

Raison d'être: American Journal of Undergraduate Research

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AJUR completes its fifth year with this issue, and it is a natural time to recall the reasons and resources that brought the journal into being.

The chief reason continues to be to provide a mechanism and venue to help undergraduates experience the full process of science: Carrying through a research project, reporting the outcomes, and—with the help of peer reviewers—placing the research results within the context of past and current discoveries. It is this last step—a student researcher's consultation with reviewers followed by a written report acceptable to them—that is at the heart of this journal's mission.

As a university faculty member engaged with undergraduate researchers, I understand the time investment of working with undergraduate researchers. Of course it is enjoyable and gratifying to help a student take his or her knowledge beyond the classroom. But undergraduates' time scale for research is often shorter than that for graduate students. Projects are usually briefer and it often seems that things are just taking off when the available time is spent. There're are not many hours left over—after the necessary report to an on-campus office or off-campus agency—for working on a research paper. Many research mentors do what I often did: speed the process by doing much of the clean up and writing themselves.

Does AJUR provide another path, one with positive outcomes for both the student and his or her mentor? Yes.

If the student must write a report then encourage him or her to use professional language that is clear and

direct—something you would recommend in any case. Have the student write a research abstract if he or she hasn't done this already, and help with careful research citations. If the writing style and organization are less than you would allow yourself, so be it—this is a learning opportunity for the student. E-mail the student's report to an AJUR disciplinary editor (include the student's e-mail address).

The disciplinary editor will work with the student, after the receipt of outside reviews, to improve the paper. The resulting paper will be better organized, more concise, and better cited as a result. The positive outcome for the undergraduate researcher is the experience in organizing a professional research report, under the guidance of referees and an editor. Publication in a refereed journal is still the final result. The positive outcome for the research mentor is a research publication on which he or she may be second author.

The *raison d'être* of the *American Journal of Undergraduate Research* is ultimately simple: to make undergraduate researchers full partners in preparing their research for refereed publication.



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