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## **Uniting Student and Local Writers**

A Proposal for a Literary Magazine and Reading to Recognize Blacksburg Writers

Presented to:

The Virginia Tech Institute  
for Creativity, Arts, and  
Technology

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## **STATEMENT OF NEED**

The dynamic between college students and locals is crucial for a healthy environment. Both groups inevitably interact with each other on and around campus, at large public events such as football games and subsequent tailgates, and downtown while visiting local bars, restaurants, and boutiques. The students of Virginia Tech and Blacksburg residents coexist in a tense atmosphere. While students view certain events as critical college experiences, locals have grievances with the massive crowds drawn in by game days and herds of partygoers that inevitably meander along Main Street.

Virginia Tech greatly values its football tradition, with hundreds of fans pouring into Lane Stadium to greet the players with “Enter Sandman.” However, while students view events like game days as highlights of the semester, locals have grown tired of tailgating shenanigans. In the summer of 2022, the Blacksburg Town Council voted unanimously for legislation that would require Blacksburg residents to register any mass gatherings over 200 people at least 30 days in advance. The bustling crowd of Center Street easily surpasses this number. Blacksburg residents view the ordinance as a way to keep game day crowds safer and more manageable, but students see the decision as an attack against tailgating tradition. Over the weekends, Blacksburg residents must contend with students for comfortable seats at local bars and restaurants. Though local businesses greatly benefit from the student population, residents shouldn’t have to compete with the massive amount of students who flock downtown to celebrate the weekend.

As students, we are proposing a project that would unite both Blacksburg locals and Virginia Tech students in a creative, comfortable environment. We want to create a literary magazine that selects ten writers, five local writers and five student writers. The selected writers will be published in an online magazine and asked to perform a reading at the Blacksburg Library.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This project will be divided into two parts: the literary magazine and the reading. The literary magazine will be created and posted online. We decided to post the literary magazine in an online format to save money as well as be environmentally friendly. We want to provide fellow writers with the opportunity to publish their work and be financially compensated for their pieces. As writers ourselves, we know firsthand the tribulations of being recognized as creative writers and the difficulty of being paid for our work. Even when writers “win” competitions, only the top three winners are typically paid, with successively decreasing amounts. Paying writers equally will remove the tension of competition and help create a welcoming environment between the local and student writers. This monetary incentive will also encourage writers to submit their best work, enhancing the overall quality of the magazine.

Readings are an incredible facet for writers to present their pieces in front of a welcoming and appreciative audience. They're a way for writers to present their work to keen listeners without fear of judgment. Hosting a reading for both local and student writers would provide a healthy and creative way for the two groups to interact. It would also introduce attendees to the resources that the Blacksburg Library provides. Virginia Tech isn't going anywhere, and neither is Blacksburg. Instead of living in constant unease, the Blacksburg community should unite as a whole for their shared love of writing.

## **METHODS AND STRATEGIES**

In order to achieve the goal of bridging the gap between Virginia Tech students and residents of the Blacksburg community, we have come up with the following method that will be conducted to combat this problem.

- We will start off by creating a website for the literary magazine, which will include a mission statement and the submission form for local and student writers to submit their work. The decision to make it an online journal is to allow a place for accessibility in accepting submissions, as well as having the journal posted for anyone to view and learn more about.
- We will design and print 50 advertisements to call attention to the process of submission for the journal. They will be posted around Virginia Tech's campus, including the areas around Squires, Shanks Hall, and Newman Library, to attract interest from students. They will also be posted for local residents on poles and buildings around Downtown Blacksburg. The advertisements will mention that out of each group, five will be selected to publish and receive financial compensation.
- After the submission window closes, we will read through each one and decide on which ones we deem publishable for the journal. Once that decision is made, we will have the responsibility of sending a congratulatory response back to the selected writers on their acceptance.
- Once all 10 pieces have been verified for publication, our team will organize the website to feature each piece and a short biographical statement of the writers. This is a way to satisfy the demand of having their work on a platform.
- We will design an additional 50 advertisements to highlight the reading at the Blacksburg Library in the same areas mentioned above. We will then host a reading of each piece in the literary journal, which reiterates sharing a space between students and local residents in a positive way.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The outcome we hope to produce through this is uniting the two groups that have recently been subjected to more polarizing circumstances, in a way that can hopefully ignite a beneficial change in the relationship between the two.

