

Project Narrative

When I first started college, I started with no knowledge of what I wanted to do with my life. I only knew that it had to encompass science in some capacity. At first, I was a pre-dental student; I was following this track because it was all I knew that could give me a decent standard of living. My first year was a stressful time and I spent a lot of it trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. Ultimately, I decided to pursue science head on, something I was always passionate about but unsure as to how to even get started. It was this confusing first year that really served as the motivation for the project I created during my time as a Latham fellow.

With my project, I wanted to reach as many people as possible, to increase interest in STEM, and have my work be something that could be publicly broadcasted and published with permanence. So, to do this, I interviewed my fellow undergraduate researchers to get their thoughts on research as an undergraduate, how they got involved, their passions, and how to make the most of their undergraduate career. I filmed these interviews, edited them down, and uploaded them to YouTube and, now Synthesis, where they can be seen by anyone with an internet connection and where they will perpetually remain.

When editing these videos, I curated them to be fit for an audience of 12 to 18-year-olds, the typical middle to high school aged student. I picked this audience because when I was around this age, I vaguely knew what I wanted to do with my life, but I did not know the means of pursuing those dreams. Thus, my life took a detour which involved me pursuing goals I was not passionate about for a while. It wasn't until I found my way to the sciences that I felt truly on track with my life.

When I interviewed my friends, I asked them about various topics ranging from their research and how they got involved in it all the way to their life as an undergraduate and where they plan on going to next. During these interviews, Hector and Josie (my interview subjects), would walk me through their lab. They showed me the equipment they used, the facilities, and what they were working on that specific day. This mode of engagement made the interviews seem more personal and more like a day in the life rather than them just sitting and staring at a camera the whole time. I took the interactions I had during the interview back to my computer, edited them down to the most important clips that could be digested by my target audience, and uploaded them to YouTube. I left some clips in, even though I think they are more difficult for the average teenager to understand. I explained those clips in depth in post-production.

Once all my videos were uploaded to YouTube, I then partnered with Victoria Fernandez at the Iowa City Public Library, where I presented the videos to teenagers in the

designed Teen Space (Fig. 1). At this event, there were about ten students in attendance, but only five filled out the survey. In this survey, 60% of the students responded 'very likely' when asked if they would recommend the videos to a friend (Fig. 2). Additionally, I presented *Josie's Undergraduate Life as a Scientist* with the Iowa City Booster Club for an Earth Day presentation, however, the content shown was perhaps a little too difficult for the audience present at this event and thus I decided on not having the survey out and most participants did not own any electronic devices.

Going forward, I would like to continue these types of videos well into the future. Fortunately, I will be attending Indiana University in the fall of 2023 where I will be pursuing my academic career as a PhD student in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior. For the five years (give or take) I will be surrounded by plenty of amazing scientists, my career as a scientist will continue and thus, I will have plenty of content to film as long as I have the time to pursue these projects as I'll be primarily focusing on my PhD work.

Overall, I am immensely grateful to have participated in the Latham program. The people I met along the way have made it fruitful, and I have learned many valuable lessons. One primary lesson that I learned is to never doubt the amount of time and effort that creative work takes to get to the final product. I learned this throughout my time editing my videos as they took a large chunk of my time to complete in a way that satisfied me and fulfilled the criteria that would fit my target audience.



Figure 1. Students in the Teen Space at the Iowa City Public Library watching *The Undergraduate Life of Hector*.

How likely would you recommend the videos to a friend?

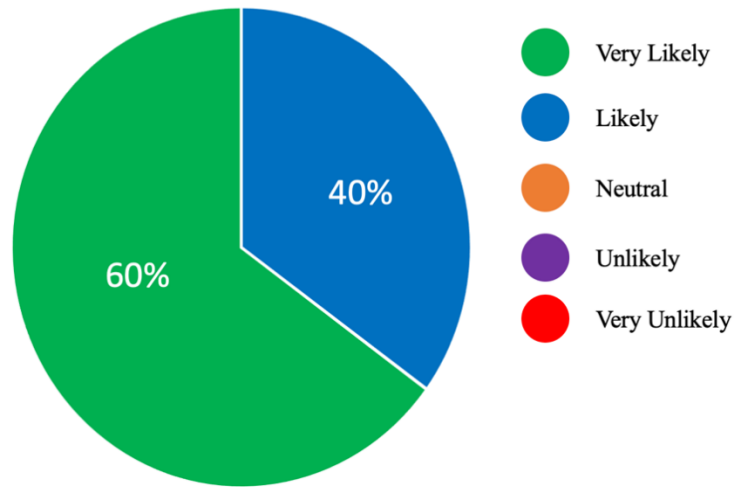


Figure 2. Pie chart displaying the percentage of students that would recommend the two videos to a friend. N = 5.