

Collaborative Research: The Benefits of Business Faculty and Students Working Together

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Recent headlines like “Business Education: The Race to the Bottom,” and “Business Educators Struggle to Put Students to Work,” tell only one side of the story about our undergraduate business curriculum and its focus, or lack thereof, on rigor. With business fields accounting for the most popular and largest of all undergraduate programs in the United States, granting 20 percent of all bachelor degrees, faculty and students alike have a responsibility to improve the actual and perceived quality of our programs.

One way to upgrade the education faculty bestow and the education absorbed by students is through collaborative research. What we mean by collaborative is truly collective research between two individuals who share a common interest. This is not an easy task to accomplish, especially when one person is the faculty member and the other is an undergraduate student.

Our student-faculty research partnership was initiated through the McNair Scholars program at St. Edward’s University, a small, (approximately 3,500 undergraduate students) private, Catholic university located in Austin, Texas. The purpose of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program is to encourage low-income individuals who are first-generation college students and/or traditionally underrepresented in graduate education to pursue doctoral study. Thus, through this national program an undergraduate student becomes a scholar and the faculty member becomes the research director.

We have both benefited a great deal from our collaborative research, from personal enrichment and professional development, to acceptance to a prestigious graduate school. We will share with you the steps that you can take to undergo a successful research agenda. We will also describe our experiences presenting at several conferences, and our success and struggles to publish.