

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

Nolan Schultheis (00:05):

Welcome to Making College Worth It, the show that examines engaged learning activities that increase the value of college experiences.

Jessie Moore (00:12):

In each episode, we share research from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning and our international network of scholars. We explore engaged learning activities that recent college graduates associate with our financial and time commitment to college being worthwhile.

Nolan Schultheis (00:27):

I'm Nolan s Schultheis, a second year student at Elon University, studying psychology with an interest in law. I'm the Center for Engaged Learning podcast producer and a legal profession scholar.

Jessie Moore (00:37):

And I'm Jessie Moore, director of Elon Center for Engaged Learning and a professor of Professional Writing and Rhetoric.

Nolan Schultheis (00:43):

In this episode, we'll visit with Dr. Dawn Whitehead, vice president of the Office of Global Citizenship for Campus Community and Careers at the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and Dr. Maureen Vandermass-Peeler, director of the Center for Research on Global Engagement at Elon University. They are two co-editors of a new open access publication Mentoring Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

Jessie Moore (01:07):

In the Center's 2024 national survey of 18 to 34-year-old recent graduates of two or four year higher education institutions asking about their meaningful undergraduate experiences and how they matter now, only 13.9% of respondents reported taking part in a study away experience during college. Of those who studied away, most participated in international study abroad. That was longer than a month, 42.7% or nearly 50% of respondents reported participating in undergraduate research facilitating mentored undergraduate research in global context, including global context within our own geopolitical borders could increase students' opportunities to participate in two high impact educational practices. Let's hear from our guests about what's possible at the intersections of mentored undergraduate research and global learning.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (02:00):

I am Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler. I am a professor of psychology at Elon University and I study child development and I think about the way children develop in sociocultural contexts and that has me thinking a lot about culture as well. So I'm also very interested in global learning and I direct a center for research on global engagement at Elon and I've been mentoring students since I started working in academia basically. And I find that to be where I thrive, that's one of my greatest passions to work with students. I have two students in the summer research program here at Elon this summer and it's just such good work. It can be really challenging and also just, I find there's so many benefits. So I can say more about how Dawn and I met later, but Dawn?

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (02:46):

Yeah, so I'm Dawn Michelle Whitehead from AAC&U. And when I think back, I think one of the ways that I got involved in this indirectly was when I was at Indiana University, Indianapolis or IUPI, which is now IUI, and I was working, we had a consortium that was the Center for Research and Learning, the Center for Teaching and Learning and then also international affairs. And we were trying to be creative to find ways to help fund students that were participating in education abroad programs. And as I partnered with those in the office for Research and learning, at first there was sort of like, oh, no research isn't education abroad. And so we had those early conversations about, well it is education abroad and how is it that we could use some of the funding to not only help the students support their opportunities to go abroad, but also to make sure students are working with faculty have opportunities for agency in the research and that kind of thing. So I think that is one of the first ways that I got involved. And in terms of the work that Maureen and I do, I put it squarely at Elon and Maureen and one of the CEL summer institutes.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (04:00):

It's a funny story that centers the Center for Engaged Learning. So Dawn was the keynote for one of the research seminars that was actually looking at global learning. And I gave a presentation with my colleagues, Cindy Fair and Amy Allacco, both also at Elon and also very active mentors. And we'd been thinking about how to mentor projects that were being conducted in a global context, whether that's, and we want to say this really clearly, we mean both local and international context when we say global. And so we had done a little focus groups with students here trying to understand how to better help. And sometimes students feel really well prepared for these experiences and sometimes they absolutely didn't. And so that presentation was made in front of Dawn whose eyes sort of lit up. And in fact in her keynote she mentioned it, wow, this is a rare integration of these high impact practices.

(04:50):

And Dawn and I started the conversation. So thanks to Jessie and her crew for inviting. You had Dawn back at Elon many times now and we love it. So we started a conversation, Dawn, I remember that. And then we put together a think tank with some other colleagues and including the Forum on Education Abroad, which is a national organization with A CNU with Elon. And we had a think tank. We had another one planned for the spring of 2020 and we all know what happened there. Eventually we did go to a remote, we did an online think tank and we had what, Dawn, 40 participants or so at that point, and I guess I'll just continue the origin story. We story actually ended up forming three working groups. So I co-led one with Kate Patch who was at Grinnell College. Dawn you co-led with

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (05:37):

Elizabeth ish originally and then Mary Price both from the forum on Education abroad. She co-facilitated with me.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (05:42):

And then our third group. And so these groups are represented in the publication that we're talking about today because we each contributed something unique, but we were also collaborating the whole time. And the third working group was led by Chris at Purdue along with Susan.

