

Editorial

Research is in many ways, the pursuit of knowledge and undergraduate research encourages students to explore issues of interest to them and enhance their undergraduate experience. The experience can be a realization of a dream and an opportunity to be an active contributor to scientific knowledge. Undergraduate research takes place at a very abysmal level in India where students could be overwhelmed by the academic process and do not even know that research is an option for them, let alone know how to get involved.

There are numerous benefits for undergraduate students who get involved in research. Research experience allows undergraduate students to better understand published work, thus expanding understanding and knowledge of their academic field. It could help define their academic career by helping them develop critical thinking, leadership, communication skills and explore research techniques. The gain in academic experience helps expand their resume and gives them an experience of working with a research team. Today many dental schools abroad value research experience for admissions into their various streams. Through exposure to research as undergraduates, many students may discover their passion for research and may continue on to postgraduate studies and academic positions and thus make informed decisions in pursuing careers in research.

Students today have ill-fated idea of research and awareness is first and foremost the key to success in engaging the undergraduate student. Teachers need to be aware of their students' potential interest in research in the classroom. He or she can intermittently gauge interest of their students in research and provide the right guidance about getting involved. Undergraduate students often do not really know what the research process is. Perhaps incorporating information in a short lecture or peer education through a mentoring system where postgraduates can help students understand how to go about the same. There is a tremendous opportunity for the teacher to help to open the doors to a research experience. The values of research are not part of any textbook or curriculum but needs to be proactively encouraged by teachers. By explaining the process and available employment opportunities teachers can help to demystify the procedure and ignite a passion for research. Many students get involved in research late in their undergraduate careers. Today information is abundant, use of the web, and with the widespread availability of sophisticated scientific equipment, a keen student will be able to conduct sophisticated research in short periods that would have taken years and massive resources in the past. We therefore need to encourage undergraduates to do research including peer-review and publication of their work.

Audrey F Manley, President of Spelman College, has listed seven 'Life Skills' that are gained through undergraduate research:

- Mentoring that comes close with faculty
- Experience with team work
- Increased understanding of methodology
- Improved study skills
- Improved skills in time management
- Increased self-confidence
- Improved communication skills.

So in conclusion, I would thus urge professional societies and bodies to strongly endorse undergraduate student research and publication as a part of any undergraduate student experience.

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Editor-in-Chief