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From the Editors

Why should undergraduates engage in research?

This question has been earnestly raised, both to us directly and more generally in academic atmospheres. It is undeniably true that undergraduate research often goes unfinished, and is gravely lacking in one respect or another even when complete. Sometimes the problem is a lack of follow-through on the part of the researcher, notwithstanding the afforded an immense structure undergraduates are often afforded in which to pursue the otherwise generally solitary task of research. More often, however, the final product suffers from a lack of knowledge, perspective, and experience during the question formulation process. After all, quality of answers found is limited by quality of questions asked, both at the outset and along the way.

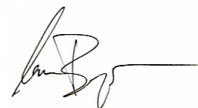
So again, why should undergraduates engage in research? The first answer is obvious – one cannot ever hope to improve without practice. Everyone, even the most brilliant, must start somewhere, must begin ordering their questions and analysis at some unskilled point. For most, the first time such questions are seriously confronted is during their undergraduate years. Having structures and institutions in place to guide and assist in this process only makes sense. Furthermore, we can all think back to the mistakes we have made in our own lives and realize that they have been just as valuable (if not more so) than our successes in shaping later methods of inquiry. Very few are able to fashion motivation from successes equal to the motivation failures provide.

But there is something more beyond the ‘training wheels’ argument for undergraduate research. Think of the excitement associated with brushing with discovering a new and fascinating phenomenon – there is a cavalcade of new perspectives, new questions, and new methods of inquiry. As time goes on these thoughts are tamed and ordered to permit thorough investigation, but in the process they can become ossified. Excitement and novelty are harbingers of innovation, and with taming and directing can produce whole new lines of inquiry. Not all undergraduate research, of course, necessarily produces such novel questions, nor do all undergraduate papers even contain a nugget that may eventually be developed into a revelatory new question. But that potential is most certainly there, and uncovering it is the mission of educators and students, and *jur* as well.

Sincerely,



Erika Ilagan



Samuel Boyer

Editors-in-Chief