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CNU PIONEERS STATE'S FIRST RESEARCH CERTIFICATION

NEW OPPORTUNITY WILL BE OFFERED TO STUDENTS IN THE FALL.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | May 7, 2024

Read time: about 2 min

Christopher Newport will be the first school in Virginia to offer students certification in undergraduate research and creative activity.

Pioneering Research Program



The Certificate in Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity will elevate CNU's emphasis on meaningful work outside the classroom and provide students a tangible way to showcase their research prowess as they head into the workforce or graduate school. The new certification will be offered starting in the fall.

"We're breaking new ground in the Commonwealth," said Dr. David Salomon, Director of [Student Research and Creativity](#). "I think it boosts us to the top. We're the first institution in Virginia to have this certificate."

The certification is key as CNU continues its ascent in the world of research. It provides students with yet another tool to use to make themselves and their skill sets competitive and in demand as they journey into the world after they graduate.

"This certification gives them the opportunity to have their work officially represented on their college transcript," Salomon said. "It lets graduate schools and prospective employers know that they have done this important work as undergraduates. It's important for students because they have already been emphasizing these research experiences on their resumes and curricula vitae (CV)."

Undergraduate research is a key component of a Christopher Newport education, as it's one the school's [four pillars](#), along with service, study abroad, and internships, that students are encouraged to complete. Last year, 37 percent of students were involved with research or creative activity on campus, surpassing a campus goal of 30 percent.

"We have incredible activity in our programs already," Salomon said.

Students, joining forces with faculty, focus their research on a wide array of topics, joining forces with faculty to extend their base of knowledge by probing into areas of interest and answering looming questions. Research can touch on a myriad of topics, and can also come in the realm of performance and art.

The certification, which has taken two years to bring to fruition, will entail 12 credit hours of coursework specific to research and creativity activity, including a required Introduction to Research and Creative Activity (RCA) class, three credits hours of RCA exposure courses, three credit hours of RCA skill building courses, three credit hours of RCA application courses or directed research, and one capstone course focused on effective dissemination of research.

"We like to say that the most important part of research is dissemination. It doesn't matter whether you're conducting research and you're incredibly brilliant and what you're coming up with is really innovative," Salomon said. "If you aren't sharing it, it doesn't mean anything. So you have to be able to share it and you have to know how to do that."

Students who are majoring in any subject can earn the certification. It will also dovetail with research opportunities on campus unique to Christopher Newport, including [Summer Scholars](#), which is a selective eight-week program during which students live on campus and are paid to work collaboratively with a faculty member on a research or creative problem. Many of the students have gone on to present their findings nationally, internationally, and had them published in prestigious journals.

Students at Christopher Newport can begin doing research as early as spring of their freshman year. Students can look into any topic, whether it relates to their field of study or not.

"The new certification process will allow students to explore, to look at areas they normally wouldn't," Salomon said. "Anything is possible. The possibilities really are endless."

Every student who earns the certification will have conducted meaningful research during their years at CNU, Salomon said.

"Not only will they have done the research, but they'll have the ability to be able to discuss it and thereby enter the community of scholars and artists," he said.

The certification had to meet certain academic requirements and be approved by both CNU and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV).

Offering the certification builds on CNU's continuing commitment to undergraduate research. Salomon said the University is one of very few schools that prioritize research at the undergraduate level.

"Most undergraduate institutions do not have the capability or willingness to support research the way we do at CNU," he said. "Usually research at universities is confined to graduate programs and graduate students. So when students come here, they really have an incredible opportunity."

