

The Problems and Possibilities of Creating and Sustaining a Multidisciplinary, Undergraduate, Digital Journal

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Abstract

Unprecedented growth has occurred in the development of undergraduate journals over the past 10 years. Yet, despite the numerous benefits that research shows for authors, editors, and faculty mentors involved in undergraduate publications, academic institutions have struggled to sustain student journals over time. Based on the authors' experience with launching and sustaining a journal over six years and data collected from five years of exit interviews, reflective writing, and surveys, they discuss 10 key steps for creating and sustaining an undergraduate journal and overcoming the obstacles linked to such an endeavor.

Keywords: *interdisciplinary, mentoring, student publications, sustainability, undergraduate journals*

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In the past decade, many universities have recognized the rich and transformative opportunities undergraduate journals provide and have taken steps to launch journals at their own institutions. In fact, Stone, Jensen, and Beech (2016) argue that the last 10 years have seen unprecedented growth in the development of undergraduate journals by universities in both the United States and the United Kingdom. They claim that there is a “clear movement on the international stage” toward recognizing “the importance of the publication of student research” (148). Indeed, Weiner and Watkinson (2014) assert that, in 2008, 40 undergraduate journals were published in the United States, whereas in 2013, just five years later, 115 were published. According to Antonius et al. (2007), undergraduate journals provide innovative models for integrating high-impact practices

with the undergraduate experience, which can, as Weiner and Watkinson argue, help undergraduate students develop the skills necessary to succeed after graduation (2).

Research on undergraduate journals over the last decade has, in fact, shown clear benefits not only for students who write and publish in undergraduate journals but also for students who serve on the editorial board and for faculty who assist students in the publishing process. Stone and colleagues (2016), for instance, find that students who published in an undergraduate journal improved their writing; they claim that “the process of preparing and repurposing work for submission challenges students to strive for the highest academic standards of quality and originality” (153). Students who published in an undergraduate journal also reported heightened confidence, pride in their contributions to a body of knowledge, and increased success in securing a job or graduate/professional school placement (Schofield and Burton 2015, 268). They also developed professional identities and knowledge of the publication process (Weiner and Watkinson 2014, 2). Students who serve on an editorial board also benefit because they gain practical skills (Ware and Burns 2008, 254); improve their knowledge of the intricate process of editing and publishing an article (Weiner and Watkinson 2014, 7); and gain insight into the professional world, improve their writing and communication skills, and build connections between the university and the workplace (Ní Uigín, Higgins, and McHale 2015, 62). Faculty involved in undergraduate journal publication benefit as well; they develop an understanding of and gain practice navigating the editing and publishing world, gain mentoring skills as they help the editorial team navigate the editing and publication process, and acquire increased motivation for teaching

and scholarly undertakings (Ware and Burns 2008, 256). These interactions between faculty and students can be an essential element, or, as McKinsey (2016) argues, “an important determinant of” student learning (1); as a result, participation in these practices can be, according to Kuh (2008), life-changing.