Jessie Moore (06:01):

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

Awesome. And thank you for providing that origin story. It's really helpful to hear as context for our discussion today.

Nolan Schultheis (06:08):

I know you had touched on it a little bit. You had said that it's undergraduate research and global context. If you're willing, could you share one or two examples, both of you may be of what that entails?

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (06:19):

Yeah, so what we mean when we say mentored undergraduate research in global context is students who are working on research that is a global topic that can be in a global context. So it could be in an international location, it could be with a local organization or a local experience, but the topic and the people that you're working with make it a global topic. So I mean it could be anything from a student who's looking at, let's say a food insecurity in a local community and how food insecurity connects to the global issue. Or it could be a student who's doing a research project in West Africa, let's say, and they're looking at a particular issue there. But the work that the student is doing, they have a mentor who is helping them and guiding them with that research. So it isn't just a student going off and doing something on their own. They're getting that guidance and support from a mentor on the research, but also on doing the work in that context, which we know can be very challenging without framing, without support and without guidance. I don't know, Maureen, you may want to add to that. No,

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (07:24):

That was perfect. Thank you Dawn. I'll give a quick example, Nolan, of one or two students I've worked with here at Elon. Often when I work with students on this kind of research, which by the way, we awkwardly call Meic mentored undergraduate research in a global context. If you want to help us get a better acronym, we're down for that. But I had a student from Venezuela Issa, and she was really interested in play in Venezuela at the time, and now it wasn't really very safe for children to play outdoors, but she was really interested in getting adolescents to think back to their childhood and also adults to compare what the context for outdoor play was. So she was doing research here with me, but of course was from Venezuela, so would travel back and forth and did some of that work online as safety remained a concern.

(08:12):

Projects like that for me, it's often students who are from a different cultural identity because of the work that I do. But as Dawn explained, this can be broadly. I just was at in Copenhagen working with DIS one of our study abroad partner organizations and students there come and work with a faculty member who has an ongoing research project in a particular field that they're interested in. They apply to that program, they go and spend the semester there doing this work. Sometimes that continues as they return to their home campuses and the United States, and sometimes it's just a bounded semester long experience. So we could probably give hundreds of examples, but those are just a few. This work intentionally integrates these high impact practices of we think mentoring, undergraduate research, and of course the global learning.

Jessie Moore (08:58):

Those examples are really helpful to offer context for our continued conversation today. As you've already mentioned, you and colleagues edited new open access publication mentoring, undergraduate

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

research and global context. And we'll link to it in the show notes. But for listeners who haven't had a chance to explore it yet, could you share a few of the highlights or key takeaways that most resonate with each of you?

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (09:22):

For me, I think, and Dawn really emphasized this point earlier for me, the benefits of this intentional integration are the key. I think we're talking about more than just adding things together. The integrated experiences are unique and they have such tremendous potential and that potential is often realized through mentoring relationships. So I think the salience of really strong mentoring relationships, and I mean on both sides we could talk about relational mentoring where this is a mutually engaging relationship, the value of these relationships for learning in whatever the context is. And so I guess the last thing I would say, thinking about mentoring is the value of multiple mentors for this work on mentoring undergraduate research in global context is another key takeaway. We call it a constellation model where students have multiple mentoring relationships and they don't have to be the same. They can be very different. They can emerge at different times, they can be with peers, they can be with community partners. So the potential of the global context for working with and creating these meaningful relationships to me is one of the most exciting parts of the work.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (10:36):

And I would echo that, especially the power of multiple mentors and that constellation model because it isn't something that often comes to mind when you talk about mentoring. Most people have an image of mentoring that is one-on-one, and that's the only way to do it. And I think one of the things that comes out in the publication is the power of having this constellation of mentors. And I think it also speaks to one other piece that I think is really important to me from the publication, and that's the section we have on inclusive practices. And we know the power of someone seeing someone like them and them could mean many different things. It could be gender, it could be race, it could be discipline. There are a lot of areas, and I think once we people think about this model as a constellation, they can see that their multiple mentors can represent different areas. And so I think it helps when you have this model, it helps make the practice more inclusive and it helps students find their way through what can be a challenging process at some institutions a little bit easier, and they're able to navigate a little bit easier when they have multiple mentors that are able to help them at different stages.

