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Student Research Symposium 2024

May 8th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Promoting Student Engagement in Research in an Undergraduate Language-Development Course

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Promoting Undergraduate Research

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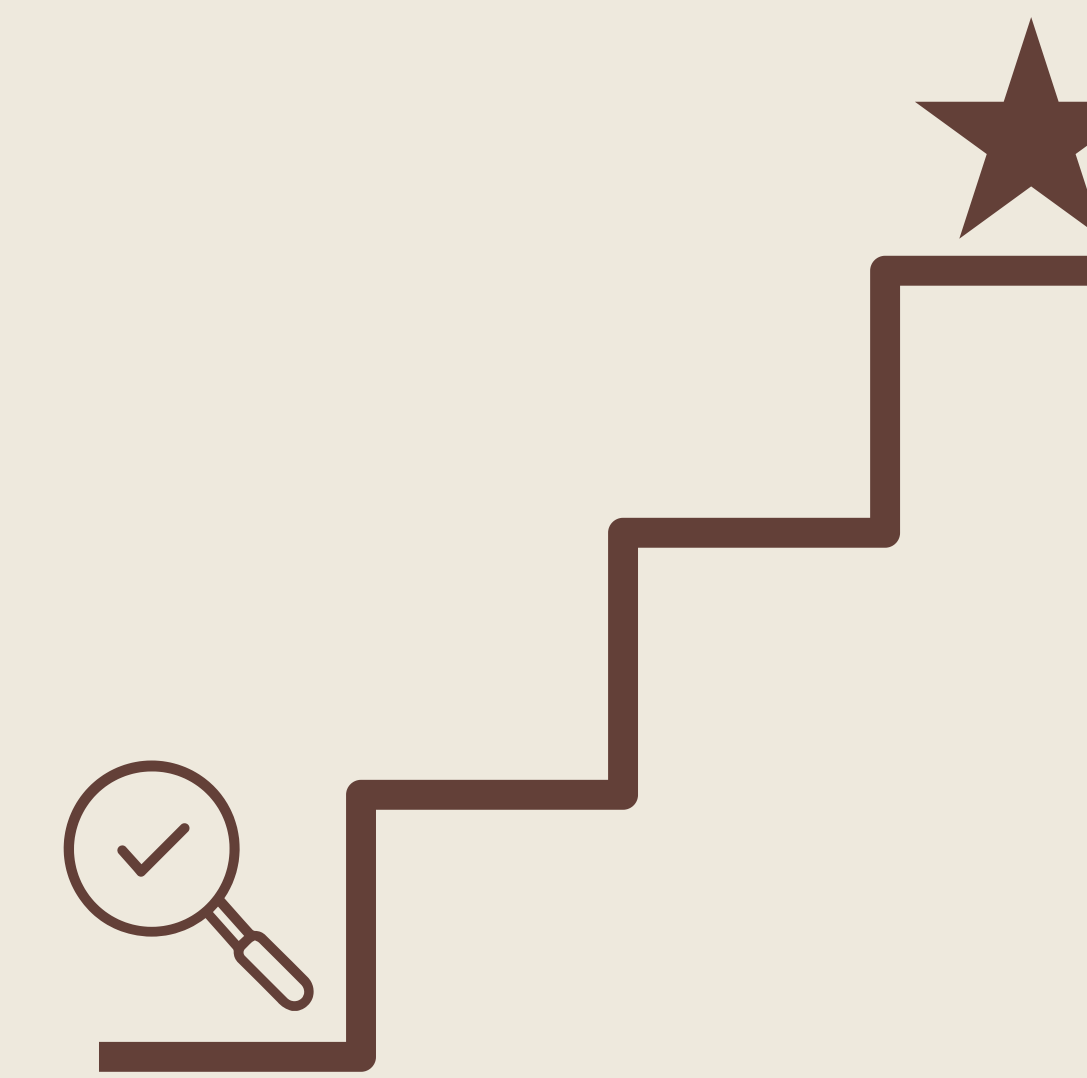
Encouraging student participation in research in an undergraduate language-development course



Methodology

The project is segmented into **3 steps** that mirror literature review, critical analysis, and proposal. Each step in the research and writing process is scaffolded. The current iteration of this project was implemented in both the Fall 2023 and Winter 2024 terms.

1. Initial research & write up
2. Critical analysis
3. Radically reimagine



“The project made the research process seem more accessible and understandable. It was an enriching activity.”



Introduction

Consistent with recent calls to diversify STEM disciplines (e.g., #ShutDownSTEM, 2020; Chen, 2020), since 2020 the first author has been infusing DEI topics into a core course by gradually developing and refining a small scale, interactive research project in SPHR 372U, Speech and Language Development in Children. SPHR 372U is a required class in the Speech and Hearing Sciences (SPHR) major, typically one of the first courses SPHR students take, and cross-listed for students interested in family studies.

Objectives

This scaffolded project helps reduce barriers of access to scientific research and increase engagement for college students, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups.

Child Language Learning Center

The CLLC is a departmental lab within the Speech and Hearing Sciences department. The CLLC studies phonological development in monolingual and bilingual learners with and without Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in preschoolers, adult language impairment, and adult second language learning. We conduct our research both in our lab at Portland State University and in the community.

References



Results

Student feedback has been generally positive, and have included the following themes: the project (1) promoted engagement as a student from an underrepresented group; (2) stimulated interaction with classmates that broadened and enriched their perspective on the topic; (3) enhanced their learning of core language-development content; (4) empowered them to draw connections outside of the classroom; (5) fostered critical thinking.

Class presentations follow a procedure informed by Takacs (2003) in which students share about both their ideas and (as they are comfortable) how their life experiences and identities might influence their perspective.

Through presentations, students introduce concepts to each other:

- Supports for parents
- Hub for resources
- Connecting with existing resources (community based)
- Inclusive literacy instruction
- Access to resources
- Research should consider experiences of families
- Open dialogue between teachers and students

Future Directions

This project is designed to reduce barriers and eliminate stigma many PSU undergrads face when it comes to being involved in research. We hope to continue to implement this project in further terms. We hope to further collaboration with teaching partners and the university faculty learning center to help identify core curricular goals and streamline the project design and instructions.

