

From the Editors

This is the fourth volume of *Chrestomathy*, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences' journal for undergraduate research. As in the past three years, we solicited nominations from all departments in the School, as well as from interdisciplinary programs and related fields throughout the College. We received ten departmental nominations, which under the journal's procedures were guaranteed publication, and ten additional nominations, of which we accepted five.

The publication of the journal would not be possible without the continuing enthusiasm and financial support of Dean Sam Hines, the efforts of the departmental editors, the interest of faculty members who nominate papers, the commitment of the student authors, and the patient labors of Roger Brownlee and his staff at the Citadel print shop. The editors are indebted to all of them for their hard work.

One editorial issue that has arisen in previous years, and that emerged with renewed force this year, is the question of what to do about authors whose work is nominated more than once. On the one hand, the journal's purpose is to publish outstanding work, and our editorial procedures are obviously competitive, since we ask each discipline to identify a single outstanding paper as a departmental nominee. To that extent, we are committed to publishing the best papers written each year, regardless of whether an author's work has appeared before. If an individual department decides to honor an author for a second time, we are obligated to follow that choice.

On the other hand, selecting and publishing the best papers is not an end in itself. The journal's ultimate purpose is to encourage all our students to aspire to do more challenging and more impressive work, and especially to conceive of their written work as more than just a classroom exercise. Our competitive editorial procedures are really a means to that end. By honoring only the best papers, we provide an incentive to future students to work harder, and examples for them to follow. And there is a real question about whether multiple publications from individual authors might diminish those effects, by depriving others of the opportunity for the honor of publication.

In some cases, there are also practical considerations involved. Authors are expected to revise their essays during May and June, and this work often requires significant time and effort. This year, for the first time, we had papers from a single author nominated in two different fields in the same year. In the end, we decided that the double task of revision would be too great, and so we rejected the paper that would have required more work.

Our practice has thus been to take no fixed position on the question of multiple publications. Clearly a firm rule against multiple publications would undermine both disciplinary autonomy and the competitive procedures of the journal. But we also remain sensitive to the fact that the results of those competitive procedures might undermine the goals that the competitive procedures were created to promote. Thus when the results of those procedures are still in question, particularly when we are looking at the additional nominations, we have felt justified in holding a second publication to a slightly higher standard. And what that higher standard should be has depended on the context. In general, we have been most welcoming of multiple publications when they have come from different disciplines in different years. We have looked more carefully at second nominations in the same field, and even more carefully at second nominations in the same year.

These sorts of contextually sensitive and individually weighted tests are in one sense unsatisfying, since they provide no clear principles that can be applied directly to future cases. But we believe that their flexibility is ultimately appropriate to the difficult business of making individual judgments of quality, and to our responsibility to measure everything we do against the standard of what best encourages the academic aspirations of all our students.

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