

Mentoring UG Research in Global Contexts: Multifaith Scholars

Institutional Description

Elon University is a selective, mid-sized private university renowned as a national model for engaged and experiential learning. Students work closely with faculty who are dedicated to excellent teaching and scholarship.

The Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society fosters research, teaching, and dialogue about the role of religion and prepares students to succeed in a multicultural world. The Center aims to engage all students, faculty, and staff in advancing their intercultural and multifaith learning and competencies, as well as empower students to build a constellation of mentors.



Mentoring Model: Multifaith Scholars

What is Multifaith Scholars?

Multifaith Scholars is an experientially rich and academically rigorous fellows program offering personal and intellectual development for students working alongside and studying with diverse religious communities.

Five second-year students are accepted each year and receive \$5,000 annual scholarship funding for their junior and senior years.

Students either major in Religious Studies or minor in Interreligious Studies. Beginning in their junior year, they undertake mentored undergraduate research, participate in community engagement initiatives, and provide campus leadership on multifaith topics.

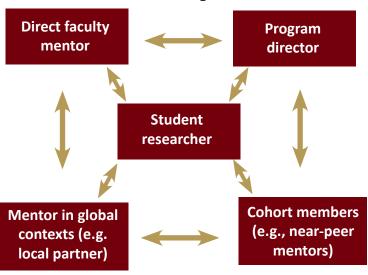


Mentoring Practices, Structure, & Assessment

Mentors deepen student learning by¹:

- Involving them in the process of discovery
- Guiding them in acquiring research expertise
- Inviting them to scholarly communities
- Increasing their self-confidence and perception of efficacy

Vertical and Lateral Mentoring



Assessing Effectiveness

- Monthly student reflections
- External assessment
- Semi-annual evaluations of mentors (based on Sharahan et al's, 2015 "Ten Salient Practices of Undergraduate Research Mentors")
- Annual tracking of learning outcomes

1. Allen and Eby 2010, Boyer Commission 1998, Brew 2013, Johnson 2010, Johnson 2015, Johnson et al 2015, Kuh 2008, Kuh & O'Donnell 2013, Lopatto 2003, Lopatto 2006, Palmer et al 2015, and Webber et al 2013



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Multifaith Scholars Statistics & Examples



Total participants: 10

What Multifaith Scholars Produce:

- Research papers
- Conference presentations/posters
- Journalism features
- Op-eds and popular pieces
- Academic journal articles
- Multimedia websites

- White papers
- Handouts and manuals to benefit communities
- Photo exhibits
- Short documentaries





Recent Project Topics:

- The role of religion in the lives of resettled refugees from East Africa
- The influence of religion on sexual decision-making among college-aged South Asian women in the United States
- The online recruitment and retention techniques of Christian Identity extremist groups
- Secularism in Denmark
- How worker migration from South India to the Gulf creates new interreligious landscapes for Hindus, Muslims, and Christians
- Jewish values, the New York financial industry, and the Occupy Wall Street movement
- Negotiating Sikh-American identities

Innovations/Benefits

- Embeds assessment of mentoring practices and learning outcomes into the program
- Small cohort and one-to-one mentoring means students receive substantive attention through weekly meetings and feedback
- Professional development and monetary support available for mentors
- Flexible project topics for diverse student interests
- Engagement with local and global communities

Challenges/Limitations

- Attracting a multidisciplinary cohort
- Building trust and reciprocal relationships with community partners
- Appealing to students and mentors from diverse identities, including secular/agnostic/ atheist
- Dedicated summer research poses challenges from some students
- Building sufficient intercultural learning into a two-year project