Despite increasing recognition of the value of undergraduate journals and higher numbers of journals being introduced on college campuses, Weiner and Watkinson (2014) claim that sustaining undergraduate journals has been a problem. In fact, their analysis of undergraduate journals listed on the Council on Undergraduate Research website reveals “that almost half of the publications had broken links or displayed ‘current issues’ over two years old” (3). Antonius and colleagues (2007) cite similar findings; many of the publications they reviewed “appeared inactive or had not been published, in paper or electronically, for several years” (32). Hensley and Johnson (2019) reiterate the ephemeral nature of undergraduate publications and the challenge of identifying their active status in their inventory of 800 student journals in the United States over the period of 2014–2015. What impediments surface that prevent undergraduate journals from being sustained over time? What causes these journals to fail? Weiner and Watkinson (2014) point to three key factors for journal failures: student-led publications, high rates of staff turnover, and lack of institutionalization. Others (Stone et al. 2016; Walkington 2012) point to the significant investment in time and effort that an undergraduate journal takes, whereas Ní Uigín and colleagues (2015) claim that the ability to secure funding and find contributors create challenges to sustaining a journal. Due to the clear benefits such publications have for authors and editors and the inability of many institutions to sustain undergraduate journals, it is important to understand not only what is involved with initiating an undergraduate journal but also what impediments to anticipate and how to address these obstacles so that the journal can be sustained over time. Previous articles have outlined the foundational elements for starting an undergraduate journal (Hart 2012); discussed the benefits of an undergraduate journal (Ní Uigín et al. 2015; Stone et al. 2016; Ware and Burns 2008; Weiner and Watkinson 2014); and highlighted the mentoring of undergraduate research (McKinsey 2016; Ridgwell 2012). This article extends the scholarly conversation by providing comprehensive steps to launching an undergraduate journal and establishing intentional structures to sustain that journal over time. Drawing on the authors’ experiences launching and sustaining an undergraduate journal currently in its sixth year and based on data collected from five years of exit interviews, reflective writing, and surveys, the article discusses the 10 steps necessary for creating and sustaining an undergraduate journal and overcoming the obstacles linked to such an endeavor.

Context

Millersville University is a midsize undergraduate liberal arts institution located west of Lancaster, PA. The institution’s mission is to provide diverse, meaningful, and high-impact experiences to students and enable them to contribute to their communities. The university enrolls approximately 8000 students, the majority of whom come from Lancaster or one of the five surrounding counties. The university consists of four colleges (the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; College of Education and Human Sciences; College of Science and Technology; and College of Business) and 25 departments. Students from departments across the university participate in an annual student conference at which student scholarly and creative engagement is highlighted. To capture the presentations and performances at the conference, Kerrie Farkas, who works in the English department, and Tatiana Pashkova-Balkenhol, who is trained in library science and works in the university library, founded the *Made in Millersville Journal* (MiMJ), a proceedings journal for the undergraduate conference. Although there were notable challenges to launching and sustaining the journal, it has evolved into a multidisciplinary, inclusive, and learner-centered experience for the university’s students.

Step 1: Finding a Niche

The first step in launching a sustainable undergraduate journal is to conduct a feasibility study to establish a journal’s viability. For the feasibility study, one needs to discover what publications already exist on the campus and how the proposed publication will differ. If there is a plan to accept submissions from outside of the university, it also is important to determine the publications that exist in the surrounding area and their aim, scope, type of submissions, and target audience. Establishing a niche is essential to initiating and sustaining a new journal because creating something original enhances students’ experiences rather than duplicating them and prevents confusion about distinctions between multiple publications that may reduce the number of potential contributors. It also avoids stepping on colleagues’ toes and competing with their efforts, which can cause unnecessary contention. It also is essential to make the publication distinct and unique so that it can find a home within the institution and avoid a principal reason for failure: lack of institutionalization (Weiner and Watkinson 2014). The ultimate goal is not only to launch a student publication but also to develop and sustain it over time, and the publication likely will not succeed if it is simply replicating existing publications.

To determine the feasibility of initiating an undergraduate journal on the Millersville campus, students in an advanced writing course were engaged to examine existing publications on campus, interview students and faculty involved with these publications, survey the campus on interest in

a journal, and research the annual undergraduate conference to determine if there was an affiliated undergraduate journal. The advanced writing students discovered three existing publications on campus, including a literary magazine that published creative pieces; a newspaper that disseminated news concerning students, faculty, and staff; and a semiannual research newsletter that provided a brief summary of research conducted by faculty and students. Students also discovered that the annual undergraduate conference featured a wide range of sessions, including both creative and research-based presentations, but that there was no formal publication that documented the presentations delivered at the event.

