

1 September 29, 2011

2 **S.R. 1104**

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4 **Title: In Support of Integrating Research and Inquiry-Based Courses into an**  
5 **Undergraduate Research Certificate Program**

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7 **WHEREAS,** The University of Texas at Austin is “one of the nation’s preeminent public  
8 research universities and a leader in higher education”<sup>1</sup>; and,

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10 **WHEREAS,** The mission of the University is to “[contribute] to the advancement of society  
11 through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry, and the development of new  
12 knowledge,”<sup>2</sup> and undergraduates are crucial to furthering this mission; and,

13  
14 **WHEREAS,** Undergraduate research is “scholarly or creative activity that contributes to human  
15 knowledge through methods established by particular academic disciplines” and  
16 involves “an educational collaboration between students and faculty members”<sup>3</sup>;  
17 and,

18  
19 **WHEREAS,** The Commission of 125 Report determines that every undergraduate should  
20 “engage in open discussion, inquiry, discovery, research, problem-solving, and  
21 learning to learn”; and,

22  
23 **WHEREAS,** The Senate of College Councils previously passed a resolution, S.R. 505, in  
24 support of creating a research methodology certificate program different for each  
25 college and specific to the needs of a particular area of study, but this was never  
26 brought to practice<sup>4</sup>; and,

27  
28 **WHEREAS,** Currently, there is no formal research program across colleges and schools that  
29 trains undergraduates early in their careers in the methodology and skills needed  
30 for future research positions or projects; and,

31  
32 **WHEREAS,** Despite the many research courses and resources available at the University,  
33 many students find it difficult to incorporate research into their degree plans and  
34 remain unaware of research opportunities and their associated benefits as these  
35 courses are not individually promoted, resulting in low participation and interest  
36 in research; and,

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<sup>1</sup> Report of The Task Force on Curricular Reform, pg. 1

<sup>2</sup> The Mission of the University of Texas at Austin

<sup>3</sup> “Undergraduate Research Page” – The University of Texas at Austin <<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/ugr>>

<sup>4</sup> S.R. 505 *In Support of Creating a Research Methodology Certificate Program*

38 **WHEREAS,** A certificate will incentivize students to engage in research opportunities by  
39 recognizing a consolidated track of research-based courses on their transcripts in  
40 addition to offering course credit; and,  
41  
42 **WHEREAS,** A transcript-recognized undergraduate research certificate program, intended to  
43 attract lowerclassmen in particular, entails students taking a required amount of  
44 coursework which teaches research methodologies specific to the discipline and  
45 introduces students to varying modes of inquiry; and,  
46  
47 **WHEREAS,** While the Bridging Disciplines Programs and the Texas Interdisciplinary Plan  
48 require some form of a research experience, the focus on research methods and  
49 training is limited in its scope, and furthermore, TIP is restricted to Natural  
50 Sciences and Liberal Arts; and,  
51  
52 **WHEREAS,** The widespread value of certificate programs is apparent through the success of  
53 the Business Foundations Program, the BDPs, and TIP; and,  
54  
55 **WHEREAS,** A certificate program will compile existing research-based courses to efficiently  
56 integrate a research component into students' degree plans; and,  
57  
58 **WHEREAS,** Performing research alongside faculty members improves students' "overall  
59 success, as participants go on to earn higher grades and more scholarships and  
60 have higher retention and graduation rates"<sup>5</sup>; and,  
61  
62 **WHEREAS,** Data obtained from the 2010 SERU survey at UT indicates that participation in  
63 research improves learning outcomes, including higher GPAs, more progress in  
64 skills development, and an expansion of knowledge<sup>6</sup>; and,  
65  
66 **WHEREAS,** Several studies demonstrate the positive benefits of early participation in  
67 undergraduate research, especially for social science and humanities students as  
68 well as first-generation low-income students<sup>7</sup>; and,  
69  
70 **WHEREAS,** Four of the top five public research universities in the nation offer formal  
71 widespread research programs that engage students from every discipline early in  
72 their undergraduate careers and train them in developing their research skills<sup>8</sup>;  
73 and,  
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<sup>5</sup> "Research Enhances Teaching," Op-Ed Article by Bill Powers for *The Houston Chronicle*

