

Quest Research Symposium Assignment

An introductory exercise to raise awareness of undergraduate research at Collin and other universities

Genre: Reading, notetaking, reflection writing

Course Level: Any

Student Difficulty: Easy or Moderate

Teacher Preparation: Medium, simple Canvas setup required

Class Size: Any

Semester Time: Any, or together with the start or finish of a research project

Writing Component: short reflective writing that shows engagement with symposium recording

Close Reading: medium level

Estimated time: 1.5 hours including view symposium videos.

To download the Canvas version of this assignment, click here: [Quest: What is Undergraduate Research?](#)

Exercise

Did you know that Collin College has an online undergraduate research journal called *Quest*? The journal publishes the best examples of student research in progress at Collin College. All Collin students are encouraged to contact a faculty mentor to help them submit their best research-in-progress work to the journal for publication. Every student submission is reviewed and given a path towards publication. To see what has been published so far click here: *Quest: An Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Student Research Journal*.

In this lab assignment, the goal is to introduce you to what undergraduate research is, and help you understand why pursuing undergraduate research at Collin College could be highly advantageous for your academic career and future work life.

1. READ

First, download and read this short article from [US News and World Report: Why Undergraduate Research Matters in College](#).

Save the article as a PDF and upload it to this assignment. Then, using the Canvas commenting tools, take notes on the page. Using the box, pointer tool, and/or highlighter, jot some ideas and questions down on the article using the questions below.

(Alternate set-up: save the article as a PDF and make it available in Canvas. Then, have students take notes on a printout, and scan or upload photos of the pages back into Canvas to be able to see their notes).

- What seems interesting, revealing, and/or strange to you about the idea of undergraduate research? If you mark something, add “because” and add reasons, exploring what this new information might mean.
- How does the field you are interested in joining “do” research?
- What questions would you love to have the chance to research?

2. WATCH

Watch one of the [Quest Research Symposium](#) videos and take notes. Each video is roughly 50 minutes long and features students who have published their work in the journal.

3. REFLECT

After watching the video, use the submission box of this assignment to leave your key takeaways from the discussion and the experience. In your response, explore these questions, mentioning specific details from your reading and watching the symposium videos:

- What key detail sticks with you after watching the session?
- What did you notice about the presentations, the questions that spurred their research, and/or their research process?
- What types of questions interest you enough to research?
- Do you have a project or a paper that you would like to submit to *Quest*? Describe a paper you have written or a project you are working on that could be submitted.
- Which faculty member at Collin would you most like to work with on this project?
- Thinking forward, does the school you want to transfer to offer undergraduate research opportunities?
- How likely are you to take advantage of this type of opportunity?
- What do you understand about undergraduate research now that you didn't before you watched the video?

RUBRIC

Any points or extra credit, depending on your class structure. (Watch closely for key details and deduct points for vague answers, or responses that indicate that the video hasn't been viewed.)

Teaching Reflection

This assignment may be given as a regular or extra credit assignment in any course or in English courses as a lab assignment to accompany a research module. This assignment fits well in a unit on academic research when students are working on annotated bibliographies, research papers, or other types of research-based presentations. I have also found this type of assignment helpful early in the semester to encourage students to identify larger questions to think about moving forward with research-based interests beyond Collin.

Discussing this assignment in class before students work on it helps students begin to see the value of thinking more broadly about research. I bring the *Quest* website up on the overhead, scrolling down to show the Google analytics at the bottom of the page that display article downloads in real-time across the globe. We look closely at an article or two, noting how many downloads each one has, where the work is being downloaded, how publication formatting resembles papers that students write for classes, reading the introductions by faculty mentors, and thinking about the potential audience for their work. I point out how early research can give them a competitive advantage in applications for transfer, scholarship, and employment in the next stages of their

careers beyond Collin. Students who have published in *Quest* have gone on to win scholarships for their studies, and some have continued investigating the questions they researched for *Quest* in the next stages of their academic careers. This conversation helps students to broaden the focus of their work beyond just the research assignment specifications.

When we cover the details of the assignment, I usually suggest that students watch Marie Peteuil's keynote address from the 2020 symposium. Marie was a dual credit student who discovered the line of her interest in theater performance and then literature, where Dr. Scott Cheney's research-based assignment led her to ask larger questions and pursue more knowledge on translated texts that eventually led her to submit and publish her work. In her presentation, Marie narrates the story of her growing interest in the questions she found, and how those questions led her to read more widely, an outcome that surprised her given her early struggles with reading. Marie's story and her ability to articulate the research process in recognizable terms tends to resonate with students, inviting them to see a place for their own work, and a path toward higher thinking.

Students in the humanities are often surprised to learn that their research is valued at this early stage since many think that research only belongs in the STEM fields. Students in STEM fields also benefit from knowing that publication could be more immediately available to them for early research assignments, where the perception usually exists that research belongs to scientists or more advanced students. There is room and encouragement for workforce students to participate in the publication project as well since many writing assignments across the disciplines often focus on technology and more technical writing based on research. *Quest* is open to publishing research-based work from any course and discipline in the district.

After reading the student responses to the assignment, I often reach out individually to those who show real interest. I point out publications in *Quest* most like what they are working on, suggest how to find faculty mentors for work already in progress, and encourage them to think broadly about their career and academic goals.

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