would like to pilot the research café idea in two of our most active colleges on campus, sciences and social and behavior sciences, for example. We will work with the ambassadors & WA on moving forward. We will assess, make changes, and expand to other colleges.</p> <p>Also see 3 above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pilots: May 2025 Identify "what" happens in a café: May 2025 Meet with ambassadors and WA on a strategy: By Aug 2025 First cafes commence fall 2025.

Table 2: Raise participation and provide more robust support for faculty mentors.

Strategy Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
<p>1. Work with deans/chairs to raise faculty awareness</p>	<p>Create a video that can be presented to faculty at opening meetings</p>	<p>Work with CATS to create video: July 2025</p>
	<p>Develop research events in GivePulse (e.g., Cavlovic’s Lab) for students to apply to participate and track research hours; this will be sent to Report Gallery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach out to current mentors and request that we add them to GP and provide them access to update any ongoing projects or needs. 2. Add funded UR grant recipients into GivePulse, so they are able to track hours. 3. Add this to our UR grant orientation/training for students so they know how to track their hours. 	<p>June 2025 (work with Jenny Frame/Heather Chapman)</p> <p>Completed: August 2025</p>
	<p>Provide a letter and data to each Dean that identifies faculty contributions to UR, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UR hours (to be made available via GP) 2. Students mentored 3. UR activity (grant, travel to conference, Symposium presentations, mentoring UR, CRE courses) 	<p>By June 30 (ongoing) each year after compiling annual report.</p>
<p>2. Increase LT funding to enhance support of faculty research that includes students</p>	<p>Continue to work with Advancement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thank you notes from students 2. Bi-semester meetings with development officer 3. Review and fine tune 1-page naming document 	<p>We currently provide item 1 to Advancement Office. At the end of each AY, will assess 1-page naming document.</p>
<p>3. Create database of mentors</p>	<p>See 1 above: Develop research events in GivePulse.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach out to current mentors and request that we add them to GP and provide them access to update any ongoing projects or needs. 	<p>August 2025</p>
<p>4. Create/Leverage support and guides for mentoring</p>	<p>Work with Mentoring. Provide resources that the Review Team suggested in the Program Review Report.</p>	<p>May 2025</p>
<p>5. Engage graduate students in mentoring</p>	<p>Discuss/Work with Graduate Programs and determine if there are opportunities for this.</p>	<p>May 2025</p>
<p>6. Work collaboratively with academic departments to raise awareness for all forms of UR</p>	<p>Create video that can be presented to faculty at opening meetings</p>	<p>Work with CATS to create video: July 2025</p>
	<p>Cc the letters to the Deans to each respective academic department that is noted in the letter.</p>	<p>By June 30 (ongoing) each year after compiling annual report.</p>

<p>7. Implement a system for awarding research (inconsistent across campus)</p>	<p>Provide a letter and data to each Dean that identifies faculty contributions to UR, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UR hours (to be made available via GP) 2. Students mentored 3. UR activity (grant, travel to conference, Symposium presentations, mentoring UR, CRE courses) 	<p>By June 30 (ongoing) each year after compiling annual report.</p>
	<p>Design and analyze feasibility of an award for mentoring a certain number of students or a reaching a milestone of UR hours.</p>	<p>August 2025. Over the course of summer 2025, will coordinate with staff and OUR-faculty associates on milestone recognition</p>
	<p>Create a spotlight on the OUR website</p>	<p>Identify a faculty member by May 2026 with production over the summer or early fall semester of 2026.</p>

Table 3: Work with university development to raise funds for OUR programs.

Strategy Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
1. Identify potential donors, naming endowment	Continue to work with Advancement. 1. Thank you notes from students 2. Bi-semester meetings with development officer 3. Review and fine tune 1-page naming document	We currently provide item 1 to Advancement Office. At the end of each AY, will assess 1-page naming document.
2. Establish consistency an communications across units that fund research	Provide a letter and data to each Dean that identifies faculty contributions to UR, including: 1. UR hours (to be made available via GP) 2. Students mentored 3. UR activity (grant, travel to conference, Symposium presentations, mentoring UR, CRE courses) 4. Create a table that is include in these letters that provides information from each of the other colleges.	By June 30 (ongoing) each year after compiling annual report.

Table 4: Implement data tracking systems to better document undergraduate research activities across campus.

Strategy Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
1. GivePulse integration with CatTracks (both within and outside of OUR programs)	Develop research events in GivePulse (e.g., Cavlovic’s Lab) for students to apply to participate and track research hours. 1. Reach out to current mentors and request that we add them to GP and provide them access to update any ongoing projects or needs.	August 2025
	Note: In terms of integration, GivePulse communicates with Report Gallery. CRE-curricular communicates with CatTracks and Report Gallery.	

Table 5: Focus OUR vision on student access and learning to better align with WSU priorities.

Strategy Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
1. A greater focus on increasing access and awareness for students.	Write new vision statement—leverage OUR-associated faculty	August 2025

Table 6: Assess and potentially re-allocated OUR staff and resources to focus on areas of greatest impact for students

Strategy Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
1. Move ERGO online	Work with Enterprise Applications on creating searchable website for online journal.	Initiate discussions with campus resources by June 2025. Live by May 2026
2. Develop research opportunities database	Develop research events in GivePulse (e.g., Cavlovic's Lab) for students to apply to participate and track research hours. 1. Reach out to current mentors and request that we add them to GP and provide them access to update any ongoing projects or needs.	August 2025
3. Leverage the work of OUR committees to engage departments in co-funding	Emphasize the importance of matching funds on UR student grants; edit Research Grants with explicit language	By August 2025
4. Assess all OUR activities for impact and be willing to re-allocate time and resources	July 15, 2025 workshop meeting scheduled with OUR Staff	July 15, 2025