Philosophy of Research
Chris M. Ray

My philosophy of research consists of a wide variety of beliefs, most of which are based in a post-positivistic world-view. I enjoy conducting research and learning new statistical and methodological approaches. I anticipate a long career of exploring my own lines of inquiry, including expanding existing research and developing new theory, and mentoring others, especially students, with their own lines of inquiry.

I believe that explanation and prediction are the primary goals of scientific inquiry. We typically conduct social research seeking to explain human behaviors, experiences, and so on. The better we can understand people, their environment, and their interactions with their environment, the more useful our research becomes. While it is not always possible to explain human behavior, we attempt to do so in an effort to aid our ability to predict future behavior. This predictive ability can allow us to reduce undesired outcomes, thus contributing to the advancement of society.

I believe that involvement in scientific research is the foundation of my overall scholarly activity. Participating in research keeps my theoretical knowledge current and allows me to develop and refine specific passions within my field. It can provide my students with an opportunity to interact with me in a mentoring role out of the classroom. Further, it helps to fulfill my commitment to life-long learning. In these ways, research involvement promotes my intellectual growth as well as that of my students.

I believe that research involvement is directly linked to my teaching quality and expertise. Conducting research requires having both a broad understanding of a topic as well as depth in the related literature. The more research I conduct, the broader and deeper my overall knowledge becomes, giving me more knowledge and experience to share with my students. Through this process, my excitement regarding the topic will become more apparent, and their interest will likely increase as a result.

I believe that I have a professional responsibility to help students become excited about research. As research is so important in promoting intellectual growth, I have an obligation to help my students become excited about it and help motivate them to participate in research. This may occur in formal classroom settings or through research teams and other forms of mentorship. Through these interactions, students should understand foundational theories of research and be able to conduct their own research in a professional and ethical manner.

I believe that collaborative research is more beneficial than individual research. Collaboration is often a more meaningful approach than individual effort on a given task. If this task is conducting research, working with faculty colleagues and students allows a researcher to expand their own ideas and incorporate others' thoughts and experience into their work. This collaboration produces a higher quality product and likely leads to further collaboration as well. It also provides an opportunity to mentor students and junior colleagues, thus extending research into the realm of teaching.

Consistent with Boyer's (1990) scholarship of discovery, research is integral to the overall productivity of an academician. It provides us with an opportunity to seek new information and to expand human knowledge. It extends teaching and mentoring beyond the classroom, and provides an opportunity to work with our students and colleagues to develop ongoing professional relationships.