

To: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair of the Academic Senate
From: Cindy Larive, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education *Cynthia Larive*
RE: Proposal to allow enrollment in research and internship courses for zero units
Date: 11/15/2016

I am writing to request consultation by the Senate Executive committee about the possibility of allowing students to register for undergraduate research courses for zero units. The Senate might also want to consider whether academic internships could also benefit from a zero unit option.

Currently some UCR students conduct research, scholarly or creative activities with faculty mentors on a voluntary basis, while others enroll for course credit (typically numbered 197 or 199). Some students choose to perform research as a volunteer rather than taking a course because they have accumulated too many units and are bumping up against a unit cap for their degree, while for others the cost of paying for "extra" units may be a financial hardship. A student might conduct research with a faculty member as a volunteer over several quarters, and then at the point where a comprehensive written report is prepared, sign up for research units in a terminal quarter. Students who are volunteers in research laboratories can create issues of liability for the faculty member and the university unless they complete paperwork treating them as without salary employees. Having students conduct research on a voluntary basis does not give them credit on their transcript for the full extent of their research participation, and makes it difficult for the campus to efficiently and effectively quantify the scale and impact of undergraduate research at UCR. It also makes it challenging to fully document and recognize the efforts of faculty in mentoring students in research, one of the high impact practices that brings value to the UCR student experience.

I recently learned of two universities, University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) and University of Central Florida (UCF), who have solved this challenge by allowing students to enroll in research for zero credits. The benefits to UTEP faculty and students are outlined on the website <http://couri.utep.edu/index.php/rsrc4033> and UCF has produced a document that explains their policy, which is appended. At UCR, zero credit courses could be implemented by departments or colleges that wanted to permit this practice by allowing students to enroll in variable credit 197 or 199 research courses for zero units (many are now 1-4 units). Enrollment for zero units would still require permission of the instructor, and presumably a grade of S/NC would be recorded on the student's transcript.

New Option

ZERO Credit Hours

for Directed Independent Research 4912

Why Enroll in ZERO Credit Hours?

- Students and faculty officially get recognized for their work by enrolling in Independent Research 4912
- The ZERO credit hour has no additional tuition charge when students are already enrolled in other courses*
 - Students still can register for variable credit hours in 3905, 4905, and 4912**
- All students doing research should be enrolled in an independent research course unless students start work off-cycle
 - Students *should not* be volunteers when conducting research with faculty due to liability and accountability issues
- Faculty can use this documented enrollment for teaching and research portfolios

How Do Students Enroll for ZERO credits?

- Students and faculty mentors should meet to discuss the semester goals for the research
- Students and/or the faculty mentor must request an undergraduate registration agreement form from the faculty mentor's home department
- Fill out ZERO credits under the Directed Independent Research 4912 option
- Turn in the form to the department and/or college
- Students are encouraged to join the Office of Undergraduate Research listserv to stay informed about undergraduate research opportunities and events (see www.OUR.ucf.edu)

Questions? Contact the Office of Undergraduate Research, our@ucf.edu or 407-823-3125

*Students not enrolled in other coursework when enrolled in ZERO credits for 4912 will be charged for 1 credit hour of tuition plus fees.

**In consultation with their faculty mentor, students may elect to enroll in a 4912 class with zero credit hours. Faculty and students should carefully consider their aims of the research project to determine if the zero credit hour option is appropriate, or if a larger number of credits is necessary.