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Letter from the Vice President of Academic Affairs

Patricia L. Donat PhD

North Georgia College and State University

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It is my pleasure to introduce *Papers and Publications: North Georgia College and State University's Southeast Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (Papers and Pubs)*. This project is the result of the enthusiasm and dedication of the faculty and staff at North Georgia College and State University. As an institution committed to student engagement, we value students' involvement in basic and applied research and other creative activities that reward curiosity and challenge students to explore meaningful areas of inquiry. We believe in the importance of these high-impact educational practices and are dedicated to providing these experiences to our students. Student engagement in undergraduate research, service-learning initiatives, international experiences, and collaborative projects is part of the campus culture and commitment to providing a high-quality teaching and learning environment.

Papers and Pubs showcases some of the exceptional work of students who have conducted research as part of their undergraduate experience and who have benefitted from the mentorship and support of a dedicated group of advisors. Through collaborative and independent research processes, the students whose work is represented here have come to appreciate the richness of a life dedicated to intellectual inquiry. They have experienced the joy of complex questions, novel perspectives, and creative solutions; they have experienced the challenge of dedicated investigation, critical analysis, and sustained commitment; and they have experienced the satisfaction and confidence (and occasional disappointment and frustration) of exploring the unanswered question.

The value of undergraduate research for our students' personal and professional growth and development cannot be underestimated. I recently attended a regional conference where several students were presenting posters of their research. The students stood beside their posters, eager for the opportunity to talk with peers and professional colleagues about their projects. When answering questions about their work, it was clear that they understood not only the mechanics of their projects, but also the implications of their work. They brainstormed with conference attendees about the new questions prompted by their work and their interest in exploring these new lines of inquiry. I was impressed that many of these students, as undergraduates, had already identified what could develop into a career's research agenda. For these students, their research participation had become more than a course requirement or a recommended item to add to their résumés. Their research had become a genuine expression of personal intellectual pursuit and professional confidence.

I hope that the work that you find published here prompts you to consider new questions. Enjoy!

Sincerely,
Patricia L. Donat, PhD
Vice President for Academic Affairs
North Georgia College and State University