

Davis Journal of Legal Studies

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Project Summary

In higher education, there is a lack of accessible publication opportunities for undergraduate students, and this lack of opportunity is even more apparent in the fields of social science and humanities. Davis Journal of Legal Studies (DJLS) is an interdisciplinary, undergraduate legal journal founded in 2020 at the University of California, Davis. DJLS was created primarily to two reasons:

- to create opportunities in legal studies, research, editing, writing, and publication at an undergraduate level, and,
- to promote free and widely accessible legal research to an audience of undergraduates.

Modeled after UC Davis King Hall Law Review and Stanford Law Review, Davis Journal of Legal Studies seeks to advance undergraduate legal discourse and empower undergraduate students by publishing interdisciplinary legal research. Davis Journal of Legal Studies also seeks to create a community of undergraduate legal scholars and provide valuable experience in academic writing, editing, and research that students can use in their educational and professional pursuits. The journal is a work of public scholarship; Volume I of Davis Journal of Legal Studies (April 2021) and Volume II (May 2022) are both freely available online and in UC Davis's Shields Library.

The objective of Davis Journal of Legal Studies is to promote research, scholarship, and creativity through undergraduate legal studies publication. This goal is twofold. First, we would like to publish an annual volume of academic research that is free and accessible to the public in order to advance legal studies discourse. Second, we would like to create an interdisciplinary community of undergraduate legal scholars to empower students in their research.

Our foundational, tangible goal for Davis Journal of Legal Studies was to publish an annual interdisciplinary research journal. We successfully achieved this goal with the publication of Volume I in April 2021 and Volume II in May 2022. The research we

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published was conducted by undergraduate students of varying majors and backgrounds; these submissions were selected by our editorial team through our submission vetting system developed by our Executive Editorial team. DJLS promotes undergraduate academia, academic research, and academic writing; the term “legal studies” is defined by DJLS as “the interdisciplinary, academic study of legal concepts, institutions, and processes”. This definition encompasses many facets of law, legality, and justice, allowing for plentiful viewpoints and diverse topics to be included in DJLS volumes.

DJLS is committed to keeping the journal free and publicly accessible; scholarship is a public service that should not be hidden by a paywall or subscription fee. Additionally, the journal itself functions as an academic experience: students working on the editorial staff will gain experience related to editing, publication, and academic research. It is my hope that editors leave the journal with an education experience that is valuable to them and their future endeavors.

Ultimately, the main, tangible goal to publish an annual volume of our undergraduate legal studies journal was met. However, our intangible goal of promoting research, scholarship, and creativity is equally important and was also met. The community aspect of Davis Journal of Legal Studies is not to be underrated: we are steadily growing our collaborative group of undergraduate legal scholars creating an accessible journal to further public understanding of legal research, and we will continue to develop this interdisciplinary community.

All members of the Davis Journal of Legal Studies Editorial Team for Volume III were undergraduate students at UC Davis. It was a goal to continue expanding beyond the UC Davis campus community with Volume III. This goal was not successfully met this year, but we did garner interest from students at UC Santa Barbara and UCLA. We continued to reach out to pre-law and legal student organizations at other campuses and utilize our network within the Western Regional Honors Council and National Collegiate Honors Council to diversify and expand both our authorship and readership. All publications in Volume III were written by UC Davis undergraduates.

I acknowledge our partners as part of our population: the Undergraduate Research Center, the University Honors Program, the University Writing Program, the Center for Student Involvement, and the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement. Specifically, I appreciate the support from Kate Stephensen of the

University Honors Program and Michelle Deutchman and Brenda Pitcher of the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement.

Impacts

In universities across California, including at the UCs, there exists a systematic problem wherein research conducted by undergraduate students is both devalued and exceptionally difficult to publish. Davis Journal of Legal Studies platforms and

empowers undergraduate research pertaining to law and legal studies. DJLS provides undergraduate students a community within which to learn important academic skills, meet new colleagues with similar interests, and appreciate the importance of undergraduate research and publication opportunities.

Davis Journal of Legal Studies provides an opportunity for students to publish their legal studies research, which is an opportunity that does not currently exist at any university in Central California. This encourages students to pursue the legal field, provides an experience that is valuable to students, and prepares students for their future academic and professional endeavors.

Davis Journal of Legal Studies will continue to work to advance the discourse surrounding legal concepts, institutions, and processes. The journal will also stimulate collaboration and create community, which is important both now and in the future. It is the goal of this organization to foster an interdisciplinary group of undergraduate legal scholars who use their own voices to highlight urgent issues in our society and take action to combat them through publication. Civic engagement is essential to being a well-rounded student and citizen, and DJLS hopes to promote civic engagement through both the scholarship published and the community built. Through these contributions, the journal and the students involved will work to advance civic engagement, both in themselves and in the public.

Davis Journal of Legal Studies prides itself on its identification as an “interdisciplinary” journal, so any student interested may contribute to the dialogue surrounding legal studies and undergraduate research. In terms of equity, DJLS is creating an opportunity for publication for undergraduate students, who do not typically have access to academic publication opportunities. In terms of inclusion, DJLS is grateful for the opportunity to join the small group of undergraduate legal studies

journals in America to allow students to explore their interest in law and legal studies.

The existence of the journal ensures the creation of more opportunities for undergraduate students, which leads to a more expansive and inclusive community of undergraduate scholars across the state and nation.

In May 2023, Volume III was published online. Consisting of 90 pages and 78 articles, it is furthering DJLS mission of empowering undergraduates and platforming legal research in an accessible manner. Copies of Volume III are now available to be checked out from UC Davis's Shields Library and read.

The Claire Sunhee Volkmann Award for Editorial Excellence, or abbreviated as the CSV Award, is in its second year. The CSV Award honors a member of the Davis Journal of Legal Studies editorial team who has shown a commitment to leadership and service in DJLS. The award is named after the inaugural recipient, Claire Volkmann (2020-2021 Editor, 2021-2022 Director of Internal Affairs) and will be awarded annually after the publication of a volume. Recipients receive a medallion with the Davis Journal of Legal Studies logo. It is important to support the volunteer excellence and community service of members of the editorial team. Paulina Villanueva received the CSV Award at the Volume III Publication Party, hosted on May 30, 2023.

Additionally, Davis Journal of Legal Studies was awarded the 2023 EXperiential Learning (EXL) Award by the UC Davis Center for Student Involvement. The award "recognizes a registered student organization that demonstrates co-curricular learning through discovery and exploration of cross-disciplinary interests in traditional and virtual spaces. In addition, [the organization] promotes extracurricular achievement and provides opportunities for students to explore new areas of interest and develops skills for future success within the academic year." This makes Davis Journal of Legal Studies an award-winning organization on UC Davis's campus.