

## Faculty Influence on Undergraduate Researchers

Each year, hundreds of MSU undergraduate students and their faculty mentors collaborate on research and creative activities. The positive impact these experiences have on students, faculty, and the MSU community is significant and wide-ranging.

### Faculty are Central to the Success of Undergraduate Research at MSU

When students are asked to talk about their undergraduate research opportunities, they repeatedly note the significant impact of their faculty mentors on the quality of their experiences. One student shared, “The respect and assistance given to me by faculty and graduate students in the department has been phenomenal. It has helped me narrow my interests and delve deeper into the knowledge base to prepare me for graduate school.” Another added, “Getting to know and working with faculty members has been great. It’s nice to finally form a network at such a large university.”

MSU faculty provide students with the opportunity, expertise, and guidance that lead them to amazing discoveries – discoveries about their scholarship and their abilities. In short, undergraduate research is successful because of the commitment of the faculty. Data from the 2008 MSU Undergraduate Research Survey supports this assertion:

- 70% of students learned about undergraduate research from a faculty member
- 45% of students decided to try a research experience because a faculty member encouraged them
- 77% of students were mentored by faculty members
- 85% of students had the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member
- 67% of students met with their faculty mentors at least three times/month

### The Impact of Undergraduate Research on Faculty

There are few arguments against the participation of undergraduate students in research and creative activities. However, many faculty members rightly worry about the impact of their involvement as an undergraduate research mentor on their own scholarly productivity. Although mentoring undergraduate scholars does include a time commitment, it also has a number of benefits for faculty members beyond the positive impact they have on student learning and preparing the future professoriate. MSU faculty members who have previously served as mentors have noted the following outcomes of their involvement in undergraduate research:

- They were more productive in their scholarship
- Students’ independent projects often served as pilots for future research
- Undergraduate student participation contributed to increasing the quality and quantity of their publication record
- It was gratifying to witness the growth in confidence in students as they became more knowledgeable and gained a sense of belonging in the research effort
- Students are smart, talented, and fun to work with in scholarly settings
- Students contributed to helping research teams make significant strides

Clearly, faculty play a key role in our efforts to expand research opportunities for undergraduates. They represent key conduits for getting information to students, and their encouragement serves as a powerful motivator to students.