

FROM THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Research is essential to Texas Christian University. Research is generally defined as the creation of new knowledge as a way to create new concepts, methodologies, or understandings. A university's mission is grounded in the values and beliefs of the institution, and universities develop frameworks for teaching and research based on the university's mission. TCU makes its commitment to research known in its mission statement. TCU strives to "... to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community through research and creative activities, scholarship, service, and programs of teaching and learning offered through the doctoral level". Research is central to the mission of TCU at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

TCU is a distinctive private national university. What makes TCU distinct is the care and thought placed in the undergraduate experience. TCU intentionally creates a place of belonging for a wide range of students. This care begins before the launch of the first semester with Frog Camp, a tradition since 1993. Frog Camp focuses on the importance of community building and the values and traditions of the university. Central to that focus is valuing all community members and how to make a difference at TCU. Also, part of the first-year experience is the Common Reading, in which all first-year students read and reflect on the same readings. In 2023, first-year students were invited to read *This I Believe* essays, reflect on their beliefs and values, and create their own philosophy. The Common Reading experience gives students time to focus on what matters to them as they begin their first year at TCU. TCU encourages students to explore TCU's past, embrace the present, and consider how to impact the future. This critical examination contributes to the student becoming a responsible citizen through research and creative activities.

Undergraduate research strengthens the entire undergraduate education experience while providing channels for faculty to teach, research, and serve within the university. Undergraduate research nurtures the creation of a community of scholars, which is vital to the intellectual health of the university. The TCU McNair Program is dynamic and supports student scholars during the undergraduate experience. The McNair Program mentors undergraduate student scholars who are historically underrepresented in higher education, and the program provides support for scholars to pursue advanced degrees. The grant funding supports the program by providing scholarly activities for participants. These activities include access to guest speakers, research-related workshops, graduate school visits, attending conferences, research stipends, tutoring, and GRE prep, among other scholarly-focused activities. TCU McNair scholars are highly competent and prepared for graduate education.

In the pages of this journal, TCU McNair scholars bring innovative ideas forward in their research. By participating in undergraduate research, our McNair scholars are better prepared for post-graduation and graduate school plans as they had the opportunity to explore their academic discipline more fully and to participate in the writing and publication process. Join me in reading their exceptional work. We have much to learn from each other.