Ideas on how to help students write a research paper, submit it, and present it to a conference:

1. Require students to present

* Will help them think about how to describe their work; this will be critical to “telling their story” in the paper
* Will raise questions that will provide an opportunity (pre-review) to fill in holes
* Prepare tables and figures that will often belong in the final paper

Continuously write background

* Students should read, read, read at the beginning of the project
* Every paper should be meticulously recorded as a reference
* One to three paragraphs (generally depending on relevance) summarizing the paper – this become the background
* Provide them with review forms that are used to review papers for journals most relevant to their work

Pick an appropriate venue for submission

* Doesn’t need to be an undergraduate-specific conference
* Has an appropriate deadline (e.g. close to end of semester or end of summer)
* Good fit – especially important for undergraduates, who will likely face stiff competition – an excellent fit for a conference can boost the probability of being accepted
* Submission is an extended abstract – this allows incremental writing, can extend the range of an appropriate deadline, and generally provides fast turn-around on acceptance or rejection

Be very proactive

* Especially at the beginning students will be very tentative
* Must have quick turnaround on your end, as undergraduates will likely face resistance to writing – don’t give them any excuses to not write
* Provide a list of references on materials that give specifics on how to write a technical/research paper

Paper Accepted

* Incorporate reviewer feedback
* If paper was accepted as a poster or presentation, prepare additional materials.
* Plan travel—much better if students can attend

Paper Rejected

* Discuss with student another submission—student may no longer be in your lab
* Incorporate reviewer feedback
* Identify new venue based on same criteria as before
* Resubmit

Encourage a good balance of writing, reading and experimenting:



* While undergraduates will rarely be on a project as long as graduate students, with proper preparation and nurturing, they can generate significant results in 8 to 16 weeks
* Be prepared to learn—the first time is always a challenge, but it does get easier
* Publishing and presenting can be significant motivators; let them run