It was determined that a conference proceedings journal based on the annual conference would complement (rather than compete with) existing publications on campus and could serve to capture the presentations from the conference and allow the cycle of scholarly conversation to continue year-round. The idea was proposed to the conference directors, who welcomed the idea of a journal that would feature student works presented at the conference. Connecting the journal to an existing experience rather than making it a separate endeavor would provide a built-in audience that might be interested in contributing to and reading the journal and would help to institutionalize the journal as part of the undergraduate experience, a key factor in journal sustainability. This was a crucial decision, as even with the built-in audience, it was a struggle to find contributors, especially in the first few years.

Step 2: Deciding on Scope, Content, and Format

The second step to creating a sustainable journal is determining the scope, format, and content, which will clarify the specifics of the publication for the editorial team and potential contributors. The designated conference included presentations and performances from multiple disciplines in various formats (papers, posters, presentations, spoken-word poems, art sculptures, musical performances, and the like), so it was decided that the journal's scope would be multidisciplinary and all types of submissions would be encouraged, to allow as many students as possible to experience the publication process and to maximize the number of potential contributors, an essential element of sustaining a journal publication. Because students are busy and attracting contributors is essential (Ní Uigín et al. 2015), it was decided that authors would submit summaries of their work as academic articles (for research projects) or creative commentary articles (for visual, performative, or other creative projects) to facilitate process management. Authors would retain the copyright to their work so that they could publish in other venues; this would allow the journal to publish as many articles as possible and avoid barriers for science majors who often seek discipline-specific publishing opportunities.

Another key decision was to use a digital platform rather than print to attract a wider audience, enable more forgiving deadlines, and save on costs. Journal sustainability required being as economical as possible and eliminating the necessity of continual fundraising for operation. At first, the free version of the WordPress digital platform (n.d.) was used; however, it was quite limited in its design and navigation features and lacked a mobile-friendly version, so other free and low-cost options were considered. Wix (n.d.) was chosen due to its ease of use; simple and intuitive drag-and-drop interface; and wide selection of design features, fonts, and templates.

Step 3: Identifying Purpose, Audiences, and Contributors

A third step to creating and sustaining an undergraduate journal is determining the purpose of the journal, the target audience, and potential contributors, and thus provide the editorial board with a focus for their efforts and ensure that current and future initiatives are in harmony. It took several issues and numerous discussions to establish the purpose and focus of the Millersville publication. It was decided that the journal would have three primary aims:

1. to contribute to undergraduate research by showcasing research and creativity from across campus and preserving it so that the cycle of scholarly conversation could continue year-round;
2. to offer conference presenters a learning experience about publishing a written article on their research or creation for a general audience; and
3. to provide an opportunity for students to serve as interns and editors and gain hands-on practice in editing and publishing

Articulating these goals helped to determine the primary readership for the journal: a general, nonspecialized audience, consisting of faculty, staff, students (current, past, and future), and the community. To develop a wide readership, an open-access journal format was chosen, which would be accessible to everyone. Articulating the goals also determined the primary contributors to the journal—conference presenters. Ní Uigín and colleagues (2015) consider the continuity of contributors a central factor for sustaining a student publication. In this case, the strong connection of the journal to the conference ensured a consistent flow of authorship.

Step 4: Securing Sustainable Funding

A fourth step to creating a sustainable undergraduate journal is determining a budget and finding funding. The Millersville University journal budget would not be sizable because it would use a digital platform; however, the editorial board needed to be staffed and any upgrades to the digital platform would need to be paid for. To sustain the journal over time and because funding is often a key

contributor to a journal's success or failure (Ní Uigín et al. 2015), it was decided that internal funding was potentially most sustainable, especially if funding was part of an annual line in the university budget. The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration funded the annual conference, and the director was approached to secure funding for student editors. The proposal was approved due to the journal's connection to the conference and its potential to expand students' professional experiences. This funding source has provided sustainability because it is consistent and funded annually. Recent research also confirms that most undergraduate publications start with internal funding from offices connected to institutional and undergraduate research and later attain financial support from private foundations, national organizations, advertisers, and other external funding sources (Hart 2012; Ridgwell 2012).

