

Fall 2015

Foreword

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Foreword

It is our pleasure to welcome readers to the Fall 2015 issue of *Tigra scientifica* Science News Magazine. This is the 10th issue in this series of exemplary writings by students enrolled in Clemson University's Creative Inquiry (CI) course, Popular Science Journalism. Science and technology have an enormous impact on society. Thus, science journalists shoulder the responsibility of transmitting accurate, comprehensible, and timely information to bridge the gap between scientists and the general public. A talented group of Clemson University undergraduate students has embraced this responsibility to produce this magazine.

The communication of science to the general membership of a democracy allows for educated decisions in national debates involving science and technology. Without scientific knowledge, it is difficult to know whether to choose wind energy over other forms of energy (page 18), medical treatments based on nanotechnology (page 16), or restaurants that use ingredients from genetically modified sources (page 23). Such knowledge also helps us to understand the natural history of the world (page 9), the behavior of animals (page 7), human culture (page 19) and even the value of a three-day weekend (page 20). In the public realm, scientific knowledge is important in choosing to support (or not support) politicians who favor new efficient fuels, more transparency in medical risk disclosure, or agricultural biotechnology. That these student writers recognize the value of clear science communication is a testament to their maturity.

In developing these articles the students took on four interrelated tasks: to identify the science most relevant to society today, to determine what readers might already know, to design communications to fill critical gaps in knowledge, and to evaluate the clarity of those communications (think late-night group editing). It is unmistakable that these students are profoundly invested in this work and share a deep appreciation for the craft of communicating science. We count it as an enormous privilege to work with extremely talented writers each semester. Since its inception, 48 students have developed more than 255 articles. The course is open to undergraduate students of all majors, ranks, and levels of ability. Students majoring in Biochemistry, Biological Sciences, Environmental and Natural Resources, and Genetics have contributed to this issue.

For us, a central satisfaction of working with these writers has been the opportunity to continually learn new things. It has also been remarkably gratifying to see students expand their writing skills and grow in confidence, camaraderie, and self-awareness. This growth is the result of the format of the course, which was first developed by Dr. Holly Tuten. While a graduate student at Clemson, Holly regularly contributed science articles to the student body newspaper, *The Tiger*. Shortly before graduating, Holly launched the course as an effort to pass her trade on to undergraduate students. We are grateful to Holly for creating a format that was both effective and “turn-key.”

The production of a magazine is always a collective effort. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to Dr. Barbara J. Speziale (Professor of Biological Sciences and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies) and the CI Program for encouragement and the funds necessary to complete this project. We are also grateful to Jan Lay (Creative Services Advisor) and Savannah N. Miller (Creative Designer) for their expert assistance in magazine design and layout. Finally, we acknowledge the commitment of past instructors, Mr. Matthew Johnson and Dr. Curtis Newbold, who were instrumental in keeping the project alive.

Although people can choose not to do science, they cannot choose to ignore it. Scientific advances pervade every aspect of life and should be a source of awe, even for people in whom they evoke a sense of disbelief (“wait...we can do that?!”). Science communication is successful when it reaches people with the information that they need in a form that they can use. Through hard work and collaboration, this group of students has increased the accessibility of science to all. We congratulate them on their success.

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