The main project outputs include:

- Helping change the relationship between Blacksburg residents and students at Virginia Tech by adding a collaborative aspect to the literary magazine. The magazine will emphasize the goal of integrating students with locals through the shared interest for writing, which will hopefully produce a greater effect on their overall dynamic.
- Administering an event to publicize the respected works of students and Blacksburg residents at the local library to combine the talent of the creative works from the journal, and add a conversational component amongst these two groups to establish community.
- Compensating writers for their work gives support to those who are dedicated to the craft. Assisting writers with a monetary contribution is an effort to recognize writers in a way that is substantial to their investment in writing and publishing their work.

#### PROJECT TIMELINE

Project Step	Date
Create Website	October 29th - November 3rd
Confirm Venue	October 29th - November 3rd
Submission Portal Open	November 4th - December 1st
Review Submissions	December 2nd - December 31st
Contact Winners	January 1st - January 5th
Host Reading at Blacksburg Library	January 30th
Publish Magazine Online	January 31st

#### BUDGET

Overall, our project is not inherently expensive. As organizers and submission readers, we are volunteering our time. Other expenses, such as a website and advertising, are relatively cheap. We also plan to host the event the Blacksburg Library, which is a free venue. In order to encourage submissions, we intend to pay selected writers for their work.

##### *Advertisements*

Our project relies heavily on community participation, so advertising will be essential. We plan to do this through social media, such as Twitter and Instagram, as well as posting flyers throughout campus and Downtown Blacksburg, such as classroom buildings and local stores. We will design our graphics for free using Canva and print them at Newman Library. The cost of which is 75 cents per color page. We plan to print 100 flyers, which would cost \$75.

### *Website Domain*

To provide more information regarding submissions and the event, we will create a website. The website will be attached to our social media and appear as a QR code on the flyer. To establish legitimacy and professionalism, it is important that we purchase a domain name, which will be the title of the project. According to domains.google, it costs \$12 to register a website with a domain name.

### *Writer Compensation*

Other literary organizations in the Blacksburg area, including but not limited to *Silhouette* and *the minnesota review*, are wonderful opportunities for writers to share their work. However, these literary journals do not offer writers payment for their work. While this is no fault of the journals—they are non-profits or student-run, after all—our journal would be, to our knowledge, the first of its kind to pay students and Blacksburg residents for their work.

Currently, the only local literary event with a monetary award is the Giovanni-Steger Poetry Prize, which awards up to \$1,500. The recipients of this award are undergraduate students at Virginia Tech. Having received over 100 submissions in 2021, students have a low-risk, high-reward incentive to submit.

However, the monetary award from the Giovanni-Steger Poetry Prize is limited, as only three undergraduate students receive the award a year, despite honoring ten finalists. The award also decreases based on place: first place is awarded \$1,500, while third receives \$500. Our intention is to expand the opportunity for writers to receive a monetary award by paying the ten selected writers, five Blacksburg residents, and five Virginia Tech students. As the remaining funds are \$913, each writer will receive \$91.

### **BUDGET TABLE**

<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>COST</b>
Advertisements	\$75
Website domain name	\$12
Payment for writers	\$913 (\$91 per writer)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

### **PLAN FOR EVALUATING PROJECT SUCCESS**

To ensure our project progresses smoothly, we will continuously check in with our faculty advisor, Dr. Patel. Dr. Patel, an assistant professor in the Department of English, has extensive

experience in the literary world. She is the internship supervisor for the *Noemi Press* and the *minnesota review* internship programs and is an editor for *The Georgia Review*. We plan to meet with her weekly so she can review our progress and provide feedback. Due to her prior experience, her guidance will be essential to our project.

To measure our project's success, we will keep track of the number of submissions. As we will select ten submissions, five from Virginia Tech students and five from the Blacksburg community, we are reliant on participation from residents and the student body. It is our goal to receive fifty submissions in total. Not only is this sum an example of ample community participation, as is our main goal, but it also allows us to select the strongest submissions.

As we are establishing this event on the idea of uniting students and the local community, the reading is essential to the success of our project. We expect a turnout of twenty-five people, including the selected writers. If we are able to meet or surpass this goal, we will consider the project a success, as we were able to create a community space for residents and students alike.