Step 5: Establishing an Editorial Team

A fifth step when creating and sustaining a journal involves staffing. Deciding on a systematic process for recruiting an editorial board that can be refined, updated, and repeated annually allows steady development of the publication. The options of volunteer editors or having faculty require students in their courses to serve as editors were rejected due to potential lack of investment, the difficulty of consistently finding volunteer editors or faculty willing to require their students to serve as editors, and the challenge of timing the editing with volunteer availability or faculty course deadlines. Also considered and then eliminated was the idea of faculty serving as editors; the preference was to extend the opportunity to students so that they could capitalize on the benefits of being involved in an undergraduate journal. Additionally, many students on the Millersville campus were interested in editing and publishing. After deciding that students would serve as editors, the campus writing center was contacted to gauge the possibility of writing center tutors serving as editors. However, the policy of having tutors serve as guides, coaching student writers rather than providing feedback directly on student writing, eliminated this possibility. (Past and current writing center tutors, however, have served on the editorial board, which has benefited from their contributions.) The decision was made to create an internship program that would allow students to be fully involved in the editing and publication processes. To address Weiner and Watkinson's (2014) concern regarding the high staff turnover rates that cause many student journals to fail, students were retained for at least one semester of paid internship. After exit interviews with several interns revealed their desire to work for more than one semester, the opportunity was provided for students to work beyond the one-semester internship by continuing on as student employees or extending their internship to two semesters. Staff turnover is challenging, as it requires regular training and starting over with a new editorial board. If students are motivated to stay because

they are taking an internship for credit and can remain on board as staff, institutional knowledge can be retained and passed on to new board members, and faculty directors do not have to continually find new interns, train them, and get them up to speed for each new publication issue.

The larger the pool of students targeted for the internship, the better the chances of filling the positions and sustaining the journal in the long run, so the positions were opened to all disciplines. The directors reached out to colleagues to request that they encourage their students to apply. Reaching out to all disciplines also was in line with the goal of creating a multidisciplinary experience for students. The effort to create a multidisciplinary team resonated with interns, as exit interviews have shown. For example, one intern stated that being part of a multidisciplinary team allowed her to see "that there are many different solutions to a problem, and having people from different backgrounds work on a problem together can generate unique results." Another intern reflected that, "When it comes to group projects, I always find myself going them alone. . . . Here, with a group of interns so willing to help, I had to learn how to let my guard down . . . I love how involved every intern is in making sure the journal flourishes. It is great working with others with the same mindset as my own."

To find a multidisciplinary team for the journal, positions were advertised in multiple venues—in the internship office; in the student newspaper; in emails to faculty; and in a daily, campus-wide, digital newsletter—to increase awareness of the opportunity. Trial and error showed that advertising needed to occur early in the semester prior to the start of the internship. Advertising a year before was too soon because students were not ready to think about their internships, and advertising in the middle of the prior semester was too late because by then students had already chosen their internships. In the first year, only four students applied for the internship, but after adjustment of the timing, up to 15 applicants applied each semester.

Step 6: Conducting a Pilot Test

A sixth step to creating and sustaining a journal is to determine the logistics and best process for it to run smoothly and successfully. Research points to the significant time investment involved in running a student journal (Stone et al. 2016; Walkington 2012). Conducting a pilot test helps work out the process, timelines, and coordination needed to most effectively run the publication and saves time in the long run.

Because of the Millersville journal's connection to the annual undergraduate conference, students from the previous year's conference could be contacted to inquire whether they wanted to publish with the journal, or students planning to present during the current year's conference

could be asked if they were interested in both presenting at the conference and writing an article for the journal. It was decided to pilot work from the previous year's conference; there was a concern that authors might be overwhelmed trying to both present and publish at the same time.