Jessie Moore (11:46):

And that's a great lead into our next question.

Nolan Schultheis (11:49):

You are talking about this constellation of mentors, and as I was reading the report, one of the things that I found most interesting was that how you mentioned mentors can even be community members. And I was wondering if you guys could elaborate on that and how mentoring relationships with community members tend to develop.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (12:07):

Yeah, I think part of that goes back to good practice in terms of community engaged learning. And it is a shift from the model that some people have where the community is where you go to extract. And it's a

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

model where the community is a place that we're going to learn. And I think many institutions that are doing this well are looking at community members who are involved in this process as co-educators. And I think once you have that perspective, then the mentoring comes naturally and then students understand. So I think it's the framing where you help students to think we're going to be learning from different people in different contexts, and our community members are a source of knowledge. And I think that is one thing that helps tremendously. When we have that framing for community engaged learning, then it makes sense that you would have co-educators in the community and they can mentor in ways that some of us who are only on campus, we don't have the expertise, we don't have that experience, and it's absolutely critical for students to get those perspectives and to get that guidance.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (13:07):

Absolutely. I guess the word I would lift up here and echoing Dawn's comments is reciprocity. So we're thinking about these reciprocal relationships. We all need to be getting something out of it. So when we are doing work with faculty members who are considering building in a community engaged piece, whether it be to their course or to an undergraduate research experience, we're always asking what would benefit the partners? What do they want to know, what's of interest, what kind of projects would be helpful so that it's not just hosting a student and thinking only about the students' learning, it's mutually engaging and reciprocal so that we're all learning something together. And I would say as a person who served as a faculty mentor, I learn, I would argue almost as much if not more from my students and with my students in these experiences. So we again, back to that relational mentoring piece, trying to level the playing field so that the university sees community partners as essential and reciprocal.

Jessie Moore (14:05):

I don't know why I haven't thought about it this way before, but your responses are reminding me that some of the work that I've done mentoring undergraduate research in TESOL courses as part of community-based learning here really could be an example of mentored undergraduate research in global context. And our community partners were so essential in helping us understand what the priorities were for families who were navigating language differences in the local community and better understanding what their needs were and how we could learn more about supporting them, but also learn with them and address some of the unmet needs that the local school districts and community couldn't support. So I'm just having an aha moment here that I had not previously, so thank you for that.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (14:53):

That's great, Jessie. I love thinking about that with language. I think it's so important. It's one of the ways when students are studying abroad that they can engage with peers but also with host families, whatever the context. It's a great example of we want to learn from each other with our Italian partners. For example, some of our students who go to Florence are spending a weekend or longer in a town in Tuscany where there's middle school students who are very interested in English language, but more so of course in pop culture about what's it really like to live in the United States. And the students are deriving benefits from learning about Italian culture, spending time with the families there and especially with the children in the school. And then again, that reciprocity is there, we're getting something different out of it, but we are getting a lot out of these relationships. So that's the goal.

Nolan Schultheis (15:44):

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

So I brought up my Europe trip and that actually led me into creating this question, which is as a student lucky enough to have traveled internationally, I encountered cultural differences. That surprised me as well. What ways are there to help students navigate cultural differences they might encounter while completing undergraduate research and global context?

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (16:03):

There are many ways to answer it. I think one you've reminded me of some students who really wanted to help each other with these experiences. So of course we've talked a lot already about the role of a mentor in terms of a faculty mentor, but there were some students who approached me because of the Center for Research on Global engagement, and they said, you're giving us these grants to do our research and a global context, could you also help us create community in some ways? And I was very interested and they wanted to create a video called What to Know Before You Go. And it wouldn't just be about the context they were going to travel in necessarily or the people they would work with, but also just preparedness for in some ways the unexpected. I mean, it's very hard to fully and adequately prepare somebody, but talking about that, talking about the fact that there are going to be these unexpected challenges and also ensuring that there are resources around the student that they are aware of other types of support.

