

KEY FINDINGS FROM OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE

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In their assessment of undergraduate research, Occidental College has examined two questions: who participates and what are the outcomes. The assessment effort shows that:

- ♦ the students enrolled in independent study courses during the academic year generally reflect the gender and ethnic distribution of students in the Occidental population
- ♦ women, Asian-American, Native American, and high-GPA students are somewhat more likely to participate in independent study projects
- ♦ white males are under-represented.

Assessment of students who receive academic year undergraduate research support (college-funded program) or summer research support (college and externally funded) indicates that:

- ♦ arts and humanities students are underrepresented
- ♦ African-American and Latino students are underrepresented
- ♦ the gender ratio of participants reflects the college population
- ♦ 51% of the 238 summer research students were invited [by the faculty (30%) or other students (21%)] to join in an ongoing summer research program.

The 238 summer research students identified the following characteristics and expectations as important:

- ♦ working collaboratively
- ♦ cultivating an interest in advanced study
- ♦ developing communication and presentation skills
- ♦ improved admission to advanced study programs
- ♦ formulating research questions
- ♦ pursuing a career where they can be creative
- ♦ being driven to achieve.

Further assessment of 145 summer research students regarding the learning outcomes resulting from summer research (adapting the survey of Cross and Angelo, 1992) showed that:

- ♦ higher order thinking skills and discipline-specific skills were valued by all students
- ♦ basic academic success skills and personal development skills were more highly valued by students of color and humanities students
- ♦ work/career preparation and personal development skills were highly valued by women and Asian-American students.

None of the highly valued characteristics correlated with student's GPA.

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