

**2007-08 Inquiry/Research Based Education  
Progress Report  
Request for Continued Funding**

**Mays Business School**

**QEP Council**

Chair

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## Summary of 2007-2008 Activities

### *(1) Reframing of proposed project*

Mays Business School's intent is to develop and administer a formalized Undergraduate Research Program for all undergraduate students. Our plan was to begin by creating a "research track" within the Business Honors major. This was to serve as a pilot project, leading to a more inclusive program open to all interested Mays undergraduates. We have modified this plan and are instead beginning with the more inclusive program. Reasons for this modification: (a) many enrichment opportunities already exist for Business Honors majors; (b) the intent of the university's research/inquiry-based education initiative is to enhance research/inquiry skills for *all* undergraduates; (c) organizational changes moved the Business Honors program under the umbrella of Undergraduate Special Programs, a collection of programs that aim to foster the learning outcomes listed in the next section. A description of the reframed project, *Mays Inquiry*, is provided in Appendix A.

### *(2) Initial undergraduate research partnerships*

Amy Wood, under direction of Dr. Tim Peterson, presented a paper titled *In Search of the Vital Few*, at the Academy of Management Conference, summer 2008.

Erica Schmidt, under direction of Dr. Roemer Visser and Dr. Lesley Tomaszewski, conducted all of the data analysis for a paper titled *Gender Bias, Business, and Grades: Is there a connection?* This paper has been proposed and is under review as a roundtable for the Academy of Human Resource Development Conference.

Brittany Bongers, under the direction of Mr. Shontarius Aikens  
Invited to participate summer 2008; currently working on research and assessment related to the Freshman Business Initiative

## Learning Outcomes

Mays Business School has adopted the following program **learning goals** for undergraduates.

- Communication skills (oral, electronic, and written)
- Problem solving, critical thinking, and analytical skills
- Creating new opportunities
- Ethical decision making
- Leadership, management, and teamwork
- Interdisciplinary foundation in business
- Discipline-specific competencies
- Global and cultural awareness in each of the above

We believe that the second goal is consistent with research and inquiry-guided learning, and propose the following outcomes to guide our assessment of student learning in this area.

**Learning Goal:**

- Students will be able to solve problems, analyze information, and think critically.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will clearly articulate a research question or problem.
2. Students will identify and use appropriate library resources to investigate a research problem.
3. Students will operationalize concepts with appropriate indicators.
4. Students will analyze data and interpret results.
5. Students will organize and analyze data to rigorously test hypotheses.
6. Students will recognize methodological limits to both published and original research and to suggest correctives.
7. Students will articulate research findings in professional formats suitable for publication.

**Assessment**

From the proposal: Students will demonstrate proficiency, as shown by their writing, which will be evaluated with a rubric derived from expectations set out by the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

Modification: Products of students' research (proposals, papers, and/or presentations) will be evaluated using a rubric developed by their faculty mentor in collaboration with Mays Inquiry staff. The rubric will be consistent with learning outcomes listed above. Additional indirect evidence will be collected by means of surveys or interviews with students and faculty involved in Mays Inquiry.

**Summary of Results**

Organizational and staffing changes (noted above) have delayed full implementation and assessment of this project. The three student research experiences noted above are serving as our "pilot" and have guided our reframing of the project.

**Closing the Loop**

The three student projects listed above were all student-initiated. These students had questions of interest to them and/or were curious about the research process, and had a mentoring relationship with faculty who were willing to work with them. The success of these student-faculty partnerships is the catalyst for our reframed project intended to spark interest and open opportunities for other undergraduate students. Having funding available for travel to conferences and other research-related expenses will serve as incentive and support for both faculty and students.

**Budget**

From existing funding:

\$12,000      Conference Funding for Faculty-Student pairs

\$3,000      Research resources

\$2,500      Operating Budget (Promotional material, workshop luncheons, etc.)

\$17,500      TOTAL

**Request for 2008-2009:**

\$10,000 funding for 2008-2009 will increase the number of student-faculty partnerships we will be able to support.

## Appendix A

### **Mays Inquiry: Business Undergraduate Business Research Program**

#### **Overview**

*Mays Inquiry* offers students the opportunity to collaborate on cutting-edge research by working side-by-side with a faculty member on an existing research project or to design and carry out his/her own research project under the direction of a faculty mentor.

#### **Goal**

The goal of *Mays Inquiry* is to expose students to the full range of activities and skills associated with initiating, conducting and completing a research project. This goal can be accomplished through involvement in an ongoing research project or through completion of an independent research project.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to clearly conceptualize and articulate a research question or problem.
2. Students will be able to identify and use appropriate library resources to investigate a research problem.
3. Students will be able to operationalize concepts with appropriate indicators.
4. Students will be able to correctly analyze data and interpret results.
5. Students will be able to organize and analyze data to rigorously test hypotheses.
6. Students will be able to recognize methodological limits to both published and original research and to suggest correctives.
7. Students will be able to articulate research findings in professional formats suitable for publication.

#### **Eligibility**

To participate in Mays Inquiry, students must:

- Be a U3 or U4
- Have an overall GPR of 3.0 or higher

#### **Course Structure**

The student will enroll in 1-3 hours of BUSN 491 during the semester they will be working with the faculty mentor. During this 491 the student will:

- Participate in a research project, working closely with the faculty mentor
- Commit to 45 - 135 at least 50 hours depending on the credit hours enrolled during the course of the semester towards the research project
- Write a 4-page reflection paper dealing with the research project that is due to the Mays Inquiry staff by the end of the semester
- Meet periodically with the Mays Inquiry staff for a progress report on the research project

- Attend two research workshops developed by the Mays Inquiry staff related to elements of the research process
- During the spring semester attend or present at the Annual Student Research Week conference

**Expectations for the Student and Mentor**

The student and faculty mentor should work together to determine the student’s level of knowledge and skill and the scope of the research in which the student will participate. It is most likely that the student will not start with a highly developed set of research skills and, in the early stages, the student can reasonably expect to perform a variety of more mundane research-related tasks (e.g. data entry, literature review, recording results). However, the mentor should not view the undergraduate researcher as a paid research assistant and the activities they engage in should have a clear educational purpose. Mentors should be committed to making the student’s research experience as educational as possible and should be willing to discuss the activities in which the student is engaged and illustrate how the activities fit into the overall research program. As the student’s knowledge and skills grow, the faculty mentor should assist the student in making more significant contributions to the design, analysis, and/or interpretation of the overall study.

**Application Process**

Interested faculty mentor-student pairs should submit the completed application and a research proposal (500 words) to the Mays Inquiry Program to the USPO Director and the student should register for 1-3 course hours of BUSN 491 under their professor before the semester the research project begins.

**Tangible Benefits**

Depending on the student’s contributions, students participating in the Mays Inquiry Program will participate in research projects, present at a research conference, contribute to a scholarly publication and be listed as a co-author, and be better prepared for graduate studies and/or for their chosen career.

**Funding**

Faculty-student pairs may request funding for registration and travel expenses for conferences at which proposals have been accepted. Faculty-student pairs may also request funding for research resources such as software and databases.

The amount of funding available for each faculty-student pair will be dependent upon the number of applications received in a given fiscal year.

**Project Budget**

\$12,000	Conference Funding for Faculty-Student pairs
\$3,000	Research resources
<u>\$2,500</u>	Operating Budget (Promotional material, workshop luncheons, etc.)
\$17,500	TOTAL

