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Editor's Introduction

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XULAnexUS: Xavier University of Louisiana's Undergraduate Research Journal.
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Editor's Introduction

Dr. Ross Louis, Communications

Ten years ago, this journal was conceived during an interdisciplinary conversation that has since become increasingly common at Xavier University of Louisiana. A historian (Dr. Gary Donaldson), a political scientist (Dr. Bill Serban), and a biologist (Dr. Chris Doumen) proposed the initial version of Xavier's undergraduate research journal during a project funded by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT). They called it *Internexus* and hoped it would encourage interdisciplinary collaborations, promote faculty-student relationships, and offer innovative, technology-driven venues for representing Xavier students' research. It is safe to say that ten years and six volumes later, the journal, now called *XULAnexUS*, has fulfilled those goals.

The present issue is the second published since Hurricane Katrina shut down Xavier's campus for three months in fall 2005, and it represents the emergence of *XULAnexUS* as a competitive venue for Xavier undergraduate scholarship. Building on the foundation established by the journal's founding editors (Drs. Donaldson, Serban, and Doumen) and CAT multimedia artist Bart Everson, my editorship began in Fall 2007 with two goals: expanding the multimedia capacity of the *XULAnexUS* website and creating a multidisciplinary faculty-student editorial review process mirrors the experience authors will encounter as graduate and faculty scholars. Our first issue, Volume 5.1, met those goals. We published articles that took advantage of our digital media platform, including an example of creative scholarship that relied on a community-based video narrative. We also established a faculty-student editorial review board that partnered a faculty member with two students to review submissions based on academic discipline (Fine Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)).

XULAnexUS's re-designed website and submission/review process yielded a diverse – and carefully edited – publication in April 2008. We published eight total articles that represented seven different disciplines. The issue consisted of four research manuscripts, three scholarly notes, and one case of creative scholarship. Some student authors published work in their academic majors; others published work in their minors. The volume included work that came from summer research programs, senior capstone projects, and course assignments. Five of the authors were graduating seniors; they are now all enrolled in graduate programs.

For Volume 6, *XULAnexUS* has continued to strengthen the quality and representation of undergraduate scholarship at Xavier. The editorial review board expanded the journal to two issues and revised the publication process to accept submissions each semester. The result is an ongoing review of submissions that allows students to revise and resubmit their work throughout the academic year. The journal's

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infrastructure, supported by Xavier's Center for Undergraduate Research and funding from the Mellon Foundation, has also improved. The editorial review board rotates annually, with students applying for eight competitively selected positions. Student members work closely with a faculty editor to learn the process of academic peer review. We have also added a student editorial assistant who learns every stage of the academic publication process, from creating a call for submissions to formatting accepted articles for web publication.

Our first issue in Volume 6 features four articles (two research manuscripts and two scholarly notes) and involved our most competitive review process to date. I am particularly struck by the patience and diligence of these four undergraduate scholars. Beginning with their initial research experiences, most of which occurred during the 2007-2008 academic year, these authors attended a publication workshop, consulted with their faculty mentors, revised their manuscripts for submission, and responded to multiple revisions suggested by the editorial review board before publishing their work in this issue. From start to finish, the process spanned twelve months for some authors.

I believe the work presented here represents the startling diversity of the Xavier research experience. Kimberly Tran, a 2008 Xavier graduate in Biology and Chemistry who is now enrolled in the Louisiana State University School of Medicine, explores the communication behaviors of Vietnamese Americans within healthcare contexts. Her study sheds light on the cultural communication practices of a population with increasing representation here at Xavier and throughout the New Orleans community. Jada Etienne, a senior Psychology major, is motivated by the common experience that all students face in adjusting to the demands of a college environment. Her study explores how positive and negative information consumed by students might effect their self-perceptions.

Andrew Harris, a senior Philosophy major, and Chanté Calais, a sophomore Biology, Pre-Medicine major, have published work that emerges from English courses. In Harris' essay, a revised assignment for ENGL 3400: Literary Criticism and Theory interrogates the depiction of women seen in a magazine advertisement for male clothing. His detailed analysis of a Diesel Clothing ad uses feminist theory to identify ways in which images contain subversive messages of masculine dominance. Calais explores the relationship between lived experience and creative literary expression in the work of African American writer Chester Himes. Her essay is adapted from an assignment she completed for English 1023H: Introduction to Literature for Honors Students and analyzes the ways in which Himes' personal life impacted his short story, "Prediction."

On behalf of the Center for Undergraduate Research and the editorial review board, I proudly welcome you to Volume 6 of *XULAnexUS*. Published ten years after the journal was conceived, this issue suggests that Xavier students are engaged in scholarship that is both relevant and resurgent.