(17:00):

So for example, if you were going to, as you mentioned, be in a European context, undoubtedly we have friends and colleagues, we have partners we work with who are in educational abroad programs. So we would establish a sort of a constellation or a network around you of support so that you aren't meeting these challenges alone. And I think we could point to our colleagues work with the salient practices. This is something that we could talk more about, but helping mentors know these are the sorts of things. There's 10 practices that have been identified from the literature. One of them is preparing students, thinking about it, having intentional conversations before you get started, and then as you're going, just that support throughout. But I think we often think again about, as Dawn mentioned, that faculty relationship with the student, but the peers can be really helpful. I went last year and here's what happened to, and here's something you could think about. So you would have again, that constellation of people around you to support.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (17:57):

Yeah, I echo everything that Maureen just said, and I would just add the importance of engagement before you go. And so one of the things that many people do if possible is to provide opportunities for students to engage with people from the country where they're going before they go. So the first time you experience someone from a different culture isn't when you get off the airport or get off the airplane, but rather you've had some experiences, you've heard, you've had conversation, you understand how speaking might be different, what may be lost in translation, the translations that emerge. So I think it's that experience initially before you go. I think that's something that's been really important is some sort of engagement, engagement with, I think Maureen didn't quite say it this way, but engagement with pop culture, engagement with local news, things like that before you go again, some of the things that we struggle with when we're in a foreign country are related to sort of the disorientation that comes from, oh wow, I didn't know people talked about this.

(19:03):

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

When it's something very common in another context, but it might not be. And then I'd say that the last thing I think is absolutely critical, and Maureen touched on this, is reflection. And when I say reflection, I don't just mean how did you feel? How did you feel today? What did you uncover? But when you're actually connecting that reflection to your experiences, connecting it back to literature, connecting it back to your course, so you're actually unpacking what you've experienced in academic context where you can say, okay, historically what's going on? Why is this happening? There's a historical connection to this also, did they react differently to you than me? Could that related to a gender issue? Could that be related to something else? Is there about educational attainment? So I think having structured reflection where you're able to unpack these experiences with different mentors, I think is more Mar said, the peers are critical, but also your mentor who may be from your home institution, your local mentor who can help offer some explanation. And there are some conversations that you will have with the locals, some that you'll want to have just with your peers. And that's okay. And I think that's what the power of a constellation is. You've got all of these people who you can help understand and unpack these experiences that can be uncomfortable at times.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (20:21):

I would add quickly that the research we've done with students, which in the publication that we're referencing here today, a lot of our work has been with faculty. And I don't know that we had any community partners yet, Dawn, but the aim of this publication was in part to sponsor more research to inspire people to investigate these complex but really exciting issues. But when we've worked with students, students carry multiple identities. And so thinking about, as Dawn is pointing out, those identities in some spaces look a certain way for me and then people may react to me differently in a different space. So helping again with that preparation beforehand to know one student shared that she had been adopted in a particular out of a particular country when she returned to that country, people assumed she had linguistic skills she didn't have or they made assumptions about her identities and she was unprepared for that. So she talked a lot about how that was an additional layer. Nolan, you started this question by how could I be better prepared? And so just those are conversations again that people should be having with students.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (21:29):

There's a section where we talk about the interviews that were done with some host site consultants, host educators, and I think some of that information is really helpful too because it talks about from their perspective what they are thinking when they're having students come and do work in this context. And so I think it just pushes us to realize that we have to have these conversations because we come with our notion from our institutional context or the American context or the higher ed context, and then our educators on the ground also have their perceptions, which may be very different. And so it's critical that we have those conversations to help make sure that the process goes smoother even though we know we can never, we're always going to struggle and stumble, as you said, so that you can be best prepared.

Nolan Schultheis (22:17):

I was just going to note, one of the examples that stuck out to me the most was the story about the women waiting in line. I'm not sure what country it was, but to have this idea of, oh, I'm waiting in line. I have my spot, I'm free to walk up. And then lo and behold, it's no, all men go first. And I thought that was interesting just in the sense of you have such a solid idea of your identity your entire life. It's been

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

developed, it's been reinforced, and then you go to a different country and it's broken down. And I just found that kind of unique concept because you're still respected in that other cultural context, but it feels disrespectful because it's what you're so used to is just now the opposite. And I think that's kind of one of the biggest examples of a cultural difference I feel that just highlights how differently people think. It's not out of a place of disrespect that these men are going in front of these women. It's just what they've learned as well.

