Because NYU is a research university, we are committed to providing research opportunities to our undergraduates. But because the word “research” means different things to practitioners in different fields, it is clear to this committee that to improve the research experience of undergraduates, the effort has to be tailored to specific schools and disciplines. Whereas all schools offer a wide variety of research and creative opportunities, it is not possible to have a “one size fits all” approach. Here are some examples:

- At Steinhardt research opportunities are located in the different departments. About half of the seniors in the small Applied Psychological Studies program, for instance, do research with a faculty member and some of them present their findings at a departmental research conference.

- Stern has an honors program for seniors, limited to the top 5 percent of the class, that involves graduate elective courses, an honors seminar, and a thesis/project supervised by a faculty member. This independent research is presented to the seminar, from which the best theses appear in a student publication and are given awards.

- All Gallatin students conduct a project that necessarily involves some research or original creative activity. Those who need support for independent projects can apply to the Dean’s Office for small grants.

- Virtually all TSOA students participate in original creative activity both in studio experience and in independent projects. In addition 13 percent of TSOA undergraduates are enrolled in departmental honors programs, which emphasize research. The school provides seed money for students’ creative projects, and each department funds student work through performances, exhibitions, and screenings.

- CAS has what appears to be the most developed, school-wide initiative in this area—the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), aspects of which might be used as a model by other schools. It includes the Dean’s Undergraduate Research Fund, which has raised endowment of several million dollars for research scholarships for students; in addition, individual departments have obtained external grants for this purpose (e.g., NSF REUs, Beckman, and HHMI). CAS also sponsors an annual school-wide undergraduate research conference, which involves all departments, and publishes a magazine, Inquiry, showcasing selected student projects. In addition, a database of faculty who are willing to mentor undergraduates will be made available to students via a website.
this fall, and will also give information on external research and funding opportunities. (This database will start with science and will include the humanities and social sciences later in the year.) CAS will also start this year to provide departments (especially in the sciences) with modest funds to defray costs incurred in the initial training of undergraduates to be full participants in the research life of the departments. Finally, UROP offers an opportunity for CAS to monitor student participation in research and to work with faculty to set quality standards for this activity.

- We recommend expanding collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty to integrate research-based assignments into the classroom, where appropriate. The aim is to develop in all NYU students an increasingly sophisticated ability to locate, evaluate, synthesize, and communicate information into their research and learning. Given the overwhelming amount of information available through library catalogs, subscription databases and the internet, students need to be able to distinguish among these tools.
  
  o Adopt a phased approach, introducing basic searching skills and critical evaluation of research materials to freshmen and sophomores and utilize subject librarians to teach more discipline-specific research skills to juniors and seniors.
  
  o Increase faculty awareness of librarians’ availability to provide research support for classes and/or individual students.
  
  o Encourage faculty and librarians to work together to construct library ties to classes. We can do this by building on existing examples—e.g., the Spanish and History courses that utilize the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive in Tamiment Library; the web-based research tool that supports evidence-based practice developed by nursing faculty in collaboration with librarians; and the use of the libraries’ electronic primary text collection of British and Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries by Gallatin students researching the depiction of domestic workers.

- In addition, we recommend that the Provost ask the Dean of each school to report on its efforts to promote undergraduate research. Each school will need to define precisely what it means by research in the context of its disciplines; it will also have to state what it currently does to support undergraduate research, what it plans to do in the future, what resources will be needed to meet such goals, and whether such resources can be found in the school, or whether assistance is needed from the Provost’s Office.

Subcommittee members:
Marisa Carrasco (convener)
Kay Cummings
Paula Feid
David Scicchitano