



Experiences of research

Each year, the first exercise of the Mellon Institute invited the Fellows to reflect upon the time when research or the research process first "came alive" for them.

Fellows were first asked to describe this experience in some detail and later on to come up with a single word or phrase that best described their first *personal* experience with research.

The purpose of this exercise was to invite the Fellows think about the types of research experiences they want to design for the students enrolled in their classes, and conversely, the experiences they wished to avoid when introducing students to research.

Here is a summary of the keywords and phrases generated by the Faculty Fellows from 2003-2006 as they described their own first experiences of the research process.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF RESEARCH

- fun
- exciting
- empowering
- expansive
- discovery
- active (v. passive)
- adventuresome
- engaging
- clarifying
- supported
- facilitated by someone
- confidence building
- subversive
- challenging assumptions
- evidence generating
- interconnectedness
- personal
- detective-like
- persona
- detective-like
- invigorating
- applied
- meaningful
- collaborative
- self-realizing

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF RESEARCH

- overwhelming
- humbling (*"I know less than I thought I knew."*)
- TMI (*"too much information!"*)
- chaotic
- muddy
- deflating
- confusing
- frustrating
- complex
- embarrassment
- scary; afraid to ask for help
- harried; last minute
- solitary
- devastating
- intimidating
- boring
- tiresome
- isolating

- advocacy
- analytical
- emotionally moving
- passionate (about a topic or ideas)
- inspiring
- intoxicating
- exhilarating
- intense
- improvisational
- surprising
- self-directed
- synthesis
- crafting of an argument
- independence
- "the unanswered question"
- curiosity
- transferable
("I can apply this to anything!")
- awakening
- solitary
- glimmering
- validating
- "thrill of the hunt"
- "taken to another place & time"
- "drive to better understand the world"
- outside the classroom
- "if you have the right skills, anyone can do it!"