Welcome to the 2013 Student Summer Research Poster Symposium

This is the third year that we have had a Student Summer Research Poster Event in September, and it is clear that we are building toward a tradition. In the previous two years we shoehorned an almost overwhelming number of excellent research posters into the Marlo Room, which were viewed by hundreds of members of the Lafayette community. As I look over the titles of the posters for the 2013 symposium I am confident that we will match if not exceed the quality and quantity of work that was presented in prior years.

In the summer of 2013 there were over 150 Lafayette students working on research projects. Those who were on campus had the opportunity to hear three excellent talks given by Professors Maria Chudnovsky (Columbia), Lisa Gabel (Lafayette), and Lars Hedin (Princeton). Professor Dan Sabatino took us through the ten-episode series Connections. These events reinforced the experiences that were occurring across campus all summer, experiences that gave Lafayette students practical experience with the difficult and creative work needed to explore actively contested questions, often making publishable contributions.

It is not inexpensive to offer research experience to this many Lafayette students. In fact, our annual expenditures for undergraduate research are in excess of $700,000. These funds come from faculty research grants, income from endowed gifts, and Lafayette’s operating budget. (If you’d like to contribute, feel free to talk to me!) And while this is a substantial use of funds that could be otherwise allocated, it is also an excellent investment that provides outstanding opportunities for both the faculty and the students. The depth of Lafayette’s commitment to undergraduate research is perhaps best captured by the fact that the majority of graduating seniors report having worked directly with a faculty mentor on a research project, a number significantly higher than at colleges and universities across the country, and even higher than most other highly selective small colleges, where undergraduate research has been nurtured for decades.

Lafayette is blessed to have so many imaginative and productive scholars among the students and faculty. Today you can see on display some of the results discovered in the summer of 2013. While you look at these posters, you should listen for hints indicating just how often these student-faculty research teams also generated transformative experiences for those involved.

—John Meier
Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Research Services