

Year One and Counting

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This issue completes this journal's first year of publication. As with all such stages, it's an appropriate time to review AJUR's progress in meeting the goals outlined one year ago in Spring 2002.

In June 2002, the goals for AJUR began with "this journal seeks to help undergraduates researchers become better writers and expositors of science." Have we made a realistic step in this direction? Yes, in so far as one year's service can tell. Seventeen papers—written by twenty-two undergraduate authors—have been published so far: a modest beginning. A few of these papers sailed through without any significant alterations, but more took some profit from thoughtful comments by many referees. Each of these undergraduate authors certainly gained a better sense of how to write clearer prose, as a comparison of their initial and final drafts would show.

Has the review process been as fast as we'd hoped? In about half the cases, yes, but the initial reviews for the other half have often 4 or 5 weeks. There is room for improvement.

AJUR's second goal was to "provide a forum that is broader than a single discipline." This we have achieved, albeit on a modest scale of one year, with one qualification. This past year saw the publication of three papers in chemistry, five in physics, three in computer science, two in the behavioral sciences, one in statistics, and one in mathematics. A few of these spanned several disciplines or dealt with new technologies like nanotechnology. The qualification comes from the absence of a biological sciences paper in print this past year.

AJUR's third goal was directed to gaining "submissions from undergraduates engaged in scientific or technical researches wherever they may be in the world." Is this goal within reach? Not really, though AJUR has

made a beginning. The Internet has made distant connections relatively easy to achieve, but these connections are sometimes sporadic. Access to an Internet-connected computer is not easily available in many parts of the world. Even so, AJUR is committed to building an international editorial board, though this could well take several years.

AJUR also has some distance to go to increase its profile in some parts of the US and Canada. The western region of the US, not counting the Pacific coast, is an area that needs better coverage by this journal.

AJUR's fourth goal promoted the outcome of "a high international standard for undergraduate research presentations." The journal and its editorial staff can be justly proud of the level of publications thus far, though all would agree that there are areas for improvement. Achieving these improvements will depend on better coordination between AJUR and its disciplinary editors.

The fifth and final goal is related to the fourth: improving and extending the undergraduate research network on which AJUR depends. This network of research supervisors, reviewers, editors and research students needs forums and venues for communication. AJUR will prosper only if it provides a forum suited to undergraduate researchers and their research supervisors. This year has seen a good start but much remains to be done in integrating AJUR into this network. The journal will need to build more bridges to disciplinary societies and others in the coming years.

Organizing a first step on the road to improvement will depend on AJUR's hardworking editors. Later this year, I will convene an on-line discussion for all editors to discuss strategies to help AJUR find its way to the next level of excellence.