Featured School:

Berry College

Campbell School of Business

Mount Berry, Georgia, United States

www.berry.edu/academics/campbell

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AACSB International
The Campbell School of Business’s Undergraduate Business and Economics Research Journal (UBER)

The mission of the Campbell School of Business at Berry College – “to provide an excellent liberal arts-based business education that engages the Head, Heart, and Hands, while serving the academic and business communities through appropriate research and services”1 – is clearly visible at the School through its initiatives. A prime example of their focus on this mission is the School’s Undergraduate Business and Economics Research Journal (UBER). As the faculty advisor of the UBER Journal, Dr. Thomas Carnes adds, “The goal is to develop the entire individual and teach students how to work together and be responsible.”

Furthermore, the business school upholds a liberal arts focus, which encourages students in striving to become good writers and communicators, and faculty to be more conscious of developing these skills within their students. For example, within the undergraduate curriculum, students must take at least two intensive writing courses. If they are a double major, then the requirement stands for each major. With such commitment to the importance of writing and research, it may come as little surprise that the Campbell School of Business is one of the very few institutions that is involved in peer-review and publication of undergraduate business research.

Beginnings and the Review Board

In 2008 Dr. John Grout, Dean of the Campbell School of Business, and Professor Nancy Miller recognized that there was a distinct lack of research produced and disseminated by undergraduate business students. To their knowledge, only the University of Michigan had supported such an initiative, prompting Grout and Miller to view this as an opportunity for the Campbell School of Business to create a journal that would serve as an outlet for undergraduate students’ original work.

In the Fall of 2008, work started in developing the UBER Journal. Having over 13 years of experience in the newspaper and publications industry, Dr. Thomas Carnes was brought in as the faculty advisor for the Journal. In January of 2009 the first editor was hired, and the first issue was published in Spring of 2010. Currently 11 students and Carnes work as staff for the Journal.

With roughly 85 percent of Berry undergraduate students holding paying jobs on campus, the time and labor spent on the UBER Journal are not exceptional. Both Carnes and the student executive editor seek out students, as well as advertise on the school’s website for positions on the Journal’s staff. Positions on the Journal are open to all undergraduate students regardless of major, and in the past students from

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disciplines such as history and biology have served on the review board. Carnes and the executive editor interview candidates separately, looking for individuals who exhibit curiosity, excellent writing skills, and the ability to focus and devote substantial time to the Journal. Hired students are all trained on the reviewing process by the editorial team. The majority of students join the Journal as sophomores and continue working until they graduate from Berry. The executive editor is typically a senior. Carnes characterizes the staff’s different levels of responsibility on a five-point scale, with level 5 carrying the most responsibility as the executive editor, reviewers being level 4, copy editors being level 3, etc. Reviewers are paid for seven hours of work for each paper they complete. The executive editor is paid an hourly wage, and works 16 hours per week, including some work over the Christmas holiday and during the summer. External reviewers are hired on a project basis, and are usually students who are looking to enhance their experience and resumes.

The Review Process

The UBER Journal receives over two dozen submission per year, of which over half are rejected before reaching Carnes’s review. In both the first and second years of the Journal's existence, 12 articles were submitted, of which four and six were accepted, respectively. The copy editor ensures that submissions follow the APA style and advises the executive and review editors on acceptance. The review editor serves as “the second-in-command to the executive editor,” explains Carnes. He or she assigns all reviews, makes sure all the review deadlines are met, and meets with the executive editor to make recommendations to Carnes on what papers to publish. Most papers are reviewed by two in-house reviewers and some papers are also reviewed by an external reviewer. The final decision is made by the executive editor, the review editor, and Carnes. The Journal aims to publish four to six papers in each annual issue.

Throughout the review and selection process, Journal staff look for well-written articles that are original, show good ideas, and make a contribution to the field – the criteria mirror that of typical journal submissions made by faculty. To date most articles have been focused on the fields of economics, finance, and marketing; however, the Journal accepts submissions on qualitative or quantitative research on any of the following nine areas: accounting, economics, finance, marketing, management, business law, corporate ethics, information systems, and operations management. All co-authors of submitted manuscripts must be undergraduates or have received their undergraduate degree within a year and a half of publication. As the journal is targeted at undergraduates, it is expected to be written in a manner that is understandable for this group of students, yet Carnes notes that some submissions have been fairly technical.
All articles must be submitted by the end of November, and papers selected for subsequent review must be revised and re-submitted by the end of January. Staff then spend February and March intensely reviewing the articles. In April, accepted articles are then sent to Lulu.com, an open publishing platform, where the Journal can be downloaded or purchased in hardcopy form.

Staff actively work to promote the Journal, and aim to be regarded as the premier journal for business undergraduates worldwide. Staff annually attend the National Conference for Undergraduate Research events to network and spread exposure, and also send close to 3,000 emails to business professors at institutions around the world, informing them about the Journal and whether they have any students who could contribute.

Support for the UBER Journal

Carnes credits much of the Journal’s growing success to the hard work of the staff, but also to the level of support by faculty and the Dean. He adds that the Campbell School’s Economics department has been strongly involved with the Journal, especially with regard to providing assistance in reviewing technical economics articles. “Generally, all faculty have been happy to help,” he says.

However, creating an undergraduate research journal from scratch and running it has not come without challenges. As previously mentioned, the UBER Journal is one of a kind and therefore throughout its creation, it did not have other models from which to learn. Carnes adds that although his previous experience is helpful, working on a newspaper is still quite different than creating and maintaining an academic peer-reviewed journal. Initially composing a staffing model was challenging, and the Journal’s first executive editor took much of the work load on her shoulders for the first eight months. Carnes recommends that schools who are interested in creating a similar journal should make sure that faculty working on the journal have very few or no other commitments to the business school (aside from teaching), as it does take up a substantial amount of time.

Carnes mentions that some students express desires to pursue research careers in academia, but working on the Journal serves the Campbell School in much more than just providing its students with academic research experience. The UBER Journal has been a great opportunity for students, whether in networking or experience building their leadership and communication skills. “Editors of the Journal show exactly the qualities that employers look for,” adds Carnes. The Journal also provides an outlet for undergraduate research, which was very much needed and remains a largely untapped area in business research. The fact that students from highly recognized schools, such as Stanford, Temple, and Villanova Universities have submitted papers to the Journal supports the notion that business students have been searching for a channel to share their research, and the UBER Journal is serving this need.
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End Notes