Jessie Moore (23:23):

One of the things I want to amplify is that space for reflection to process that. As Dawn suggested, it's not just the how did that make you feel, but as I hear you suggesting, Nolan, processing that, okay, so that's not intentionally disrespectful. It is a mark of the local cultural expectations. And so that's requiring a shift on our perspective as we're interacting in that local community

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (23:49):

And the mentorship piece being so important and the publication we reference often culturally responsive mentorship and mentoring so that we are thinking about this as a very dynamic situation and knowing that the way you experienced that, what you described Nolan, would be different than another person's response.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (24:07):

I think one other thing I'd just add in that same context, I think it also is some, for many students, many faculty, many staff, they maybe haven't had to navigate privilege in that way. And so I think that's another, and again, that comes as Maureen said, from your local mentors who can describe this. I remember a group I was working with in Ghana, the students, because they were perceived to be from the university at a local school, they got to sit in the chairs, not the teachers, but the students, these college students. And they were very uncomfortable and we had to say, no, no, this is a form of hospitality. You're the guest, you're from the university, but how do you navigate that, especially when you're on your own, as you said, Logan, it's one thing when you're in a group and someone is saying, okay, but how do you really navigate that as an individual when you, like you said, you're just so like, this doesn't make sense to me at all. And helping unpack and understand that from the local perspective and from yours.

Jessie Moore (25:10):

One of the things that I really appreciate about the publication is just how chock full of helpful ideas and strategies it is. And you have an entire chapter on teaching and mentoring, undergraduate research in global context, ethos implications for practice, and I love that title to start with. For colleges and their faculty and staff looking for an entry point into facilitating this type of high impact educational practice, which strategies would you prioritize to minimize roadblocks and start with a strong foundation for growth?

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (25:44):

One, it goes back to reciprocity or mutuality, whichever guiding ethos that your institution has about engagement with the community, engagement in global context. So I think a lot of it goes back to how does your institution engage with the world? Because I think if you don't have a framing that grounds

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

the work as reciprocal, then it can be really challenging to develop to say, okay, well, for our program, we're doing it this way. So I think it speaks to the importance of the institution having that ethos and the institution being committed to this type of ethical engagement where there's reciprocal learning reciprocal where really reciprocity is at the center, and the goal is learning from each and recognizing it might not be equal, but we are going to be as equitable as possible. So I think that to me is the starting point, is making sure that as an institution you have that understanding and that grounding and that you don't have some from the institution operating from that perspective than others that are going just saying, we're just going to pay them a local rate.

(26:53):

We're just going to come in and get this information. But it has to really be part of the fabric of the institution. I think that's critical. Secondly, I think, and I hope it's clear that we're trying to make a strong case for integration across the institution. So this can't just be something that the office of International Affairs or international programs does. It can't just be what the mentoring team does. It can't just be what the undergraduate research team, but we have to have conversation and we have to work together and talk through these things so that people understand and see the connections across the areas because we all have something to contribute to that ethos. So I think those are the two things that are most important to me. One is that we have this foundation as an institution, and then secondly that there are conversations across units on campus and those that are developing these types of experiences for students.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (27:47):

Absolutely. I think the research that we did, the national survey research that we did supports what you're saying, Dawn. Exactly. Faculty say that that is the one thing, they haven't had professional development themselves and they don't necessarily feel institutional support. So it tends to be a very individual model where a faculty member has a relationship, let's say in the Netherlands, and they have built this research program and they built partnerships and they wish many of them reported that they could scale it up, meaning we would love to see broad support for programs like this rather than just each person having to develop it themselves. So absolutely that ecosystem support I think is really critical for the ethos. And we have lots of questions in the publication, if you notice in the implications section, I mean, we don't have the answers really, but we have a lot of good questions and we would hope that people will engage them and we'll learn from each other that way.

Jessie Moore (28:43):

Thank you both. I think that that institutional culture is such an important piece and it comes across in the publication, but it is also the element that I think we sometimes forget about or downplay, and it is so central to being able to scale up these types of opportunities.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (29:01):

And I would just lift up the Center for Engaged Learning as a great example of support that's both external and internal for faculty. We, Elon has a center model where my center, the Center for Research on global engagement. So we try to have that kind of institutional support spread out as Dawn's talking about. So this doesn't just live in our global education center. We're all thinking and talking about mentoring, global learning and undergraduate research among many other high impact practices.

