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WURJ Health and Natural Sciences

To Our Readers: Learning the Importance of Utilizing Skills of Scientific Inquiry beyond the Classroom

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Letter from the Editors

The first year of operation for the Western Undergraduate Research Journal: Health and Natural Sciences was a whirlwind! Undergraduates, graduates, and Faculty came together brilliantly to ensure the initial success of the project. Reviewers were trained, students submitted articles, workshops on research opportunities were held, and our very first articles were published.

In addition to being a period of growth for WURJHNS, this past year was also a major learning experience for everyone involved with the Journal. Our undergraduate reviewers (with the guidance of Faculty members) learned how to apply review methodologies to critically appraise articles, articulate constructive feedback to authors, and see a paper through to publication. Additionally, our academic affairs team also experienced a completely unanticipated level of success in the form of overwhelming interest from the general student body looking to get involved with research and scholarly publishing. One of our most successful initiatives was the running of 3 seminars presented by students and a Faculty member, Dr. Jamie Melling, on how to get involved with research professionally. Each of the three seminars was completely full and registered by students at all levels of their undergraduate career, indicating the strong interest students at Western have towards applying their knowledge in the form of research.

Our cohort has the unique opportunity get involved with research opportunities in various capacities which in turn can have the potential to inspire which graduate and professional programs one may pursue. Academic journals are intricately woven into this process, as they have revolutionized how scientific information is disseminated and how students learn. Thus, it only comes naturally that students must acquire the skills pertaining to scientific writing and publishing at an earlier stage of their education. Furthermore, open access publication now enables students and scholars to more readily share scientific information through open channels – this is a mandate we have systematically incorporated into the WURJHNS as an open access journal. All these elements together form the basis of the Western Undergraduate Research Journal, an open-access, double blinded, peer-reviewed undergraduate academic journal. The Journal finally came to fruition through the concerted efforts of Western Libraries, the Faculties of Health Science, Science, and the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, thus demonstrating the interdisciplinary niche WURJHNS fills in the undergraduate scientific community at Western.

If there is one thing that we have learned during our tenure on the Journal, it is that no question is too big or too small to be answered. The principles of scientific inquiry can be applied to many circumstances outside of the classroom and lab. These are the questions that lead to innovative and thought provoking discoveries. Garnering the ability to hone in on the processes of scientific inquiry at the undergraduate level is an invaluable skill, but beyond that, communicating this knowledge through scholarly publication is arguably even more important. Thus, with the first volume of the WURJHNS successfully wrapped up, we urge the bright and young minds at Western to continue to ask questions, apply scientific principles outside of the classroom, and communicate to their peers and other scholars through their writing.

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