

Caring, Investing, Empowering:

Undergraduate Research Mentoring Practices by English Faculty



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Introduction

Students enter the world of academic research by **mentors** helping them become the “**authority**” in their own **meaningful research projects**.

Mentoring undergraduate research (UR) has received attention in scholarly publications, particularly in STEM areas. This study seeks to uncover the characteristics of effective faculty mentors in a department of English. Do these characteristics match those identified by Shanahan, et al (2015) in their comprehensive review of literature, “Ten Salient Practices of Undergraduate Mentors: A Review of the Literature”?

Methods

Researchers used mixed methods and gathered data from faculty mentors and undergraduate researchers. First, **three experienced, award-winning mentors were interviewed**. Once data from the faculty interviews were analyzed, researchers **surveyed students who had conducted and disseminated undergraduate research**.

Results

Mentors

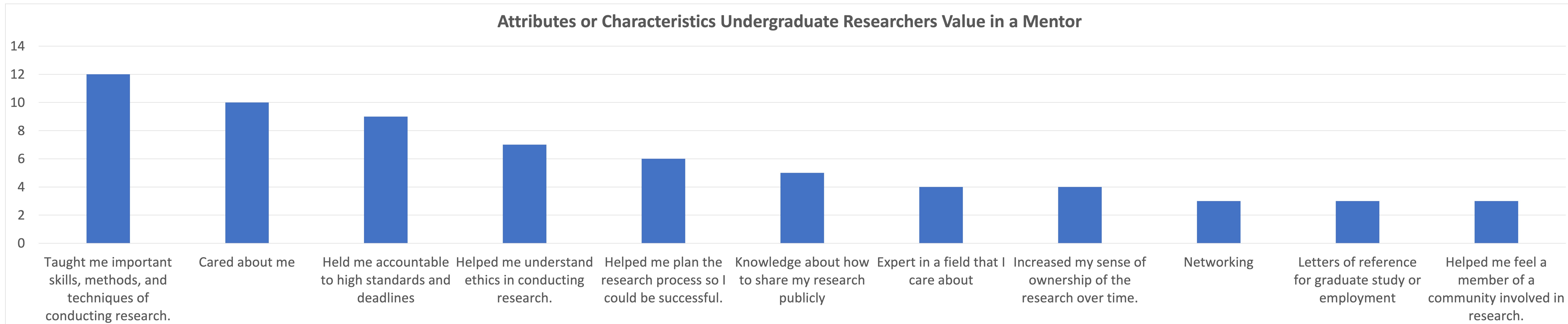
- Emphasized importance of student growth and satisfaction as a mentor;
- Setting clear expectations crucial;
- Modeling each step of the research process important.

Students

- Relationships and skills top the list;
- Start earlier in meaningful research.

