

Faculty-Undergraduate Research Partnerships: A Model for Joint Publishing in East Asian Humanities

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Editors' Note: This article is derived from one of a series of presentations that was made under the panel title, "Bringing Scholarship to the Classroom: Japan Studies," held during the 16th Annual Conference of the ASIANetwork on March 15th, in San Antonio, Texas. Faculty-undergraduate research is of primary concern to all ASIANetwork members, and in this provocative article, Professor DiNitto assesses the challenges and opportunities of such collaboration within the humanities disciplines in ways that are both honest and forthright.

The past decade has seen a new emphasis on incorporating opportunities for undergraduates to engage in research both inside and outside of the classroom. The terms "undergraduate research," "independent inquiry" and "inquiry-based learning" are buzzwords in the field. The controversial 1998 Boyer Commission report funded by the Carnegie Foundation, "Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities," examined ways in which research universities could better bridge the gap between faculty research and student learning. This continues to be a concern for liberal arts colleges as well.

Questions remain regarding the outcome of such research opportunities, specifically the publishing opportunities for undergraduates in a collaborative relationship with a faculty member. Grants and institutions at universities and colleges sponsor faculty-student research, but how often does such co-authored research make it to print? This is standard practice in the sciences (and to some extent in the social sciences), to the extent that there are various debates in these disciplines about the ethical procedures for determining authorship credit when working in collaborative situations (see the APA guidelines). The humanities have not yet caught up with the sciences in terms of classroom research and academic publishing for a number of reasons. The field of East Asian Studies presents special

challenges, because the language proficiency level necessary to conduct advanced research is generally not present in undergraduates. Hence, any definition of "research" will differ from that of disciplines working primarily with English language materials. This paper looks at the institutional possibilities and obstacles to

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joint faculty-undergraduate student publishing both at colleges and universities, and in the major East Asian studies journals. Last, I offer a model of interdisciplinary co-authorship that has the potential for success.

A google search for the keywords "faculty-student research" and "collaborative faculty-student research" turns up a number of programs and

initiatives in the humanities at American institutions such as: University of Scranton, Northern Kentucky University, St Mary's College of California, Hope College, Pace University, and California State University, Fullerton.¹ The programs at these various schools range from summer grants to academic year funding. Some, like Hope College, give priority to proposals from the humanities, and many mention that the research will culminate in a publication or presentation at scholarly conferences. Pace University's website for Student-Faculty Research Projects lists one such co-authored paper on an Asian topic, which was published in the journal *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*.²

Besides the summer grant, logical places for this research within the humanities curriculum are the honors thesis and the capstone course. Graduating seniors in writing intensive capstone courses can bring cumulative knowledge to bear on a new research project which could easily intersect with the faculty member's own research interests. The expectation that a senior could, with significant mentoring, produce a document of publishable quality is reflected in, for example, the standards for awarding honors to theses. At William & Mary, some departments reserve the top level of "highest honors" for those theses of a publishable quality. That said, there are still questions about where such work would or could be published, and the

follow-up that by the time such work was published, the student would have graduated, in which case she would no longer be an undergraduate.

These grants are a way to compensate and motivate faculty (and students) to engage in such research, which has traditionally been done as an overload. But, in order for such a joint venture to be worth the faculty member's research time, the work would have to be published in a peer-reviewed venue where the faculty member would normally seek to publish his/her own work. To get a better idea if such co-authored projects have made it to print, I surveyed the major East Asian Studies humanities journals. In corresponding with editors, I asked if their journal had received or accepted any submissions co-authored by a faculty and an undergraduate.

Of the five journals editors who responded, not one had a co-authored submission of this type. Three of the five had published articles co-authored by a faculty-graduate student pair or by two graduate students. Two editors mentioned occasionally publishing articles co-authored by faculty. One journal had received submissions from undergraduates, but they did not make it very far into the review process. Co-authorship of any kind appears to be rare in the East Asian humanities disciplines.

A number of editors mentioned interest in increasing such submissions, but the assumption was that the work had to meet the journal's standards. I also encountered skepticism among editors and colleagues as to whether or not such projects are viable. There were suggestions that co-authorship of this type may only be viable on a project where the demands of the subject matter require collaboration. Also necessary was a division of labor which is not always clear in humanities research. There was additional concern that jointly authored publications may not be granted the same weight or value by the academic community or by internal academic review systems, which presents problems for untenured faculty.

My interest in this topic comes out of personal experience working on a project with an undergraduate at William & Mary. The project began as an honors thesis, which grew out of a series of independent studies that the student undertook with me.

Through the support of a grant from the college, the student was able to travel to Japan to collect materials. Before going overseas, I arranged for the student to meet with faculty members in Japan who offered various assistance in helping him find sources. The examining committee

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regarded the resulting honors thesis as a contribution to the field, but it needed work in terms of the level of the writing, the detail of the analysis of the primary sources, and the crafting of the argument. It would not have been accepted for publication in an academic journal in its then current state. The topic of the honors project intersected with my own research interests, and the student and I decided to work on it together so as to try for a joint publication. The student is now in an American History Ph.D. program, and no longer an undergraduate.

I revised the thesis for presentation at an invited talk for faculty and graduate students at a major American university. Over the past few months, I have been further revising this presentation for submission. The student had completed Fourth Year Japanese proficiency at William & Mary and did not have the Japanese language proficiency to conduct a detailed linguistic analysis of his sources. However, since the material was based in *manga*, he could acquire much information through analyzing the visuals. That said, I conducted new research, did a re-examination of his existing research (correcting some analytical mistakes that were based on his insufficient language proficiency), reformulated parts of the argument, added in new technical vocabulary specific to the genre, and polished the language.

The student originally conceived of the project and found all the primary sources used in the project, purchasing many in Japan. The student also brought a knowledge of American history, specifically war history (based in English language sources), that I did not have. While the first two points are timesavers for the faculty member, the third point is

Since we cannot expect undergraduates to have the level of expertise of a faculty member, in order for these joint projects to be productive, the student has to bring knowledge outside of the East Asian specialization to a collaborative effort. The interdisciplinary nature of this collaboration is key. Other possibilities might include collaboration with students with interests in women's studies or film, or working with them on a comparative national project. In this way, undergraduates could bring their knowledge of feminist and film theory or of another national tradition, to the endeavor, adding a new scope to the project.

Publishing is the culmination of our research, and there is real value in having undergraduates work at a high level with faculty. If we are serious about bringing research into the humanities classroom, we must ask ourselves if we as a community of scholars and teachers value such collaboration, if the publishing community values such collaboration, and if we are willing to redefine humanities research to include undergraduates.

Endnotes

¹The College of William & Mary recently received a three-year grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation to increase the presence of "undergraduate research" in the curriculum. This initiative focuses on the process of student learning, but the College also encourages new curricular structures that result in research outputs (e.g., student or faculty-student presentations and publications). See the Mellon website (www.mellon.org) section on "Curricular Development and Educational Effectiveness," which enables institutions to "foster student and faculty research partnerships."

A google search on "undergraduate research" turned up programs and offices at universities such as UNC, UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UW.

²See http://digitalcommons.pace.edu/lang_research/