



## Letter from the Editors

Kyla Schmitt, Jay Taylor

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to Volume 21, Issue 2 of the Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal (OURJ). This issue—comprised of a cohort of pieces collected between the Winter and Spring Terms of 2023—has been a long time coming, and it boasts a strong collection of art, scholarship, and research that we are elated to share with the University of Oregon community. Serving as both a snapshot of the previous winter and a tone-setter for the coming fall, the present issue stands as a testament to the hard work of OURJ’s editors and collaborators in 2023 while also marking a turning point for the journal in the year to come.

2023 was a year of immense growth for OURJ, both in terms of our editorial team and our on-campus relationships. Our editorial board—peaking in size at a record-setting seven student members on payroll this year—represented diverse academic disciplines, from linguistics to environmental science, cultural anthropology to data science, biochemistry to political science. Beginning in Spring 2023, five of those student editors bid OURJ farewell, many of them freshly graduated from the University and ready to enter into the professional world with their bachelor’s degrees and editorial know-how. We thank them for their time and energy, and we wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

For those of us that remain, we have a critical task ahead of us: we must decide how we want to shape the culture and direction of OURJ with an entirely fresh team of editorial talent—which parts of the organization to carry on, and which to reimagine—in the 2023–2024 academic year. Thanks to the efforts of Lanch McCormick, Kevin Hatfield, Franny Gaede, and other faculty members who have helped make OURJ what it is today, however, we feel that the journal is in good hands as we look to chart this course.

With financial support from the Center for Undergraduate Research and Engagement, we have made advancements toward issuing OURJ’s first-ever scholarship, the Ginieczki Scholarship—named in honor of our most recent editor-in-chief emeritus—to reward particularly strong, innovative, and meritorious undergraduate submissions. Under UO Libraries, we have worked to secure year-after-year funding for the editorial staff to ensure that the journal endures. In collaboration with the McNair Scholars Program, we have assembled a first-of-its-kind special issue—shortly forthcoming—showcasing the research of first-generation and underrepresented college students. Alongside the Office of Academic Advising, we will present at College Block this September, advertising editor, author, and scholarship opportunities to the hundreds of students that attend the fair each year. And to cap off the year, we will work for a second year in a row to further facilitate research advancement opportunities at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in May.

We are excited to see what other developments and opportunities unfold in the 2023–2024 academic year. We hope that many of you—whether as staffers, authors, collaborators, or readers—will join along for the ride. In the meantime, however, we are honored to present this summer volume of OURJ.

Warm regards,

Kyla Schmitt and Jay Taylor, Editors-in-Chief