

VURJ

VANDERBILT
UNDERGRADUATE
RESEARCH JOURNAL

HELPFUL NOTES FOR PROSPECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS
ABOUT THE SUBMISSION PROCESS

Approved by the Advisory Board on January 21, 2005

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Mission Statement

The *Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal* seeks to engage and unite the University community in a vibrant, cross-disciplinary discussion on the role of undergraduate research in the modern private university through the publication of outstanding scholarship in every academic discipline represented on the Vanderbilt campus.

Overview of the Journal

The *Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal* is dedicated to the publication of outstanding scholarship by all undergraduates in every academic discipline at Vanderbilt University. The annual publication will be separated into two distinct sections, Humanities & Social Sciences and Engineering & Natural Sciences, led by an Associate Editor confirmed by the Advisory Board.

Students in all four of the undergraduate schools will be eligible to submit articles for consideration by an interdisciplinary review board for each division. Faculty members with special expertise in a particular field will provide the foundation for a publication that seeks to share exceptional undergraduate work with the greater Vanderbilt community and an international scholarly audience.

Section Policies

Humanities & Social Sciences and Engineering & Natural Sciences

The principal sections of the journal are Humanities & Social Sciences and Engineering & Natural Sciences, which publish outstanding articles based on scientific research or analytical criticism using the accepted techniques of a major academic discipline. The sections are open for submissions from any undergraduate student or collaborative team regardless of school affiliation, year of attendance, or major course of study. Students should submit articles to the section most consistent with the subject of interest, rather than the disciplinary technique. Prospective contributors are encouraged to contact the Associate Editor prior to submission for preliminary suggestions on the suitability of a topic for a particular section.

Research Notes

The Research Notes section publishes short summaries of preliminary research findings, methodological challenges, or unanticipated developments within major faculty-led research efforts. For undergraduate students collaborating with faculty members in sponsored research projects with the eventual goal of conference presentation or professional publication, this section provides an initial opportunity to share the graduate-level research experience with the University community.

Editorial Process Guidelines

Focus and Scope

The *Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal* is a refereed journal of criticism and innovative research featuring the work of Vanderbilt University students. We welcome submissions from all undergraduates in every academic discipline represented on the Vanderbilt campus whose outstanding contributions warrant dissemination to the widest audience of Journal readers. As you craft your submission, feel free to reference the following guidelines we seek to follow in evaluating each submission:

- Originality or Innovative Quality - the extent to which the submission provides an exceptional opportunity for our readers to discover new dimensions of academic research.
- Content - the variety of techniques, experiences, results, research data, or publishable findings within the article. The best articles will contain noteworthy research findings for the group of readers most directly interested by the subject area.
- Readability - the degree to which the submission can be easily read by a diversity of readers who may not have advanced training in the discipline of interest. Since the goal of addressing a broad audience is a high priority for the Journal, readability is greatly stressed by reviewers.

If you are an undergraduate engaged in departmental honors work, independent study, research assistantship, or summer research, we are particularly interested in your submission. If you are uncertain about the level of interest in your academic research, please feel free to submit a short abstract to the editors for a preliminary assessment prior to writing an article. We will help you define your writing efforts for the greatest contribution to a future edition.

Peer Review Guidelines

The *Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal* conforms to the highest standards of ethics, honesty, and integrity in the evaluation process for submissions to the Journal. Both sections of the Journal maintain a blind, peer-review process that protects the scholastic value of academic research by verifying the methodological and content validity of submissions.

The most important aspect of the proposed journal is that undergraduate students are integral to its successful development, implementation, and operation. While the journal will draw on faculty expertise in policy direction and systems technology, the Editorial Board will be primarily composed of students from every college. Prior to submitting articles for review, it will be students who translate their academic interests into publishable articles with the guidance of fellow students who serve as editors. Accordingly, we have approved a unique editorial structure to lead journal operations over the course of an academic year. Every faculty member should encourage interested students to visit the organizational website (<http://vurj.vanderbilt.edu>) for more information.

An Overview of the Submission Process

Preparing for Submission

Prior to submission, prospective contributors must carefully prepare their submission in accordance with the professional standards for academic publication. One of the most important steps involves the removal of all personal references to the author, faculty advisor, departmental colleagues, and research team. Both sections follow the author-date system of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, which is available in the reference section of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library. Many authors may also need to format conceptual diagrams or statistical tables. Finally, we encourage all undergraduate students to consult faculty members for helpful comments prior to peer review.

Submitting the Article

When a prospective contributor is prepared to begin for peer review process, the appropriate method is electronic submission through the official site (<http://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/vurj/>). Every author should follow the registration process of the Open Journal Systems platform, which provides the Editorial Board with contact information for the student and faculty advisor should the Editor need to verify any background information during the review process. During the submission process, the author will list the discipline, subject, coverage, and methodology for the research article.

Receiving the Peer Review Assessment

The Editor will oversee the blind, peer review process. Every article will be sent to two members of the Editorial Review Board without any personal references to the author. Both reviewers will evaluate submissions on the basis of original or innovative quality, content, and readability. At the completion of the peer-review process, the Editorial Board will make one of four decisions (Accept, Accept with Revisions, Revise and Resubmit, or Reject) and notify the author of the outcome.

Revising the Article

Authors who are encouraged to Revise and Resubmit should consult an experienced faculty member in their chosen discipline for assistance in revising the article immediately. Every author will be expected to respond to any major concerns from the Editorial Board for future publication.

Confirming the Final Manuscript

The final step in the review process will be a confirmation of the final manuscript by the individual author responsible for the original submission. If the manuscript contains any typographical errors or the copyeditor makes any grammatical changes that are unacceptable on the basis of technical accuracy, the author should notify the Editor within one week of receiving the final manuscript.