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PERSPECTIVE

UNDERGRADUATE
PERSPECTIVES FROM
THE *FINE FOCUS*
STUDENT TEAM,
FALL TERM 2017,
UNIVERSITY OF
DETROIT MERCY



SARAH BUHAY
BIOLOGY (PRE-MEDICAL)

Working with *Fine Focus* this semester has been a truly insightful and fulfilling experience. Upon hearing about the opportunity to work with Ball State University's *Fine Focus*, I was immediately drawn in and excited for what was ahead. As an undergraduate student in research, I understood the importance of the work behind publishing a paper, but from this experience I learned what happens on the other side of submission, the great effort put into creating a quality research journal, and what many journals look for in research articles.

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FINE FOCUS IS TEACHING IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF RESEARCH THAT IS OFTEN GONE UNSEEN (PEER-REVIEW AND PUBLICATION) AND DIVERSIFYING THE PUBLICATION INDUSTRY BY REACHING OUT TO DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS.

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The experience with the *Fine Focus* group was not only educational, but also personal. The students at Detroit Mercy were able to connect with those from Ball State; hearing each other's stories and learning hands-on from one's peers was a personable learning experience for all of us. The work that *Fine Focus* is doing has bounds of benefits to students from all places. With the *Fine Focus* journal, they are recognizing hardworking undergraduates within the STEM sciences and spreading this new science across the world. Under the grant for the educational outreach, *Fine Focus* is teaching important aspects of research that is often gone unseen (peer-review and publication) and diversifying the publication industry by reaching out to different student groups.

In a field that needs more diversity, inclusion, and input, *Fine Focus*' mission and work is vital to the future of science. We ReBUILDetroit students that have collaborated with *Fine Focus* value diversity within the STEM fields, and we are ecstatic to see the fire for teaching others and diversifying the field ignite with a group organization like *Fine Focus*. Perspective is everything, and I can only say “thank you” to the *Fine Focus* group for teaching us about the perspective of reviewers and publishers and for valuing our perspectives.



ALI ISSA
BIOLOGY

Ball State University has an incredible group of undergraduate students that call themselves *Fine Focus*. *Fine Focus*'s mission is to give undergraduate researchers from all over the world an opportunity to publish their hard work. That is something fantastic and every university should fragment a similar group with similar ideologies.

Before I attended my first *Fine Focus* meeting, I was very hesitant, especially because I was one of the few ReBUILDetroit students who were randomly selected to be a part of this special opportunity. I had no idea what the Ball State group was about, or why they chose the University of Detroit Mercy (which is in a completely different state) as a place to communicate and distribute their knowledge. After my first two meetings, I fell in love with everything they were doing. We sat through various presentations and participated in many engaging activities that were meant to help us better understand the process of the editorial board. The members of the editorial board are the ones who review journals; in this case, microbiology journals.

I learned a lot from *Fine Focus*. I learned that the editorial board does a double-blind peer review. A double-blind peer review is something many journals do, including *Fine Focus*, so that the identity of the authors and the reviewers are never revealed to each other. Something cool I learned was that *Fine Focus* receives many submissions from authors all over the world, including third world countries. Many of the authors of these countries don't have English as their first language, so when their manuscripts go through the editorial process, rejections are often given out due to a plethora of errors. Errors may include maintaining a consistent idea that is brought up in the paper, or too many grammatical errors.

With all the hard work *Fine Focus* is doing, I hope that we can establish a similar group on our campus who can publish undergraduate research from the Detroit area or even from all parts of the world. I appreciate *Fine Focus* for taking their time and driving all the way to Detroit to educate us in the stressful work that goes into editing journals. I am so thankful for this experience.



CHRISTINA JONES
BIOLOGY (PRE-DENTAL)

I'm Christina Jones, a ReBUILDetroit Scholar and Biology major at the University of Detroit Mercy. I joined this program as a community college student with little research experience and a lot of determination. Since my transition to UDM, I have gained extensive research experience working in a bacterial pathogenesis lab at the School of Dentistry. I work

with *Yersinia pestis*, the causative agent of plague. I have also become a published author through my work under the SEA-PHAGES program, a discovery-based undergraduate research course administered by the University of Pittsburg and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

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THIS COLLABORATION [WITH FINE FOCUS] HAS HELPED TO REINFORCE MY PASSION FOR RESEARCH—I LOVE BEING A PART OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND EACH NEW EXPERIENCE THAT I HAVE AS A REBUILDETROIT SCHOLAR BRINGS ME THAT MUCH CLOSER TO WHERE I WANT TO BE IN LIFE.

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Collaborating with the Ball State *Fine Focus* group has been a far more insightful and enjoyable experience than I would have imagined. I was surprised to learn about all that goes into the peer review process and feel that this knowledge will help me when I draft my own report for publication. I enjoyed having the opportunity to share my experiences with fellow undergraduate students and to give feedback on an actual article being reviewed by the *Fine Focus* team. This collaboration has also helped to reinforce my passion for research—I love being a part of the scientific community and each new experience that I have as a ReBUILDetroit scholar brings me that much closer to where I want to be in life. As a Biology/Pre-dental major and senior at UDM, I am excited to continue my journey in research in the field of dentistry. I hope to pursue a DDS/PhD or DMD/PhD degree so that I may continue publishing my work and contributing to scientific knowledge.



SHELBI MATLOCK
ENGINEERING & SCIENCE

Participating in *Fine Focus* was a chance for me to enhance my researching skills and learn all that goes into the making of a scientific journal. From this experience, I learned the do's and don'ts of writing a scholarly article, was able to have intellectual conversations with peers about issues that arise in article reviewing processes, and gained friendships. Being around a group of individuals who also share a passion for research was a valuable and unique experience for me. One that I brag about.

From this, I have gained confidence in my own scholarly article writing, assurance in knowing what scholarly journals look for, and an abundance of information that I can use towards my own research and article writing experiences. Another thing is the pleasure of knowing that I have created a network with young researchers like myself who I can turn to if I need advice or help. I am extremely thankful and forever grateful for the collaboration of ReBUILDetroit and *Fine Focus* of Ball State.



CHANNING SESOKO
ENGINEERING & SCIENCE

My experience with *Fine Focus* this last semester was one that I didn't think I would enjoy as much as I did. I was expecting a cut and dry set of lectures about the peer review process and all the behind-the-scenes work that goes on in a publication. There was always good food to be eaten, stories to be shared, and laughs to be heard throughout the building. Not only did our team of BUILD Scholars learn a lot from this experience, but over the course of several months, we became friends. The crew from Muncie, Indiana would always seem eager to trek out to Detroit, Michigan, just so they could teach us and graciously involve us in their magazine. Believe me when I say, the energy and tenacity that these people have is amazing, and I'm glad we were given the opportunity to come together and put the work in with them to get the last issue out. It was also a treat feeling like a Hollywood celeb, being interviewed underneath all the hot lights, with microphone wires running up and down our shirts, being able to talk about our experiences in the world of science, research, and eventually publishing and disseminating some incredible novel research. Working with *Fine Focus* has not only given me an inside view of the workings of a scientific journal, but has also helped me forge friendships that span across the country, which is a true blessing. I give my best to the whole Ball State crew, and hope to see everyone again soon!