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The Institutional Repository: A Place for Every Undergraduate Researcher's Work

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The Institutional Repository: A Place for Every Undergraduate Researcher's Work

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As scholars, we have various outlets for disseminating our work. What about undergraduate researchers? Student research journals are excellent outlets but can be labor and resource intensive. However, there is a place for student research that may be overlooked: the college or university institutional repository.

An institutional repository (IR) is library-based digital infrastructure and services showcasing scholarship that serves two functions: dissemination and preservation. Content is added post-publication, making it open access. The repository also functions as an archive. IRs are also highly efficient: authors add their work with minimal mediation from librarian IR administrators. The IR benefits the institution and its contributors who gain greater visibility.

The STEM-focused New York City College of Technology, City University of New York (City Tech), has a growing and vibrant undergraduate research program supported by a variety of local and federal grants. The number of student and faculty participants has grown an average of 15 percent every year in the last three years. Student research results are presented at a poster session every semester. Recently, the IR, Academic Works, has been opened to students. Enthused to have their posters side-by-side with faculty scholarship, students can link to their research in their applications for graduate school and employment, thus documenting their research, as City Tech Associate Provost Pamela Brown points out.

The greatest success has been the workshops in which students are introduced to scholarly communications and open access as well as learn how to self-archive, or describe and upload, their work. Whether or not student researchers go on to graduate school, Academic Works helps extend and strengthen their experience as knowledge creators, including their voices in the scholarly conversation.

Benefits of Discipline-Specific Undergraduate Research Clubs

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Developing student research clubs helps to foster peer mentorship, accountability, and supportive communities for undergraduate researchers. These can be successful at not only the institution level but within disciplines and departments as well.

The Veterinary Research Group at Cal Poly Pomona is an undergraduate student club with members ($n = 30 \pm 10$) interested in gaining research exposure and experience involving animals. This research club provides a peer mentorship avenue for upper-level undergraduates (club leadership) to help their fellow students identify projects, faculty mentors, and research opportunities. Faculty members are excited to engage with enthusiastic students and seek out research club members for their studies. Fundraising efforts and student club monies are used to support poster printing and travel to research conferences. Prior to research meetings, students help each other develop posters and slide presentations, providing a safe forum to practice research presentations. Lecture topics in club meetings include animal use, research ethics, safety measures, and training modules that orient students to the research community. Exposure to peer research projects helps students to better understand research methods, study design, data analysis, and best practices within their discipline. Prospective faculty and graduate student mentors also present their research to the group to share their research journeys and to solicit assistance in their projects.

Comradery and inclusivity within the club foster a support network and commitment in student members that keeps them engaged in their research projects. This marriage of high-impact practices produces high-performing, successful students with a nearly 100-percent retention rate. A disproportionate number of club graduates go on to graduate or professional studies. There is increasing emphasis on research acumen and information literacy in pre-health professionals, and students interested in pre-professional careers seek opportunities to distinguish themselves.