

An Interview with Taylor Powers, Student Author

Brendan Mahoney

What's great for you about GREAT Day?

Powers: Most of the academic college experience revolves around learning new information and acquiring skills pertaining to one's field of choice. But at some point, it becomes essential that the students apply what they have learned in a more practical sense. Unfortunately, in many colleges and universities across the United States, this opportunity is not provided until the graduate level. But that is what is so unique about SUNY Geneseo and GREAT Day. Students are able to delve into a research project of their own choosing, fostering an environment of independent discovery amongst their own peers.

What impact do you think GREAT Day has on our campus culture?

Powers: Not only does GREAT Day foster an environment of active, practical learning, but it also creates a campus culture in which the opinions and interests of the students are highly valued by their professors and their peers alike. It is not a new idea that an atmosphere conducive to learning must engage the students at a level beyond the standard classroom lecture, but GREAT Day takes the concept further, demonstrating that the College is genuinely interested in the students and what they have to offer to their prospective fields. Consequently, when the faculty and staff prioritize the research, talent, and professional development of their students, the entire campus in turn puts a high value on active involvement—both in the academic world and in the surrounding community.

Why does undergraduate research in general matter to you?

Powers: Personally, I think that independent research or directed study is an invaluable component of the undergraduate experience. Not only does it allow students to think more critically about what they have learned, but it also teaches them that they can be actively involved in their field from the beginning of their studies. Curiosity and discovery do not require a master's degree or PhD, and as such, it is disadvantageous to confine a student's education to a traditional classroom setting until the graduate level—especially because many students do not pursue a degree beyond their bachelor's.

What's your interest in the specific topic being researched in the following paper?

Powers: From a young age, I have always had a strong interest in foreign languages, but during my undergraduate career, I ended up discovering that I was also interested in the actual process of second language acquisition. With society becoming more and more globalized, it is becoming more advantageous for people to be bilingual. However, in order to be able to teach a second language, one must first understand the linguistic framework of acquisition, how the mind processes language, and how it is subsequently produced. Just as with one's first language, the acquisition of a second language is strongly influenced by the learner's environment. As such, I wanted to discover what effect the learning environment has on the acquisition of pronunciation. If we are more aware of what influences a student's acquisition, then we will in turn be able to teach more effectively, more efficiently, and in a more personalized manner.



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