

STUDENT-FACULTY RESEARCH

Research is an integral part of undergraduate education at Randolph-Macon. The college's liberal arts tradition is linked to research through the common goal of active, investigatory learning. In our academic programs, student discovery and exploration of ideas are paramount to the educational experience. By engaging in meaningful research experiences, students become active learners and take responsibility for their own learning.

The model of student research, coupled with presentation and publication opportunities, extends throughout the college. Currently, the integration of research into the educational process at Randolph-Macon College primarily occurs through two distinctive and formal programs – departmental research requirements and the Schapiro Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program – both intended to create an inquiry-based experience.

Departmental Research Projects

All Randolph-Macon students are required to complete a capstone experience; for many students, this takes the form of a research project in their major field of study carried out during their senior year. Majors in a department follow a core of course requirements intended to introduce students gradually to the research process. By following this core, undergraduates reach the senior year adequately prepared for meaningful, independent research. In addition, most departments offer advanced students the opportunity to engage in one-semester guided research projects or two-semester Senior Projects.

The Senior Project

Having obtained the consent of the major department or council no later than the beginning of their senior year, suitably qualified students may elect to do a six-semester-hour special project in their major fields.

The senior project, which must be performed over two terms, may be in the form of library research, an advanced study of a particular topic in the field, a laboratory research problem, or any other exercise agreed upon by the major professor and student. The successful completion of the project affords evidence of the student's capacity to do satisfactory work where individual initiative is involved. A distinctive element of each Senior Project is a written thesis defended before a faculty panel in the presence of the department and students. Senior projects are completed only when a faculty committee of three members is satisfied with the research project and with the student's oral defense of the project. At least one member of a committee must be drawn from outside the department in which the project is taught.

Semester hour credit for the first term of a two-term senior project will not be recorded until both terms have been successfully completed by the student. Enrollment in the second term is dependent upon successful completion of the first term. If a student fails to successfully complete the second term, a grade of F will be recorded for the second term.

Schapiro Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program

Professors Schreiner and Terrono, Directors.

The Schapiro Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) is a competitive research program that provides students across all disciplines the opportunity to identify and execute a research project alongside a faculty mentor in a nine-week period during the summer. This total summer immersion experience supplements research activities that occur during the academic year. In consultation with faculty mentors, students submit proposals that are evaluated by faculty with expertise in the topic of research. Students who are awarded SURF summer fellowships complete a substantive paper or other discipline-appropriate project during the summer research experience and are required to present their findings at a celebratory conference at the end of the summer. Additionally, students are encouraged to present their work at an appropriate professional meeting and explore opportunities to publish their research in peer-reviewed journals.