Conducting a Pilot Issue Retroactively

For the pilot, the plan was to publish between five and seven articles. Twenty students who had presented at the previous year's conference were contacted; in the end, three of them had published articles. The main challenge was convincing presenters to publish. Interns discovered that some presenters had graduated, some had moved on to other projects, and some did not have the time or will to rework their projects for publication. In short, a retroactive publication did not work. Even though the publishing process is not cumbersome or time consuming, authors were still hard to recruit. Continuing along this path would remain challenging and frustrate the desire to sustain the journal beyond one or two years.

Conducting a Pilot Issue Concurrently

Due to the challenges presented by publishing the journal retroactively, a second pilot was conducted, in which the journal was published concurrently with the conference. As students worked on their conference presentations, they could at the same time work on their journal publications. This might help eliminate the difficulty of tracking down potential authors, although it could be challenging for students to present and publish simultaneously. For the pilot, the conference committee helped make potential presenters aware of the journal by including a question on the application form asking if students were interested in publishing with the journal, providing leads for the journal about possible contributors. As a result, the number of published articles increased to nine, a 33-percent increase from the retroactive publication, but there were two challenges: some students signed up to publish but declined when contacted, and some agreed to publish but did not complete the entire publication cycle. Interns reached out to these students to discover their reasons for dropping out, and authors revealed that they did not realize the amount of work needed to create summaries of their presentations due to the multiple-draft process. In exit interviews, interns suggested adding a more detailed explanation of the journal in the application, including a link to the journal website so that potential authors could see sample articles; this change might ensure authors better understood the process prior to making the decision to publish.

Step 7: Making Changes and Launching the First Full-Scale Issue

The next step in sustaining a journal is to make changes based on the pilot tests to ensure a smoothly run publication and compress the overall time commitment required for publishing an issue. The pilot tests revealed a need

to clarify how and why students should participate in the journal, to clearly explain the steps involved in the publication process so that students understood what was expected up front, and to implement a strategy motivating students to complete their articles. Based on suggestions interns provided during exit interviews, it was decided that authors would need to go through two rounds of edits with two distinct editors, one to work on the larger issues of focus, purpose, organization, cohesion, message, and catering to a general audience and one to work on punctuation, proofreading, and readying the article for publication. In consultation with interns, it also was decided that students would be asked to include a picture and a brief biography, to make the publication more professional as well as attract and engage readers. As research shows, finding and maintaining contributors is essential for the success and sustainability of a journal, so several additional changes were made to ensure increased participation of authors. A mission statement was developed and posted on the website. Four goals were outlined to realize the mission: (a) expanding and enhancing the journal's visibility prior to the conference and increasing its use subsequent to the conference; (b) incorporating the journal into the conference; (c) creating a streamlined, personalized publishing process with authors; and (d) publishing 25 percent of total conference submissions from diverse disciplines.

After evaluating interns' exit interviews and reflections, benefits for authors were articulated and publicized. These benefits included impressing future employers with a publication, improving writing, and building critical communication skills by working with a trained editorial team. The publication process was clarified by including a more detailed explanation of the journal on the conference application, with a link to the website; creating an easy-to-follow five-step submission process, starting with checking "yes" on the conference application and ending with approval of the article proof; and developing detailed instructions and tips for authors so that they knew what they needed to do and when to do it. To motivate students to complete the publication cycle, interns developed a set of emails to welcome authors, explain the five-step publication process, and provide reminders of key deadlines; personalized emails were sent to authors, checking in with them to ensure their questions were answered and encouraging persistence; and publishing expectations on the website were clarified. Moreover, from ideas presented in an intern's end-of-semester reflection, several informational workshops for authors were held, and a blog was started, providing tips for transforming a presentation into a publication and translating a paper for a general audience. From an idea presented in an intern's exit interview, it also was decided to give small incentives (stickers, magnets, pens, candy) to authors who completed each step of the five-step process. These changes helped to increase and keep authors for subsequent issues and allowed the interns

