Editorial: The Birth of a Journal

The Journal of Undergraduate Psychological Research originated as the brainchild of Professor Norine Jalbert in the WCSU Psychology Department. In the Fall of 2005, she proposed the idea to the department, and our faculty jumped on board right away. I suggested to Norine that we share the duties of faculty advisor, and soon we were off and running.

Why do the work (and incur the expense) required to create an undergraduate journal when we are already struggling to balance teaching, service, scholarship and—believe it or not—a personal life? First, we knew of a handful of other small schools that have successfully produced undergraduate psychology research journals. Since WCSU students were not eligible to publish in these journals, we wanted to reward our students by developing an outlet for their research. Second, we hoped that the existence of such an outlet would encourage students to “aim higher” in their own research, in terms of theoretical underpinning, hypotheses, design, and analysis. Third, we wanted to give students familiarity with the manuscript development, submission, and (at least for authors of accepted manuscripts) publication process. We hope that the published journal will serve as a pedagogical tool for faculty to use as an example of what students enrolled in WCSU psychology courses should aspire to. Fourth, students would have an opportunity to gain direct experience with the management of a scholarly journal, including the sometimes challenging task of evaluating and editing the work of their peers. As an undergraduate at Wesleyan University (many years ago!) I had the good fortune to participate in an undergraduate social studies journal. I remember well the task of editing manuscripts and the excitement of seeing the final product. Although a challenge, the experience was definitely worth it!

This first year has been a learning process for us. Since we did not begin until the fall—and we hoped to publish in Spring—we had only about seven months to solicit, edit, re-edit, complete the design and layout, and print the journal. Most annual journals have a 12-month publication cycle, even when they have years of experience and have smoothed all of the wrinkles in the process. Furthermore, the students who submitted the manuscripts did not write them with the journal in mind, and therefore in many cases the manuscripts needed substantial revisions. Fortunately, all eight of our authors were very willing to make both large and small changes in their manuscripts and to do so under tight time restrictions. Additionally, we encountered other obstacles, such as scrambling to find someone to create the graphics and layout both professionally and—gulp—affordably. We were really lucky to have Cailin Micari, a student intern at the WCSU publications office, step forward. Cailin came with a great recommendation from the graphic design faculty and possessed the skills we were looking for as well as a warm, friendly personality.

So we are all very happy to see the fruition of our efforts and the publication of our first annual Journal of Undergraduate Psychological Research. We are proud of our student authors and view Volume I as a foundation upon which to build ever greater journal volumes in the future.

Daniel W. Barrett, Ph.D.
Faculty Co-advisor