The zen of learning laboratory physics through writing and the art of peer review

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The zen of learning laboratory physics through writing and the art of peer review
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Why write?
Communication is a critically important scientific activity. When we, as scientists, write, we synthesize information into a coherent physical description. Our understanding of what we have done in an investigation is solidified through the process of endeavoring to write for ourselves and also for our peers.

Communication skills are also highly valued for all career paths. Physics graduates need to be able to communicate technical information clearly and concisely for future success!

For writing to be most useful to the author, it is necessary that the author write about something in which they are invested.

For students, peer review can be very helpful in defining a proper audience for writing. Unfortunately, we often have small advanced laboratory classes and so blind peer review can be challenging.

Advanced Laboratory and JAUPLI – Journal of the Advanced Undergraduate Physics Laboratory Investigation
http://opus.ipfw.edu/jaupli/

JAUPLI is an online journal as an educational tool. It is intended that students write about their advanced laboratory projects. These papers are reviewed by their peers at other institutions.

We ran trials of JAUPLI in the Spring 2011, Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters. These trials included ~70 students from six different universities. At the close, we had an anonymous survey of the students (35 respondents).

Peers Review
The process of peer review for scientific writing serves many purposes: forming a community of scholars, checking scientific accuracy and interest to community, and enforcing an audience on the author.

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For more information contact Mark Masters at masters@ipfw.edu