TABLE 1. The Growth of the Journal in Size and Scope

Journal issues	Number of articles	Number of departments	Departments	Non-STEM	STEM
Pilot 1	3	3	Education, Music, Earth Sciences	67%	33%
Pilot 2	9	7	Education, Psychology, Communication, English, Sociology, Computer Science, Earth Sciences	71%	29%
Issue 1	29	15	Education, Psychology, Art & Design, Communication, English, Music, Philosophy, History, Sociology, Applied Engineering, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Nursing, Multidisciplinary Studies	66%	33%
Issue 2	30	13	Education, Psychology, Art & Design, Communication, English, Language & Culture Studies, Music, Applied Engineering, Biology, Earth Sciences, Math, Nursing, Physics	54%	46%
Issue 3	42	18	Education, Psychology, Social Work, Art & Design, Communication, English, Music, Economics, Government & Political Affairs, History, Sociology, Marketing & Management, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Geography, Math, Multidisciplinary Studies	72%	28%

to experience the satisfaction of guiding authors through the entire publication process. One intern, reflecting on his experience with an author, stated, “When sending back a final submission I edited for an author to look over, she wrote that she gasped with joy seeing her article look that way and sincerely thanked us for our work.” Although student authors still dropped off during the process, these developments resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of published articles in the first full-scale publication, up from 9 articles to 29, and contributed to steady growth for subsequent issues.

Step 8: Raising Awareness and Sustaining Authors

The eighth step when creating a sustainable journal is to generate awareness, so that students know about the opportunity to become authors and members of the editorial board. Without authors and editors, the journal cannot be sustained, so increasing visibility and student interest and integrating the journal into the fabric of the university are essential not only to help potential authors decide to publish and keeping those authors engaged to the end of the publication cycle but also to assist potential editors with the decision to staff the editorial board and keep those editors involved throughout the editorship.

As pointed out by Dellinger and Walkington (2012), embedding undergraduate journals into institutional culture contributes to their sustainable future. After receiving input from interns on institutionalizing the journal and increasing the number of authors, intentional collaboration with the conference committee proceeded, with a goal of becoming an integral part of the conference so students would see the publication as a logical extension of their presentation. Thus, the journal was integrated with

conference marketing and promotional activities, websites were cross-pollinated to illuminate the connections, and visibility at the conference was increased by creating an eye-catching poster and being present the entire day of the conference. Survey results of student authors’ perceptions of their publishing experiences demonstrate the value of working with peers across disciplines with a personalized and scaffolded approach. For example, an author responded, “This opportunity to work with editors outside of my field helped me tailor my technical writing piece into an entry that anyone could understand and appreciate.” Another author stated, “They [editors] helped me through the entire process from start to end, were super encouraging and patient.” Dellinger and Walkington (2012) found two additional ways to embed a journal into university culture: by creating an interdisciplinary list of curricular recommendations for the classroom to share with faculty and by raising awareness of the undergraduate publication among new faculty through a presentation and welcome letter and providing a supplementary copy of the journal to new faculty during orientation (Dellinger and Walkington 2012). The journal continues to grow each year, as each decision sustains and helps it to thrive (see Table 1). To date, 113 journal articles have been published, from 24 of the university’s 25 departments.

Step 9: Creating a Sustainable Infrastructure to Support and Empower the Editorial Board

The penultimate step to creating a sustainable journal is to secure faculty mentors to guide the process and support and empower the editorial team by creating clear standards, structure, expectations, and roles, allowing students to take ownership of their work and make important decisions to advance the journal. The overall time and effort required

