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Students Take Lead On Publications

May 8, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The titles of the articles sound like they belong in the pages a lengthy government study or a high-gloss national magazine: *School Vouchers: Does Increased Competition Benefit the Masses? A Study on Obesity and its Relationship to Socioeconomic Background and Current Earnings*.

Yet these titles are in fact part of a unique publication, an economics journal produced and edited completely by undergraduate students at Illinois Wesleyan University, known as *The Park Place Economist*.

"It's very rare to have an entire publication generated solely with the work of undergraduates," said Robert Leekley, publication adviser and chair of the IWU Economics Department. "We've actually used it when we recruit faculty. It's very impressive."

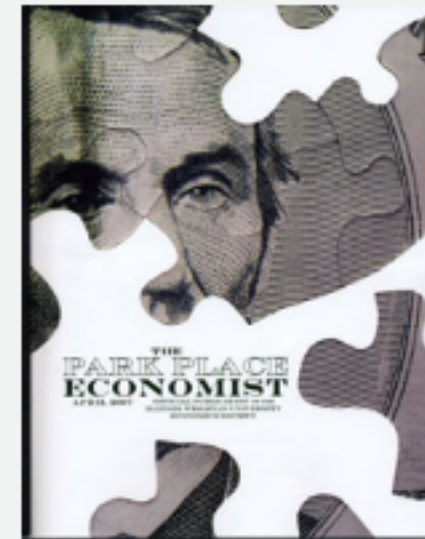
Taking its name from the street that runs through Illinois Wesleyan's campus, *The Park Place Economist* has been publishing for the last 15 years. Undergraduate students are responsible for gathering submissions, choosing articles, editing and proofreading and layout for the publication. The journal, published annually in print and online, acts a learning tool for the students.

"The look and feel of each year varies, depending upon the decisions of the students," said Leekley. "But the experience students gain is the same. Working as a team and putting together the journal may be as important as anything they edit. The whole idea of the journal is to promote responsible writing, and hope the students learn the difference between what is good, and not so good research."

The message came through loud and clear to this year's *Economist* editor, economics and mathematics major Todd Kumler. "Working on the journal has helped me look for what makes quality research," said Kumler, who will continue writing at the graduate level. "Soliciting articles, overseeing the entire process better prepared me for my future. Plus I'm really impressed with what IWU students produce."

The journal steps beyond the work of students in class. Also included in the *Economist* are interviews with successful alumni who offer insight about how their economics background helped with their careers, such as Jarod Bona, who went from Illinois Wesleyan to attend Harvard Law School and now is an attorney for one of the largest law firms in the world. This year's journal also includes a rare look at global economic perspectives from IWU students from international students and an American student studying abroad.

The concept of undergraduate students taking the helm of a journal may be unique, but amazingly, Illinois Wesleyan has six journals in four departments with undergraduate student editorial boards, including economics, English, history and political science.



Park Place Economist 2007 Cover

"It raises the stakes of what we write," said Kumler. The senior from Elgin, Ill., did double duty this year, also acting as editor for the second Economic Department journal, *Undergraduate Economic Review*, which is published only online but takes papers from all over the United States. "The thought of getting published serves as a great incentive to focus on your work," Kumler said. Those making submissions also learn from the process, as the student board for the *Economist* returns student articles with comments, allowing them to learn what made their papers top qualifiers, or kept them from publication.

"The journal can make writing papers, which can at times seem boring, a very real and even exciting process that pushes us to compile and present the papers in an even more professional way," said Brett Strand, a senior political science major from Rockford, Ill., and editor of the political science journal *Res Republica*.

Student editors agree the toughest part of creating the journals is choosing submissions. Student boards blindly review the submissions and meet to decide which pieces will make the cut for publication.



Diego Baez, Mike Theune and Amanda ReCupido review *Tributaries*.

"That can be a long process," admitted Amanda ReCupido, an English major and editor of *Tributaries*, one of the English Department's two student publications. "Students can be amazingly committed to a certain piece that they think should be in." A senior from Hoffman Estates, Ill., ReCupido helped select more than 60 submissions out of 300 for this issue of *Tributaries*.

ReCupido is also on the board for a second English Department publication, *The Delta*. While *Tributaries* highlights creative writing, *The Delta* focuses on literary criticism. Now in its second year, *The Delta* also holds a unique place for undergraduate publications. "To have a publication on criticism and analysis is typical with graduate institutions, but rather special on the undergraduate level," said Michael Theune, assistant

professor of English at Illinois Wesleyan and adviser for both English Department journals. "You might see many popular creative writing journals like *Tributaries* in campuses across the country, but we felt a population of our students was being left out, those who write outstanding criticism."

Whether its is a poem entitled "Spanish November," or an article *Analyzing the Effect of Change in Money Supply on Stock Prices*, the journals offer undergraduate students a chance to highlight their work, and the editorial boards a chance to explore new avenues of learning.

"Students use the materials as evidence of the quality of their work for applications to graduate schools, internships and jobs," said Leekley.

"It's an amazing experience," said ReCupido, who plans to go into publishing and will use her editorial board experience in her career. "I might have imagined playing some part in a publication as an undergraduate, but to be able to take such an active role as a student is incredible."