<sup>6</sup> Harrison Keller and Marc Musick, "The Effects of Research on Undergraduate Academic Success at The University of Texas at Austin," research paper, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Assessing the Impact of Undergraduate-Research Experiences on Students: An Overview of Current Literature," *CUR Quarterly* < <http://www.cur.org/quarterly/jun08/summer08CroweBrakke.pdf>>

<sup>8</sup> From the U.S. News and World Report, the universities are the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Michigan, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <<http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/top-public>>

75 **WHEREAS,** UT must emulate and improve upon the programs that exist at these peer  
76 institutions in order to move up in national rankings and serve as a model for  
77 public research universities<sup>9</sup>; and,  
78

79 **WHEREAS,** The program will foster an undergraduate research culture, partner students with  
80 faculty mentors, apply real world situations in the classroom, and support and  
81 increase the retention of all majors across colleges and schools by enhancing the  
82 undergraduate research experience; therefore, be it,  
83

84 **RESOLVED,** That the Senate of College Councils reaffirms the original goal outlined in S.R.  
85 505; and, be it further  
86

87 **RESOLVED,** That the Senate of College Councils calls for the integration of existing research  
88 courses into an Undergraduate Research Certificate Program specific to each  
89 college and school and further customized to the needs of individual departments;  
90 and, be it further  
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92 **RESOLVED,** That the Senate of College Councils' Undergraduate Research Committee will  
93 work with college councils, deans, faculty, and administrators of the individual  
94 colleges and schools to design and implement the certificate program; and, be it  
95 further  
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97 **RESOLVED,** That the certificate program will be comprised of 18 hours of coursework  
98 grounded in three basic components: foundation courses that introduce research  
99 methods and varying modes of inquiry, research-exposure courses, and research-  
100 intensive courses; and, be it further  
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102 **RESOLVED,** That in order to earn the transcript-recognized undergraduate research certificate,  
103 a student must also complete a culminating research project with a presentation;  
104 and, be it further  
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106 **RESOLVED,** That the Undergraduate Research Certificate Program's requirements can be  
107 fulfilled through petitioned credit by upperclassmen during the transition period;  
108 and, be it further  
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110 **RESOLVED,** That transfer students may also petition for research credit from a different  
111 institution if the credit is accepted and deemed equivalent to the certificate's  
112 coursework; and, be it further  
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114 **RESOLVED,** That, once approved, the certificate program will submit a periodic report to  
115 assess the efficacy, success, and extent of the program through a comprehensive  
116 evaluation process; and, be it further

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<sup>9</sup> President Powers' "A Report the Commission of 125 and The University of Texas at Austin Community"

117 **RESOLVED,** That the Senate of College Councils continues to support the effective  
118 implementation of the Undergraduate Research Certificate Program in the  
119 colleges and schools in the future; and, be it further  
120

121 **RESOLVED,** That this resolution be sent to Executive Vice President and Provost Steven  
122 Leslie, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Faculty Governance  
123 Gretchen Ritter, Dean of Undergraduate Studies Paul Woodruff, Dean of College  
124 of Liberal Arts Randy Diehl, Interim Dean of College of Natural Sciences David  
125 Laude, Dean of Cockrell School of Engineering Gregory Fenves, Dean of College  
126 of Communication Roderick Hart, Dean of School of Architecture Frederick  
127 Steiner, Dean of McCombs School of Business Thomas Gilligan, Dean of College  
128 of Education Manual Justiz, Dean of College of Fine Arts Doug Dempster, Dean  
129 of Jackson School of Geosciences Sharon Mosher, Dean of School of Nursing  
130 Alexa Stuijbergen, Dean of School of Social Work Barbara White, Senior  
131 Associate Vice President and Dean of Students Soncia Reagins-Lilly, Senior  
132 Program Coordinator Lisa Wyatt in the Office of Undergraduate Research, and  
133 Associate Dean of Academic Initiatives and Director of the Bridging Disciplines  
134 Programs Jeanette Herman.  
135

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159 **Sponsors:** Liberal Arts Council  
160 Undergraduate Research Journal  
161 Undergraduate Studies Council

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Allie Smith (Policy Director, Senate of College Councils)