At the December 17, 2008 C.O.R.E. meeting it was decided to interview program directors at UW-Stout to determine research activities that were presently occurring in programs. A subcommittee was developed to achieve this task including Jeanne Rothaupt, Forrest Schultz and Susan Wolfgram. On January 16, 2008 Jeanne presented at the Program Directors Meeting to provide general information about the new C.O.R.E. committee and to alert program directors of upcoming contact from one of the subcommittee members.

**Procedure**

Subcommittee members compiled interview questions in January, 2008 (see interview questions below). Face-to-face interviews took place from February 14-May 8, 2008. 19/29 (65%) of program directors were interviewed.

**Findings from Interviews:**

**Research conducted in the programs:**

- All programs indicated some sort of senior research project. Examples include:
  - Capstone research and development projects with industry
  - Studies completed with social service agencies
  - Action research projects
  - Diagnostic field experience in schools
  - Market research for existing golf courses
  - Applied research to identify new materials and processes used in manufacturing
  - Research for food systems and technology
  - Pure/Basic Research and Applied Research in Math and the Sciences

**Themes Identified in Discussion:**

- Undergraduate research primarily occurring in independent studies and senior capstone projects.
- Interface with industry/agencies crucial. Various stakeholders.
- Action and applied research more prevalent.
- Application of knowledge gained—desire to have meaningful and applicable research experiences.
- Research increases student engagement and builds community.
- Problem-based learning as research experiences: “this class makes my brain hurt.”
- Value of “research experience.” Scholarly writing, literature searches, applied experiences and problem-based learning prevalent.
**Value of Research:**
- Recruiting—“It tells potential student that we go beyond the class into the professional world.”
- Look to problems outside the classroom—
- Learn to discern, analyze and propose solutions.
- Learn to work as a team.
- Research projects engages faculty and students
- Funded projects assist with meeting resource demands beyond the research project, creates sustainability for institution infrastructure
- Provides professional outlook for students, maturation process for learning, and creates importance and relevance for the program curriculum
- Increased student retention
- Keeps program, faculty, and students at the cutting-edge for their discipline.

**Regarding freshman research:**
- Several programs begin basic research coursework in freshman year (i.e. Applied Science and Psychology)
- In introductory courses freshmen learn to how formulate a research question, search literature and begin scholarly writing.
  - Investigation papers—“Now that I know this, then what?” Literature reviews with implications.
- Set the stage for more in-depth research
- Instill passion for research
- Discern quality of research
- Primary concern of freshman research is “learner readiness.”

**Faculty Suggestions:**
- Encourage freshmen to become involved in campus organizations.
- Develop student mentoring programs—juniors and seniors mentoring freshmen (i.e. women engineering students mentoring freshmen women engineering students)
- Work to foster collaboration versus competition.
- Learn how to communicate research in a way to “hook” young students into a “culture” of research; the importance of early engagement.

**Additional Comments:**
- “Much of the way research is talked about has to do with ‘applied/real world’ meanings/experiences, not the traditional methods.”
- Instructors “must be okay with messiness.”
- “It is nice to know the value of the cards—what kind of research is valued the most?”
- Not enough faculty time to engage all students.
- Concern for sustainability with changing of faculty.
- Concern for funding of labs and resources
Working definition of research:

*From UW-Stout Handbook:* Faculty participates in applied and theoretical research and scholarship through activities, which lead to the application or utilization of knowledge and invention, and to creative activities, which produce new works of literature, music, and the fine arts. The results of scholarly, creative or applied research may be shared by performance, exhibitions, oral presentations, publications, or application of innovations on or off campus.

Applying this definition to undergraduate students, what is your program already doing that is research-oriented?

Does your program require a research experience for students?

If so,

a. describe the experience and academic level (e.g., freshmen year) that it occurs.

b. is this a class/course requirement or an extracurricular activity?

c. what value do you believe it adds to a student’s experience?

d. what value do you believe it adds to the program?

Are there other activities occurring that may be research experiences in your program that you would like to include here?

Are there any other comments or concerns about undergraduate research experiences you would like to share?