

Innovation and Opportunity: *The Gold Star Journal* Story

In 1996, *The Gold Star Journal* (GSJ) was born from a simple desire to honor the intellectual and academic accomplishments of the South Carolina Corps of Cadets and The Citadel Graduate College, offering students the opportunity to publish their best work from any class or project. The founding editors were three sophomores: Bradley Moorner, '99, Joshua Jenkins, '99, and Christopher McFarland, '99. The number of submissions has grown from just a few at first to nearly 50 annually. The editors have also arranged a conference allowing authors to present their work to The Citadel community.

According to former editor and author Grant Miller, '18, working on the GSJ "forces you to reevaluate your own writing skill; you adopt a critical lens. Cross-disciplinary perspective is useful. This helped in a professional setting because often in my work at the DEA my work was fact-based and sequential. This crossover is the real appeal of the journal."

This year's 25th anniversary of the GSJ invites reflection upon its rise from an amateur student publication to the quality work it is today. "The first edition was a scramble to get done," said Josh Jenkins. "We had to advertise to cadets and faculty to encourage involvement. We likely published every article we received. Our first cover was hand-drawn. The font and margins show that we were new

to the editorial experience. Where the journal is today is so far advanced from what we accomplished."

Reflecting on the impact the *Journal* has had on his professional career, Tim Devine, the 2007 Regimental Commander and a three-year editor of the GSJ, observed, "I cannot underscore the value of my experience as both a GSJ editor and writer because it introduced me to the value of two essential elements in writing: clarity and distillation. Especially with the professional style of writing that I often produce, the author must tell a story that educates an audience, influences decision-making, or directs action. The GSJ rooted me with an appreciation for these seemingly mundane, yet essential elements to communicate effectively through prose."

What was important from the beginning was allowing the students' work to take center stage. Each paper is unique, and the authors are given prominence. In 2013, the visual arts became another focal point with the publication of many students' photographs. The GSJ continues to evolve through the determination and hard work of its editors and advisor. In recognition of innovation and creativity, the 2020 GSJ was honored with two Print Industry Graphic Awards: the Athens Paper Award Most Creative Use of Paper and the Special Judges' Award for Soft Cover Booklet.

The GSJ has benefited from the assistance of many Citadel personnel. From the beginning, Brig. Gen. R. Cliff Poole, '59, was an invaluable supporter of the journal's mission, securing Citadel funds to print the GSJ. Graphic Designers Kevin Metzger and John Whitten taught the editors how to use design software to lay out the publication. The assistance and support of many faculty, staff and alumni have enabled the GSJ to thrive into modernity.

To honor the 20th anniversary, GSJ staff developed what has since become *The Gold Star Journal* Academic Conference. Held annually around Corps Day, the conference has transitioned the GSJ from an academic publication to a leadership and personal growth opportunity. Authors present their work to the college community, including the President, Provost, and Commandant. The editors enhance their leadership skills by planning, managing and officiating the conference.

"I learned to edit papers, work in a team, develop and advertise a product," said author and editor Miguel Parrado, '16. "I am a Navy JAG now. Whether I am working on motions for court or legal arguments, it is often a collaborative effort. Having to find the proper word or right turn of phrase is something I experience every day. This type of work is similar to my experience as a GSJ editor."

At its core, the GSJ inspires students to succeed academically and share their work with the greater Citadel community. The GSJ is The Citadel's sole tangible, academically focused publication that allows students to take ownership of their intellectual work.

The 2021 GSJ marked the 25th anniversary edition and the most successful conference in its history, featuring some of the greatest submissions, photographs and essays. As The Citadel's academic standards continue to rise, the GSJ's future looks brighter than ever. To read all editions or hear past lectures, please visit citadel.edu/root/goldstar.

To support *The Gold Star Journal* with a gift, please visit foundation.citadel.edu/GSJ.

