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Invited Introduction to JEREC

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“The thrill of victory...the agony of defeat.” The introduction to ABC’s Wide World of Sports includes images of champagne toasts--“the thrill of victory”--and dramatic crashes--“the agony of defeat.” Seasoned and beginning researchers can certainly relate to the thrill of research victories--identifying papers in the literature that are close, but not too close, to a proposed research question, finding data for an elusive variable, mastering a new statistical technique, completing a draft paper, and celebrating the published paper with family and friends.

Research defeats can literally involve (computer) crashes, but defeats are a key part of the learning process. Results that are counter to what was hypothesized, researchers who won’t share data, websites that are taken offline before data can be downloaded, feedback from a student peer-review/professor that seems impossible to incorporate, and power outages that occur before you can hit “save.” These experiences challenge researchers to question underlying theories, double-check data sets for errors, hone their organizational skills, become better at managing time, and to reflect on how to effectively communicate results through written and oral presentations. And they’ve learned to make backups, lots of backups.

Conducting original research for the first time can be overwhelming. How can a research question be identified when a student is just starting to read the literature? How can original research be conducted within the time limits of a semester? Professors know that we’re asking a lot of our students, but we also understand the many benefits from conducting original research regardless of whether a student is interested in pursuing an academic career.

The work presented in the second edition of the *Journal of Environmental and Resource Economics* at Colby (JEREC) was conducted by students in the 2015 environmental economics seminar “The Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity.” Students were guided by Dr. Sahan Dissanayake and supported through a student peer-review process that included referee reports from classmates, presentations to each other, and presentations at the Colby Liberal Arts Symposium. The diversity of projects and variety of methodological approaches is laudable.

Cheers!

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