Why Disseminate Research?

MARY FRIEND SHEPARD: You might be asking yourself why in the world should I publish and why should I get my ideas out there. But if you have a PhD and you are what we call now the steward of the discipline, you have an obligation to publish. You know this isn't something that's choice for you. We truly expect you to get your ideas out in the field and to put them out so people can critique them, so they can ask you questions, so you can grow, so that you are effecting change in your field. And if you're not willing to put your ideas out there, you're cheating the profession and you're cheating yourself. And you're not growing because as a PhD, we really expect you to preserve the ideas of your field and your profession and it means you need to know the research and the theory and the work that's being done there and glean what's worthy of carrying forward and continuing to work with. But you have another responsibility, and that is to create new knowledge and then to disseminate new knowledge. Those are the three jobs of the PhD. And so if you're not publishing, you might be creating new knowledge and sitting on it and that's a waste. And so we really want to encourage you to be willing to get it out there. And you're going to be scared at first because you're going to think – whew, if I get my ideas out there, what if somebody hates them, what if people don't like what I write. But I have to truthfully tell you, people don't treat your ideas that way. They get excited that you were willing to take the risk and the you put something. And they're going to find what's good about it and dialog with you and you'll grow, and then you'll be able to contribute more knowledge. So, getting one publication breeds the second which breeds the third. And before you know it, you are contributing to your field and you have knowledge and a knowledge base and a name that other people are citing and that other people are looking for. And that is good for you and it's good for your area. So, publish!

GARY BURKHOLDER: It's very important for us to publish as part of what we're doing in the discipline. We spend a lot of time doing research and we research very important topics in a large number of areas and the only way that that really ever gets out to the larger research community is for it to get published in peer-reviewed journals. There are other ways to disseminate research. We can provide the results of research into our companies, the places we work. But it's a little bit different when you're speaking to other scholar practitioners out in the broader community who look to peer-reviewed journals to be able to validate and support the work that they're doing. And there's something about research being peer-reviewed that makes it really, really important. It means that there's a number of scholars, colleagues in your discipline who have looked at that research article and have deemed that the contribution that it's making is significant and that it's worthy science. And to have that distinction and credibility first of all in terms of having your name out there as a published author is important but also it really does add to what we know in the discipline about that particular topic. And I tell students all the time that they spend a lot of time writing the dissertation and a large percentage of those dissertations never get published. So, what happens is a lot of people don't see them, people that really should see that research will never see it. And so I think it is extremely important for students. And I try to encourage my students to publish and also present at any opportunity that they can.

MONA HANANIA: I think it's very worthwhile to publish because I think it gives you the opportunity to be involved in your field, it's very important for your CV and for your professional reputation and it absolutely adds new knowledge to the literature.

GARY BURKHOLDER: Getting published and presenting at conferences were important for my career for a couple of reasons. One of them is the publishing really got me interested and exciting in academic writing. And then the second part of that is it, I think there was something about being able to take the work that I was doing and putting it out there to scholars. And I was just a graduate student at the time.
But being able to put that out there where other PhD's and researchers were reading my work, I just found that really exciting. And I think it really does provide some credibility for the work that I do now.

PATRICIA NEAL: It is probably the number one regret of my life that I didn’t take the time right after I was finished to write the papers and get them published because I did good work and I should have been able to share it.

PATRICIA NEAL: My advice to any student that’s going through the process – think about the amount of work you’ve put into this. Think about Walden’s goal of social change. And think about how bad it would be, how – what a waste it would be if all of that good work just sat on a coffee table somewhere instead of being in the hands of people who would read it, learn from it, and it would build on the body of knowledge. So, whatever you do, no matter what’s happening in your life, you definitely, definitely, definitely should publish from your dissertation.