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (29:28):

And I think it's such a wonderful model as other institutions are maybe just starting this process to see that it's not just something we're saying, oh, you should do these things. People have done it. Elon has done it, and so it's a wonderful model that you can adapt. No one is saying it has to be the same, but it is possible. And you can see the power of this model in terms of the number of students who benefit from these experiences at Elon as a particular example.

Nolan Schultheis (29:54):

While we're on the topic of students, what would you recommend to college students who are listening and are interested in participating in mentored undergraduate research in global context, but might not know how to access this type of experience

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (30:06):

In some related research, not directly related to the publication, but on the same topic of mentoring. Jessie and I have partnered on this research and we did lots of interviews with students at Elon and people have done them beyond Elon. Of course, students often identify something that was surprising to me, which is they are nervous or scared to talk to a faculty member when they first were telling me this in these one-on-one interviews, I was stunned. I just hadn't realized that there is this level of caution perhaps, and I would encourage students to communicate quickly, readily, however it makes sense for you in your class show that you're curious about a faculty member's research area. We love nothing more than to talk about our research, engage in the conversation. We're going to light up and be excited. And I would say demonstrate your curiosity through your in-class participation, but also when you have an opportunity at Elon, we have opportunities for faculty and staff members to have coffee with students or to go to lunch.

(31:14):

And the students in my interviews were sometimes saying we don't know what the purpose of that is. So also on our side for faculty and staff to normalize these kinds of interactions for all of our students so that we are being inclusive. We don't assume that a person knows how to take advantage of an opportunity like this or even create one. Again, I would go back to the peers as well because we have an organization, SA students are doing undergraduate research and talking to others about it. They did an event here once, ask a question about research and get a donut, talk to each other about these experiences. How did you get involved? And that hopefully takes, again, levels, the playing field a little bit. Students can ask each other questions. They might be nervous to ask a faculty member the first time they meet them, for example.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (31:59):

Yeah, I of course agree with all of those. And I think one thing I would add, several years ago, we have an institute on engaged in integrative learning and Terrell Strayhorn, I'm not sure what institution he's with now, but he had developed, he works in student affairs and so he had some great resources and tools and one, he described it almost like madlibs. So when we were growing up, we had Madlibs. And so he developed something like that for students to take when they went to talk to a faculty member so that they had sort of a plan because the students would say to him, well, what am I supposed to say? What am I supposed to, you keep telling me go to office hours, go to Maureen and go to coffee or go to this. And so I think something like that is really helpful.

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

(32:47):

If you are in an environment where it's not as common or you don't create these environments where students can necessarily come and meet faculty, do you have resources that say, okay, if you're going to meet a faculty member or a professional staff person that's engaged in any type of work, here are some questions. Are there projects that you're working on that students could be a part of? Could you tell me about those projects? What are your interests or just something that provides guidance for students so that when they go in, they understand the why. As Maureen said, why am I going? I think also encouraging students. I've heard some folks talk about identifying each semester, helping a student identify two new people, two new staff members, faculty members who you're going to meet this semester. So who are the two people that you're targeting? What is it that you hope to do?

(33:35):

And then have them follow up and report back to you. I met this person. Okay, did you feel a connection? Was there something? So I think just providing some guidance for what to do beyond saying, just go and speak to them. I think that can really be helpful. And then a mentorship relationship could develop or it may be, okay, those two that was not for me, but next semester I'm going to try this. So I think especially in an environment where you don't have that culture of helping to facilitate the relationships, putting things in place so that students still have a way forward in doing that.

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (34:09):

You've set up something that Jessie and our colleague Paul Miller have developed called the Fire Toolkit. I don't know Jessie, if this is a place you want to mention it, but it's a set of questions. Dawn, I don't know if you've seen the fire toolkit, but it's available to look at, and it's exactly what you're talking about. Here are some questions that could help have a conversation about different

Jessie Moore (34:28):

Experiences. And currently there are sets that are specific to study away and sets specific to undergraduate research. But you're making me think that we do need to think about a set that crosses those and acknowledges the really important integration of the two experiences. So stay tuned for Fire Toolkit version three

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (34:53):

Toolkit available on a website or is it closed for just Elon folks or could people access that to get ideas?

