

Playing in the Sandbox: Comparative Insights into the Undergraduate Research Experience



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Poster Presented at the Idaho Conference on Undergraduate Research, July 20-21, 2022

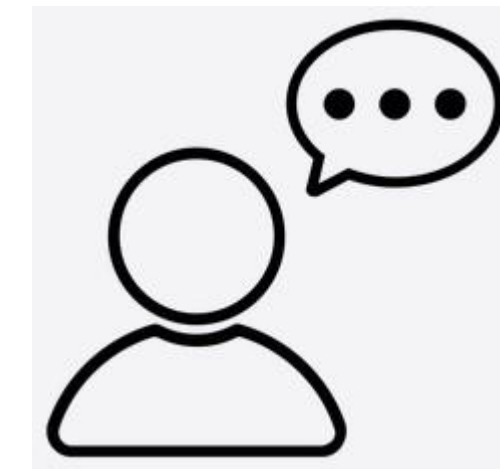


How might comparative insights from students, faculty / administrators, and parents enhance the undergraduate research experience?



There are many student researcher stories - empowerment, passion, joy, achievement. This story focuses on student researcher disconnect, pain points, and/or frustration emerging from the research process.

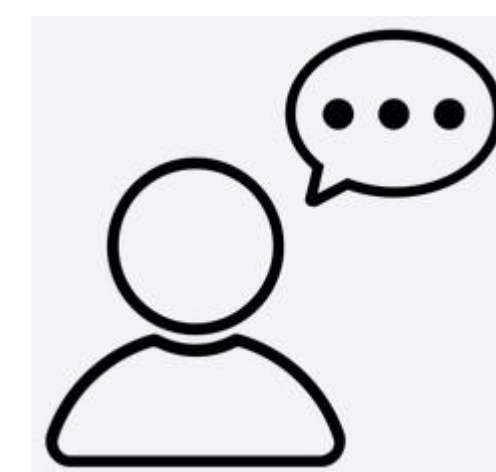
Data comes from interviews with four student researchers, all enrolled at different universities across the United States. Please note (1) names have been changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality; (2) I added **bold lettering** for emphasis in some passages.



Communication

"That was **really frustrating** . . . I spent all this time working on this application and **you didn't tell me** [of selection criteria]. [. . .] They have so many applicants. . . . A lot of 'em **I didn't even hear back from**. The ones I did get back to [me] so late that [I] was already committed [elsewhere]" ("Madera")

"She [project lead] **expressed interest**, which was really important because **I didn't feel like they** [other project leads] **were interested** in even wanting to talk to me, or wanted to spend the time to talk to me. Then, **I wasn't going to spend my time . . . talking to them**" ("Halie", emphasis mine).



Pragmatism > Passion

Honestly, that [resume building] sounds so bad . . . [that's] kind of why I did this" ("Madera")

"I will say that the **resume building is a main reason** for why I applied to [research opportunities]" ("Abby")

[I]f you're not **super in love** with what you're researching that can **make it a little more difficult**. . . . When I see 'research opportunity' I see research opportunity on my **resume**" ("Gabi").

"Overwhelming"

"I was **really nervous** [reaching out to research leads] because I haven't had an experience like that before, so **I didn't know what to expect**. . . . I **don't feel like I was really prepared to talk to them**" ("Halie").

"**You** have to be willing to **go look for it**. . . . **You have to be the one that is reaching out** . . . the **professors will not go to an undergraduate student and ask them 'would you like to be a part of our [project]'**" ("Abby").

Actions & Conclusions

- 1) Communicate to students that they *matter*.
- 1) Equip students to communicate with faculty.
- 1) User test website to simplify the decision-making process.
- 1) Explicitly connect research opportunities to resume building.