Promoting Active Learning through Undergraduate Economics Journals

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Abstract
We draw on our own experience to discuss the use of undergraduate journals to promote active learning by –
• Comparing and contrasting internal and external publications;
• Suggesting ways of integrating these journals into upper-level coursework; and
• Describing ways in which economics departments can partner with libraries to facilitate the editorial process and increase the accessibility of the journal.

Creating an Undergraduate Journal

Internal Model:
eg. Park Place Economist
(printed since 1993)

External Model:
eg. Undergraduate Economic Review
(printed since 2005)

Curriculum that emphasizes writing

Editorial policy
(Type of papers and review criteria)

Faculty oversight and student incentives

IWU student editors solicit papers from classmates, review for publication

IWU student editors solicit papers from economics undergraduates, IWU students review

Print and/or online publication

Displays IWU student achievement to University community

Helps maintain contact with alumni

Showcases high quality undergraduate economics research from around the world

Use EdiKit software for submission, peer review, publishing functions

Using the Journals in Class
To promote better student writing and critical thinking in upper-level economics courses –
• Assign students to write critical reviews of articles published in the undergraduate journal.
• Assign students to review articles that are actually under consideration for publication in the undergraduate journal, and make recommendations.
• Encourage students to submit their own papers for publication.

Benefits
• Upper-level students see examples of quality undergraduate work.
• Student authors are rewarded for doing excellent work.
• Student editors developing critical thinking skills.
• The editor-in-chief develops leadership skills.
• The department develops linkages with alumni and/or colleagues at other schools.

Challenges
• Establishing incentives for editors and reviewers.
• Dealing with succession of student editors-in-chief and faculty advisors.
• Determining the appropriate role of faculty in advising and training.
• Communicating with faculty advisors and student editors at other schools.

In its 8th year, the UER solicits papers from undergraduates everywhere.
IWU student editors and faculty advisor –
• Solicit faculty advisors and undergraduate associate editors at other schools;
• Solicit research papers from undergraduates everywhere.

Library/Department Partnership
• The Ames Library provides publishing infrastructure via institutional repository.
• Liaison Librarian provide information literacy instruction throughout curriculum.
• Scholarly Communication Librarian provides training on peer review and publishing software, introduction to Open Access.

Thanks to...
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…for their contributions.
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For more information...
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Journal publishing platforms...
EdiKit by bepress: http://www.bepress.com/edikit.html
Open Journals System by Public Knowledge Project: http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ojs

Other undergraduate journals...
Issues in Political Economy (Elon University and the University of Mary Washington): http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/ipe/default.xhtml
Undergraduate Business and Economics Research Journal (Berry College): http://uberjournal.net/
Undergraduate Journals & Conferences Directory (Mercyhurst College): http://upd.mercyhurst.edu/

Article Evaluation Criteria – Example from the Undergraduate Economic Review

[UER reviewers use the criteria below to review and evaluate submissions. Their report is uploaded to the EdiKit system where the editor can review the comments and recommendation.]

Please evaluate the article based on the following criteria, using a 5 point scale, where “5” is excellent and “1” is poor. Please mark “N/A” if the criterion does not apply to the type of paper that you are reviewing.

1. Is concerned with an important research problem. ______
2. Describes the research problem clearly and persuasively. ______
3. Uses a theoretical framework that is appropriate to the research problem. ______
4. Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, and details. ______
5. Relates the principle findings back to the research problem. ______
6. Draws policy implications (if any) from the principle findings. ______
7. Uses appropriate research design and data (if applicable). ______
8. Is well organized and unified. ______
9. Uses appropriate, direct language. ______
10. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources. ______
11. Maintains a level of excellence throughout. ______
12. Shows originality and creativity in realizing (1) through (11). ______
13. Overall evaluation of the article. ______

Average Score: ______

Recommendation:
Accept______ Accept Subject to Minor Revisions______ Decline______

Comments (especially if recommended to decline):

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