



Letter from the Editors

Taylor Sarah Ginieczki* (Political Science and Global Studies), Jay Taylor** (Linguistics and Computer Science), Kyla Schmitt*** (Environmental Science and Humanities)

TAYLOR SARAH GINIECZKI—LOOKING BACKWARD: A YEAR IN (PEER) REVIEW

In more ways than one, our 2021–2022 school year set major records. In the fall, the most students to ever attend the UO matriculated as Ducks. In the spring, Eugene received so much rain that April was the 7th-wettest ever recorded (I never said that every new record was a good one). Best of all, in the summer, OURJ received more submissions for this Summer 2022 Issue than ever before — nearly tripled from our previous issue just six months prior — and now publishes 10 of them, the most articles we have ever published in an issue.

Yet OURJ's new records can be attributed to far more than just good luck. Rather, they have been brought about with extraordinary efforts from the OURJ team — from our student peer editors and outreach coordinator to the UO faculty, librarians, and administrators who support us. Frequent meetings in the DREAM Lab resulted in OURJ re-establishing relationships with other student research groups, including the Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS) and the Affiliated Students for Undergraduate Research and Engagement (ASURE); expanding our student team by threefold; and co-hosting a national conference with the National Undergraduate Consortium on Science Journalism (NUCSJ). Editors worked tirelessly on manuscripts while abroad in countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Switzerland, Ireland, and France. And for the first time, every member of our team is compensated for their work, thanks to the advocacy of OURJ leadership and the generosity of the UO Libraries.

Having graduated from the UO this past spring, I now hand off the journal to Jay and Kyla for the coming

*Taylor Sarah Ginieczki earned her BA in political science and global studies in June 2022, graduating from the UO Summa Cum Laude. Her undergraduate projects included co-authoring a paper on IR realist theory with Dr. Craig Parsons of the UO PS department, co-organizing the 2022 National Undergraduate Conference on Scientific Journalism, and writing an award-winning political science honors thesis on Sino-American nuclear relations. While Taylor specialized in international relations, she also studied Spanish, French, and the digital humanities, and she aspires toward a career at the intersection of research, digital scholarship, communications, and publishing. Her roles with OURJ included being an author, editor, and Editor-in-Chief, and she led the journal from summer 2021 through summer 2022.

**Jay Taylor is a junior at UO majoring in linguistics and computer science and minoring in Spanish and Korean. They have served as the Financial Coordinator for the University of Oregon LGBTQA3 office and co-president of the UO Model United Nations club. They recently discovered a strong interest in research and presented on the topic of mental health in South Korea at the 2020 Oregon Undergraduate Research Symposium. They are passionate about learning new languages and teaching, and they hope to make the world a better place through education for all ages and individuals, regardless of background. In their downtime, they enjoy video games, hiking, and playing board games with friends.

***Kyla Schmitt is a second-year Clark Honors College student majoring in environmental science and humanities and minoring in English and economics. In addition to working with OURJ, Kyla is a peer mentor with Affiliated Students for Undergraduate Research and Engagement, the treasurer of the UO Society of Ecological Restoration, and a research assistant at the Ocean and Ice Lab. Last spring, Kyla received the FYRE grant to fund her independent research, which focuses on characterizing signal crayfish populations in Tryon Creek. Beyond academics, Kyla loves hiking and exploring, curating her dozens of Spotify playlists, working out, and caring for her houseplants.



year. I leave OURJ in incredibly capable hands, and I very much look forward to seeing them put their coordinated brilliance into action, now with the platform to truly do so. It is with joy and faith in this amazing team that I introduce this issue of OURJ and welcome their new leadership, and I eagerly look ahead to what records OURJ will break next.

JAY TAYLOR AND KYLA SCHMITT—LOOKING FORWARD: THE FUTURE OF OURJ

It would be improper to discuss our plans for the future without acknowledging the efforts it took to get to this point. After COVID-19 hit, OURJ's editorial capacity declined substantially, leaving the journal with only three students on the editorial team as of winter 2022. Taylor's tireless work to rebuild OURJ—from recruiting editors to tackling every bump in the publication process—has provided us a stable foundation from which to grow going forward. While Taylor's fantastic contributions will be sorely missed, we know her work will be best commemorated in the continuing success and growth of OURJ.

As the number of submissions we receive has steadily increased, so has the number of staff needed to keep the publication cycle running smoothly. OURJ has come to a crossroads: we want to continue receiving more submissions while lacking the organizational structure to support this growth. To address this, we are taking several steps to streamline OURJ processes at an individual and organizational level. Internally, we will improve the editorial onboarding process, streamline the content and copy-editing processes, and find new ways to connect with researchers on campus. Externally, we will increase the accessibility of our stylistic standards and submission guidelines; demonstrate greater involvement on campus through workshops, conferences, and events; and adhere to more regular and predictable publication cycles. We hope that by strengthening the foundations of OURJ, the journal may better serve the ever-growing undergraduate research community at the UO.

Going forward, we are excited to see OURJ reach maturity as a peer-reviewed publication and thrilled to be a part of its development. With two acting Editor-in-Chiefs, we can continue publishing accessible, high-quality research while securing the future of OURJ as the flagship undergraduate journal of the University of Oregon. Our current editorial team of strong-willed, talented individuals allows us to boldly take on new challenges, and we are confident that our capacity to do so will only grow. We thank you for your engagement thus far and invite you to stay involved with OURJ throughout the 2022–2023 academic year and beyond.