

2.3 Transforming the Undergraduate Experience through Research

The mission of the University of Houston is to discover and disseminate knowledge through the education of a diverse population of traditional and non-traditional students, and through research, artistic and scholarly endeavors, as it becomes the nation's premier public university in an urban setting.

Drawn to UH by its strengths as a diverse metropolitan research university, or tied to the area by social or economic factors, our students seek above all else a useful education – one that will prepare them for today's workplace and serve as a cornerstone for professional growth throughout their careers. In order for UH to secure our students' full commitment to the learning process, they must believe that what they are learning can be applied in the real world. Our student-centered Quality Enhancement Plan, the **Discovery-Based Learning Initiative**, will provide opportunities for students to develop the research-related skills they need in order to adapt and succeed – and to equip them to do so at their fullest potential.

In their own words...

"I have only one condition in making this gift. The University of Houston must always be a college for working men and women and their sons and daughters. If it were to be another rich man's college, I would not be interested."

*Philanthropist Hugh Roy Cullen,
on the occasion of the first of many Cullen
family contributions to the University*

Whether through course-based assignments or mentored projects, our plan to expand undergraduate research experiences includes a robust interdisciplinary approach to study and inquiry, beginning early in our students' academic careers and continuing throughout, so that upon graduation they are equipped with the broad range of skills necessary to compete in an unpredictable world. The research experiences that our QEP fosters will enhance student learning by challenging them to think critically, creatively, and ethically; to explore topics that interest them; to manage projects; to work collaboratively; and to communicate using a variety of media to diverse audiences. Our QEP facilitates the practice and refining of these skills by encouraging faculty to engage students in research projects on and off campus. By their very nature, research projects require students to familiarize themselves with university resources through interaction with faculty, fellow students, and institutional resources in a way that fosters engagement, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging – the very elements that are often cited by transfer students as missing in their university experience.

Our QEP connects the education and research missions of our university. In keeping with our mission, the QEP provides resources and opportunities for all students – traditional and non-traditional – regardless of academic background or social circumstances. Moreover, our QEP reinforces the link between UH and our dynamic and vibrant metropolitan city, connecting students to Houston's many resources while engaging corporate and community organizations. By renewing our commitment to student learning and increasing student engagement with faculty and the community, our QEP will help us deliver the education students seek and employers value.

Transforming the Experience

Where we've been:

- ◀ Some courses with research-based learning components
- ◀ Stipend-supported mentored research opportunities for fewer than 300 students annually
- ◀ Limited student awareness of research activities on campus

Where we're going:

- ▶ A University-wide effort to develop a research-supportive curriculum through enhancement of existing courses and creation of new courses
- ▶ An expansion of mentored research opportunities
- ▶ Workshops and online tutorials for students to develop research-related skills
- ▶ A new Work-Study Research Internship Program
- ▶ New opportunities for research internships on campus and in the Houston area
- ▶ Development of graduate student mentors for undergraduate researchers
- ▶ Opportunities for students to learn from guest practitioners and scholars
- ▶ Multiple venues for dissemination of student research and creative activity
- ▶ An online information clearinghouse for research-related resources and research opportunities