to manage a journal is one major factor that contributes to a journal's failure (Stone et al. 2016, Walkington 2012; Weiner and Watkinson 2014). Both authors are employed full-time at the university, and an initial surge of additional responsibilities was required to launch the journal and manage the student editorial board. Originally there was no system in place to support interns, and they were much less confident, less likely to take initiative, and more reliant on faculty mentors to take the lead. For example, one intern reflected, "We were given so much freedom from the beginning, which was awesome, but intimidating . . . I found myself stressed and unsure." Another stated that interns needed clearly defined expectations and more preparation for the internship. Initially it was difficult to manage the time needed to publish the journal *and* create important learning experiences for interns. Interns needed to be more involved, feel more confident in taking the lead, and take more ownership of their roles and responsibilities while at the same time being guided by faculty mentors. Creating infrastructure with streamlined goals, well-documented prior initiatives, and clearly defined expectations accelerates incoming board members' introduction to running a digital publication and significantly decreases the time required for faculty directors to train interns, allowing more focus on enhancing interns' learning experiences and embedding the journal into the academic life of the institution. Ridgwell (2012) confirms the importance of mentoring student editors as a best practice to support the future of undergraduate publications.

Exit interviews with interns also revealed a desire for more structure and the need for distinct roles. Specific roles (with job descriptions) were created for interns to provide them with clear responsibilities so that they would know what to do. These were directly linked to the goals created for the journal to realize its mission. It was decided that all interns would serve as editors, but also have opportunities to gain experience serving in specialty roles, such as designing the website, marketing the journal, managing authors, and coordinating the editorial team. One intern stated that "the level of creative freedom given to interns to mold the positions to their own vision helped me build ownership of my work."

Interns were assisted with development of publication timelines to help them complete their work in a timely manner and set up standard meetings: weekly intern team meetings (for interns); biweekly journal team meetings (for interns and faculty mentors); and individual intern meetings with faculty mentors twice per semester (with mentoring provided to allow students to build confidence, step out of their comfort zones, and grow in their roles). One intern's reflection revealed the importance of the plans and timelines to her: "I loved being able to have an action plan from the start to reference and change as I figured out my role. Forcing myself to plan my semester

and set goals really helped me stay structured and motivated. I enjoyed how dynamic and flexible they were and how much we focused on making sure they were laid out for us to be successful." Another intern indicated that the individual meetings were integral in allowing him to better understand the bigger picture and feel more prepared to tackle his work head on. Another intern, who worked both before and after the delineation of roles, said she felt more secure knowing what she needed to do, and still another described the internship as having a "growing and nurturing environment." Based on requests from interns during exit interviews, a list of expectations of interns was prepared, as was an editorial team contract that all interns were asked to read and sign. This covered commitments to a specified number of work hours per week, preparing for and attending scheduled meetings, meeting all deadlines, and proactively seeking feedback from faculty mentors.

Analysis of interns' reflections revealed that these changes allowed interns to feel confident taking initiative and risks. One intern stated, "I . . . stepped up and took the lead on a lot more projects than I have in the past and have gained confidence from doing so." Another stated, "Looking back at how unbelievably scared and stressed I was in February, to how organized and confident I've become is so rewarding . . . I am finally taking initiative and embodying my role the best way I can." This has led interns to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work. For example, one intern stated, "I love the mark I've been able to make on the internship as a whole and the website . . . it's been very rewarding to see how the changes to the website are increasing its usability for everyone who visits the MiMJ." Another stated, "I can't wait to see what the next intern does with the blog . . . it's nice to be able to say, 'I started that.'"

A professional portfolio was created that included (a) important information for interns about the journal's history, mission, goals, and intern roles (to contextualize the internship); and (b) guided reflection worksheets and job-related reporting tasks (to hold interns accountable for their work through regular reporting and to allow interns to reflect on and learn from their work). One intern stated that she "referenced the portfolio all the time." A professional development training program also was set up, composed of online career training modules that helped interns improve communication, critical thinking, and leadership skills; three workshops provided by faculty mentors to clarify roles and workplace expectations and to engage in team-building activities; expert-run workshops by university faculty and staff based on interns' needs; and a refined project management routine on a shared Google Drive that interns could access for future employment interviews. Two further ideas for training editors are to host an editors' retreat and to have incoming editors complete an online course (Ridgwell 2012).