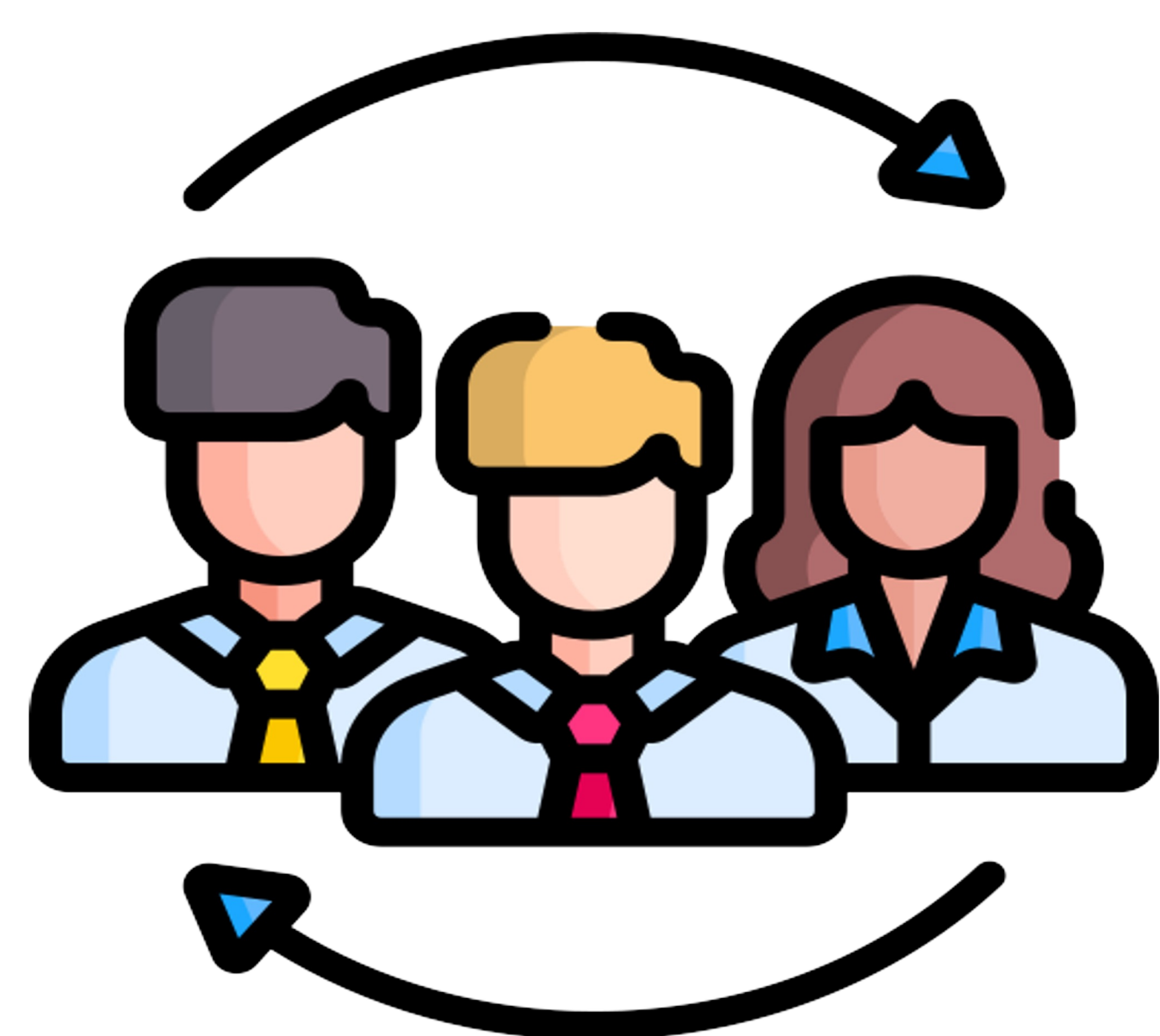


Trenton Olsen, undergraduate researcher, and Dr. Cooper-Rompato at Research on Capitol Hill (2008).

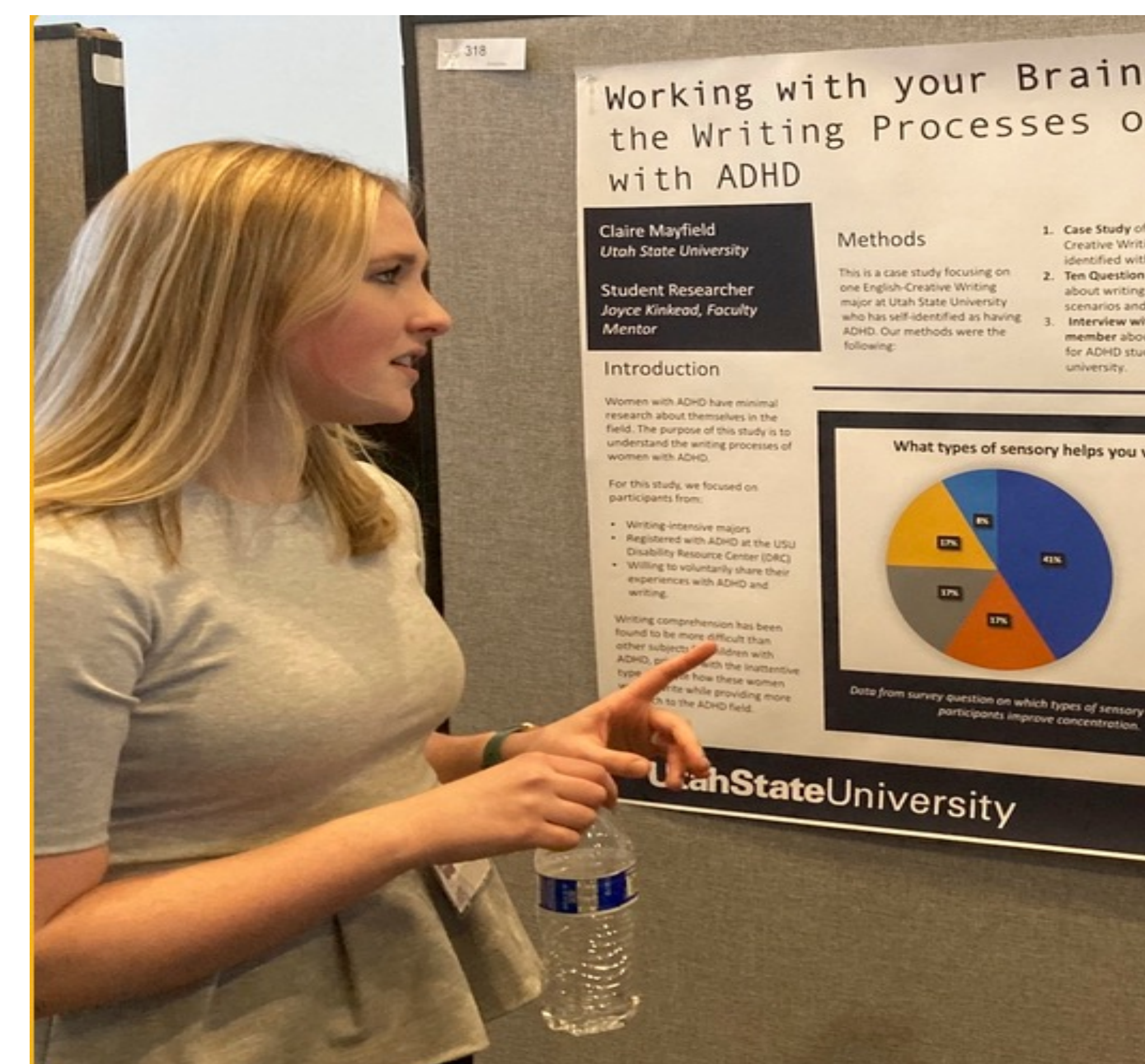


Conclusions

- Largely, English mentors employ “Ten Salient Practices,” such as **skill building**, but less likely on “community of scholars,” more typical of lab or field settings.
- Undergraduates **overwhelmingly recommend research experiences**.
- **Scale up:** Recommend the department **structure opportunities for early immersion** and highlight what “research” means in English Studies.
- **Demystify:** Publicize undergraduates and their research to build **culture of UR**.
- **Caring Counts!** Students rated “**cares about me**” as one of the most important characteristics of faculty mentors.
- Faculty Mentors value **watching students succeed**.



One way to improve mentoring practices is to foster more peer-to-peer interactions to spread the word about research opportunities in the humanities.



Claire Mayfield presents at UCUR 2022.