Jessie Moore (35:01):

Yes, it's absolutely, if it's freely available, it's at www.centerforengagelearning.org/fire. And we'll include a link in the show notes. And I'll say very briefly that right now the version that's posted is very specific to our Elon experiences, which are four of the officially designated high impact practices as well as leadership. We are currently working with students on refining a version that's a little bit more meta about experiential education and is a space where some of these questions might naturally occur, and that will be available hopefully early fall for use in other spaces as well. So thanks for that plug. This has been a really fun conversation and I think that you've given our listeners a lot to think about and to follow up on. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about the publication or your collaboration?

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler (35:59):

I would just welcome interest questions. I think Dawn and I really want to foster conversations around these topics. I think people believe they're quite niche, but in fact the integration of all of these different experiences, these are on the rise. I think more and more students are realizing these benefits. So I think it benefits us to keep talking to each other and learn about each other's work, drive forward what we know through evidence. So I think we're excited about people interacting with the publication as a first step and hopefully with us and others to keep it going.

Dawn Michelle Whitehead (36:36):

And we would definitely, as Maureen said, we want to keep the conversation going, but if people are doing research on these practices, please reach out to us and let us know. That was how this all started is we said, we hear a lot of conversation about certain high impact practices, but what about this? So I think if individuals are doing this work, please reach out and share it with us because we'd like to amplify it. We'd like to present with others about this and just to help this grow so that we have more and more evidence of the power of the integration of these high impact practices.

Jessie Moore (37:09):

Fantastic. Thank you for that openness to continuing the conversation, and I hope that many of our listeners will take you up on that. Thank you again for spending some time with us today to talk more about this area of work. It's so important and we really enjoyed the conversation, so thank you. So Nolan, what stood out to you that you think students should know about mentored undergraduate research in global context?

Nolan Schultheis (37:37):

I think this mention of the constellation of support was brought up multiple times, and I think that's probably one of the biggest takeaways I had was as a student, it can be really daunting to want to travel abroad and then to think about all the challenges that will come with it. But Elon and other schools across the nation now are starting to set up these programs that are much more catered to working towards trying to make it a more opening experience. And I think kind of back to this metaphor, it takes a village. I really don't think it would be possible for anyone to travel to an area they're not as familiar with without teaching themselves about at least something in a context of an adult who just wanted to take simply a vacation. They're still going to do their research, they're still going to look into things that might be different. And as a student, you're just able to access what you would have done as an adult now just in a much greater context and probably in richer detail than the internet could provide. And I find that very helpful and it takes away some of the anxiety that's associated with traveling to a different country.

Jessie Moore (38:51):

And I think that idea of a mentoring constellation also helps from a faculty and staff perspective because you're not relying on any one person to help you navigate that experience and any cultural differences that you're encountering, any research challenges that you're encountering, you suddenly are thinking more about the network of people that are supporting a student. And from a faculty perspective, we likely know people in the local context who can be part of that mentoring constellation, and there may be other students who can be part of that mentoring constellation, but everyone in that network may

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 1

Mentoring Magic: Mentored Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts

provide different types of support, and that takes a little bit of the pressure off of any one person while also ensuring that students have more support for the experience that they're encountering and hopefully have more success in their experience as well.

Nolan Schultheis (39:50):

Yeah. I also think another aspect really of all of the undergraduate research and traveling abroad is community. And I think the idea of creating communities in a global context is interesting and important. I don't think you don't want to put yourself in an echo chamber in terms of academia with certain colleges only communicating with other colleges or nationally speaking only US colleges speaking with US colleges. I think the ability to, in today's day and age, communicate in a wider range should be utilized. And I think the direction we're heading, that's definitely seeming to be the greater picture.

Jessie Moore (40:32):

Absolutely. I really appreciate you drawing attention to that. One other thing that I appreciated about our conversation today is we heard our guests bring in and some of the topics that we've talked with other podcast guests about. So for example, they referenced the salient practices of mentored undergraduate research, and we can link back to that prior episode and also the salient practices resources. But we're starting to see with this new publication, a real intentional integration of these high impact educational practices and not thinking about them merely as add-ons or intersections, but how do we make meaning through the integration of these different practices, which is fun to see the evolution of as well. Once again, I'm Jessie Moore

Nolan Schultheis (41:32):

And I'm Nolan Schultheis. Thank you for joining us for Making College Worth It from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning.

Jessie Moore (41:39):

To learn more about mentored undergraduate research in global contexts, see our show notes at www.centerforengagedlearning.org. Subscribe to our show wherever you listen to podcasts for more strategies on making college worth it.