Session Title: Virtual Mentorship; A Roundtable on Undergraduate Management Research

Abstract: This roundtable is designed to provide faculty members the ability to take some time with colleagues to discuss best practices, advantages, and disadvantages of managing undergraduate management research virtually. Reflecting on previous experiences and getting feedback from the student's point of view will allow for revelations on teaching and learning strategies that can be used to help students learn about management research. This session is open to anyone interested in mentoring undergraduates on management research to help uncover how they can reinforce and expand learning outside of the classroom.

Keywords: Mentorship, Undergraduate Research, Virtual

Session Format: 60- minute Roundtable

Resources Needed: Movable chairs to sit in a circle.

Unique Contribution: This work has not been presented previously or published.

Introduction

In the previous two years as universities felt the impact of Covid, most on-campus activities were switched to virtual in a matter of days or even hours. This impacted all areas of management education as not just teaching but also student extracurriculars and advising had to be done remotely. Research in labs as well as individual research projects with undergraduates, were conducted remotely often using email, Zoom, or phone calls (Heimann, 2021). Both faculty and undergraduate students learned how to utilize numerous virtual tools in order to maintain progress on research projects. The virtual format helped to alleviate immediate concerns but looking forward they provide both benefits and drawbacks for conducting undergraduate management research.

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Theoretical Foundation

At the start of the pandemic, numerous faculty members lacked the resources and skills needed to effectively teach virtually (Sahu, 2020) especially with added burdens caused by a world health event (van Esch & Wiggens, 2020). However, teaching is only a part of instructors' jobs, and as faculty lacked the resources to teach online effectively, most were also unprepared to

complete other job functions like advising and research online. This transition was not just difficult on faculty though, during the pandemic and switch to virtual college students lost their eagerness to engage and achieve goals (Daniels, Goegen, Parker., 2021) as they faced heightened psychological stress from social isolation (Mughal, Raza, Ullah., 2021). Extra-curricular activities are often used to engage and motivate students and research labs can help students connect with peers, fighting isolation. Answering the call for papers, undergraduate research also provides mentoring, which is well-known for its positive impact on diversity and inclusion (Murrell et al, 2021). The commitment of higher education institutions, staff, and volunteers to virtual mentoring programs helped limit setbacks in relationships, supports, and services that students needed more than ever during this tremulous time.

The transition to virtual research has introduced many opportunities as well as new challenges to instructors and students. Students who started a virtual undergraduate research project during the pandemic indicated that they saw benefits including being able to do research from comfortable spaces and while traveling and taking care of family obligations (which were heightened during the pandemic), they had more time to focus on research since they did not have to commute to campus for research, and they were able to attend workshops and conferences virtually that would have been cost-prohibitive for them to travel to in person. They also indicated some challenges including having to work harder on developing relationships than they thought they would in person and having to find new ways to collect data when participants could not be asked to a lab or approached around campus. Students found that they were still able to get mentorship on their career aspirations and that they were able to learn the research skills they needed for the project and for their future goals. Additionally, they learned virtual

teamwork and online etiquette skills which they would not have in person. Learning and education literature supports this indicating that students acquire essential insight into the kinds of careers they want to pursue through their undergraduate research experiences, and mentors can play a crucial role by providing advice, making observations, and giving feedback (Talbert et al, 2021).

Teaching Implications

This session will allow instructors to discuss best practices for effective teaching of undergraduate researchers outside of the classroom virtually. This roundtable will allow faculty to both understand students' struggles along with their success in being mentees through a pandemic. It will also give an opportunity for teaching professionals to learn from students as well as each other. The first intended outcome is to understand both sides of mentoring virtually. The second intended outcome would be to understand the benefits that come along with virtual undergraduate research. The third and final outcome for this roundtable would be for participants to understand what still needs to be improved when it comes to mentoring online. Online mentoring can continue to improve for both protégés and mentors and can be supplemented with in-person activities in the future.

Session Description

In this 60-minute session, we will begin with short introductions, first, introducing the participants to the research advisor and the three students currently in the lab and then giving all participants a chance to introduce themselves. Based on the number of participants the discussion can be held as a whole group or if there are a large number of participants then we will break the discussion into smaller groups. There will be no more than three small groups so each group has

a student facilitator and participants will be divided so that there's equitable experience with virtual management research in each group.

The conversation will center around the following questions:

- What unique benefits do virtual labs provide undergraduate management students interested in research?

- What barriers are there in virtual undergraduate management research right now? How can the unique benefits previously discussed help us to address these barriers?

- What aspects of virtual undergraduate management research should be continued and how can it be supplemented with in-person activities?

- Based on this discussion what can you apply at your university next semester? What support or resources do you need to do this?

Allowing participants to discuss their own experiences learning from the good, the bad, and the ugly (Edelson et al., 2019), brainstorm best practices and get student feedback on ideas. If the group has split into smaller groups they will reconvene or the whole group will switch to focus on major takeaways and implementation strategies for the last 15 minutes. Participants may elect to sign up for an email update where they can share what they are implementing, how it is going, and ask questions from other participants going forward.

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