

Academic Journal Club

White Paper

June 23, 2013

Vision:

Our vision for the club is an open, welcoming place to rationally and logically discuss current academic research as it relates to broad topics that transcend university disciplines. An expected result of this vision is to create a community of similarly interested and academically driven individuals across the university. This club will introduce students to research both inside and outside their chosen field of expertise, and interpret research in a collaborative, interdisciplinary manner. One result is to foster an appreciation in students for topics outside their discipline. The club's topics and papers are chosen by the members; however subgroup discussions and more in depth papers are encouraged and welcomed.

We also see this club as a platform to organize and host a TEDx conference at the end of each semester. This event will share with the university and the community our mission of following interesting research across disciplinary lines.

Philosophy:

Our motto, *sapere aude*, is latin for, "have courage to use your own reason." Reaching independent conclusions is key to the success of the club and the development of its members. We encourage every member to question assumptions. A corollary to this is the imperative need for civility toward each other and respect for each other. Our club will encourage the notion of a T-Shaped students. These are students who, "are both generalists (highly skilled at a broad set of valuable things—the top of the T) and also experts (among the best in their field within a narrow discipline—the vertical leg of the T)" [Valve]. We encourage the autonomy of students. We will also distinguish members by their ideas, their areas of expertise (vs major because a major is a set of minimum requirements and expertise is something that high achieving students would feel obligated to possess), and their accomplishments in research. We will avoid making distinctions based on age and class standing.

Structure:

We will have weekly meetings to discuss topics that are sufficiently broad to encompass numerous fields of research, but are at the same time narrow enough to provide discussion for only a few hours. The first 10 minutes of meetings are reserved to let a student present his or her work or a paper he or she was particularly keen on followed by 5 minutes of questions and discussion.

The main block of time is for discussion of the interplay between the three papers selected by the club members at the last meeting regarding the topic for the week, chosen two weeks prior. We have not decided upon a time limit for the main discussion. Obviously, people are free to

discuss the topic for as long as they want, but an official time limit is needed to structure the club and to let people know what to expect. This limit will also influence the narrowness of the topics we define for discussion. Laptops are welcome in meetings to look up papers and counterarguments.

The end of each meeting is reserved for selecting papers for the next meeting, and the topic for the meeting after the next.

Papers that members want to bring up in the group meeting should be posted online so other members have a chance to read them before the meeting. A short high level description or analysis accompanying each paper is also encouraged.

Monthly, we will invite faculty to present at our meetings. He or she can give a 20 minute TED style presentation followed by group discussion. This interaction will allow professors and students to meet and discuss research and build connections. Ideally, the club members will have the presentation slides a week early so members can plan points to raise and read relevant papers.

Benefits:

To students:

- How to read research articles
- Connecting with professors and their research
- Connecting students with faculty to assist in applying for scholarships
- Offering personal level information to students about what different majors do
- Connecting intelligent people on campus
- Providing a forum for engaging, academic discussion

To faculty:

- Providing a pool of proven, academically driven students to draw undergraduate research assistants from
- Connecting professors and students regardless of discipline

To the university:

- Organizing intellectually driven students
- Fostering undergraduate research
- Accelerating the race to the Top 25 Public Research University
- Encouraging students to reach across disciplines to solve large problems from many vantage points