



**In the first issue** of the *Dietrich School Bulletin*, I outlined my school-wide priorities as dean. Beginning this month, I will elaborate how we are moving ahead on each of these priorities, starting with **Enhancing the Undergraduate Educational Experience**.

As the largest school, we play a central role in the undergraduate educational experience at Pitt. Our curriculum, mentored research experiences, and advising must reflect and reach students with state-of-the-art knowledge and teaching practices. In the next few years, we will be focusing on:

- **Curricular Innovation.** Knowledge is changing, as are the ambitions of our students. Across the School, we are thinking about how these changes should affect our courses, majors, certificates, internships, research opportunities, and career placement activities. Some departments and programs are designing new integrated majors that span departments or Schools. Others are planning 3+2 or 4+1 programs that integrate an undergraduate degree with a master's degree in a professional school at Pitt. And still others are refreshing their undergraduate curriculum by integrating material across a set of courses, or experimenting with on line homework and grading.
- **Mentored research experiences.** We want meaningful research, scholarly and creative activity to be a signature characteristic of a Dietrich School education, which requires us to expand the number and variety of these opportunities. This year, the Graduate Council is exploring how to involve graduate students as research mentors for undergraduates while the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity is working to broaden first and continuing experiences in research. And we are considering ways to increase authentic laboratory research opportunities for

students in the natural sciences. Your creativity and energy are needed as we seek to scale up research opportunities across the School and build more mentored scholarly experiences in the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities.

- **Academic advising.** With Derek Fischer—the new director of the Advising Center—we're exploring ways to enhance undergraduate advising. In the future, you will see advising happen in new places, and in new forms. We will be working to make sure that students have guidance about their career goals, and the variety of ways they can work toward these at Pitt. We will be using new tools to make sure that students are satisfied with their advising experiences. Derek will also be working with faculty and staff advisors in our academic units to ensure a seamless transition from the Advising Center to departmental advising. And we will be making sure that departmental advisors have a consistent description of their responsibilities and access to professional development resources.

The Dean's Office will be supporting these priorities by helping departments and programs better track student progress, develop more effective course scheduling, and predict future student enrollment and interests. Support is also available through a two-year **Dietrich School Curricular Innovation Fund** for efforts to enhance departmental advising, develop innovative majors, enrich large-enrollment and introductory courses, or scale-up mentored research, scholarly, and creative arts experiences for undergraduates. These funds can be used to assess and/or purchase materials, including software that might augment teaching, learning, assessment, or grading; support travel to visit colleagues at institutions with curricular programs being considered at Pitt; convene workshops or retreats for sustained faculty consideration of curricular changes, especially those that cross departmental or School lines; or similar purposes. Funds must be requested by department chairs or program directors on behalf of full time T/TS or NTS faculty. Questions should be directed to Associate Dean John Twyning at [twyning@pitt.edu](mailto:twyning@pitt.edu).