Step 10: Reflecting to Improve and Sustain the Journal

The final step in creating a sustainable journal is to consistently reflect on what has worked and what hasn't and continually improve the journal to ensure its sustainability. The faculty directors regularly reflect on mentoring practices and consider interns' suggestions for improving the internship experience and enabling the success and sustainability of the journal. At the end of each semester, the editorial team reflects on their individual achievements and on the accomplishments of the editorial board and recommends actions and steps for the next journal team. Analysis of interns' reflection reports and exit interviews have revealed the personal and professional growth of the editors. For example, one intern stated, "I have really grown as a person and as a teacher. I have honed my revising, editing, conferring skills, sharpened my knowledge of instructional technologies . . . it has prepared me to step out of my comfort zone, which is exactly what I need to be a more effective teacher." Another intern reflected:

One skill I learned as a part of the editorial team . . . is building trust and creating relationships. One of the most important parts of my role is communicating with student authors to make them feel in the loop and included in communication about their submissions. This skill is also super important . . . something that I learned a lot about this semester.

Analysis of interns' reflection reports and exit interviews also revealed areas for improvement. For example, based on interns' most recent exit interviews revealing the need for frequent interaction with faculty supervisors at the beginning of the internship, a series of weekly training sessions was implemented, focused on team building, immersion into internal documentation created by the previous editorial team, and discussion of faculty directors' and interns' expectations of their contributions to the further development of the journal. Supervisory approaches have been modified, and work has been done to improve the readership of the journal, make changes to internal documentation, streamline intern training, and articulate the overarching goals for the next journal year. For example, because the journal is growing annually and funds are somewhat limited, there is a plan to involve students in an editing and publishing course as contributing editors. Also, because each conference presenter works with a faculty mentor, ways to involve faculty mentors in support of authors throughout the publishing process are under consideration.

Conclusion

The main reason to initiate an undergraduate journal involves the many benefits for authors, editors, and faculty mentors. Research has demonstrated that authors

benefit by advancing their writing skills, gaining insight into the publication process, and enjoying increased success in future careers (Schofield and Burton 2015; Stone et al. 2016; Weiner and Watkinson 2014). This study also shows that authors learn how to consolidate their work into accessible summaries and communicate their work to a general audience. Research has shown that editors benefit by learning the ins and outs of editing and publishing, gaining professional experience running a publication, and advancing their writing, communication, and problem-solving skills (Ní Uigín et al. 2015; Weiner and Watkinson 2014). This study also finds that editors learn how to create relationships, build trust with authors, and take initiative. In addition, it was found that working in a multidisciplinary environment stimulates editors' personal and professional growth. This experience also has shown that faculty mentors benefit by collaborating and learning from each other and by helping students build pathways between undergraduate education and students' future careers; encouraging students to take risks; step out of their comfort zones; and improve essential career skills such as taking initiative, developing teamwork capabilities, and building enhanced communication.

To capitalize on these benefits, however, the journal must be sustained, and to do this it is important to understand what it involves as well as what pitfalls might occur and how to address them. Due to high staff turnover rates, lack of institutionalization, lack of funding or workload support for faculty members, absence of sustainable infrastructure for the editorial board, or lack of a consistent flow of contributors, some publications are likely to become inactive. To address these challenges and sustain a journal, it is important to exercise flexibility in planning and implement a comprehensive infrastructure for the journal (conducting feasibility studies and pilot tests; identifying the journal's purpose, audiences, and contributors; working out logistics for funding; and determining how to sustain authors); create a team environment (investing significantly in establishing an editorial board by empowering them to become active contributors, unleashing their creativity, and supporting their professional development); and continually reflect with the editorial team on how to improve the journal experience and implement ideas to take the publication to the next level and allow it to persevere despite the inherent challenges. Suggested subjects for future research on sustaining undergraduate publications include mentorship of the editorial board, outreach for potential contributing editors, issues of plagiarism in the publishing process, assessment of the journal's impact on different stakeholders, and campus-wide integration of undergraduate student journals with educational practices, such as the library's information literacy instruction, faculty teaching practices, student life, and university recruitment efforts.

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