GATE SYMPOSIUM: STUDENT-LED RESEARCH

Students will not only be researching scholarly articles and information about their topic, but they will also be conducting their own **qualitative research** as well. This process will allow students to explore their data in the context of their own community, and experience a more personal and hands-on approach with their topic. The **student-led research** will not be externally valid or adhere to all the parameters of social experiments that are conducted at the university level. However, it is still important to guide students along the process and provide them with enough resources so they can properly conduct research for their projects.

There are **four types of research** that students can choose to incorporate into their projects.We strongly encourage students to incorporate **(1) surveys** and **(2) one additional type** of student-led research. The type of student-led research that students engage in depends on their topic. For example, if their topic is focused on a social phenomenon, the observation or experiment may be better suited than an expert interview.

1. SURVEYS (required)

Students should incorporate a survey in their research. There are many aspects of the survey to consider, such as who they survey, how they administer the survey, the number or type of questions they ask, the anonymity of the surveyors and/or responders, and the main objective of the surveys. A great resource on how to design a good survey can be found on this helpful website: http://psr.iq.harvard.edu/book/questionnaire-design-tip-sheet

2a. STUDENT OBSERVATIONS

In the social science world, such observations are called "Field Reports." Students observe a social situation, or go to a particular setting that is relevant to their topic in order to observe an issue in the real world. http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/fieldreport

2b. EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Certain topics may require students to interview experts in the field, such as professors who focus on researching their specific topic or community leaders who specialize in a particular issue. For example, a student group was able to conduct an email interview with a professor who lives in England because of his expertise on drones. Another group was able to meet directly with a local Youth Center director to ask about teen bullying. Students should be accompanied by an adult and be supported with advice about how to ask questions and reminded to send a thank you card. http://www.qualres.org/HomeInte-3595.html

2c. SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS

This type of quantitative research is the most challenging for students because it requires students to use people as their test subjects and have a strong understanding of independent and dependent variables, and controls. Students who wish to administer a social experiment should be supported by a mentor who has a strong understanding of experimental design, such as a science teacher. Most importantly, the question that students wish to explore must be aligned with the experiment they wish to conduct.
http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/desexper.php

NEXT STEPS:

Students should incorporate their findings on their poster and in their oral presentation of their research projects. This may include comparing and contrasting the findings of their own research versus those they find from scholarly articles, or analyzing their research using GATE depth and complexity icons (big idea, trends, changes over time, unanswered questions, etc.). Finally, be sure to have students understand and be able to explain the possible shortcomings or "design flaws" in their research as well http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/designflaws