



Letter from the Editors: “What is a Special Issue?”

Kyla Schmitt,* Jay Taylor**

The returning reader may identify that there is something a little different about this issue of OURJ. As a journal and as an organization, we continually strive to increase OURJ’s interconnectedness with the various research-focused groups and institutions we share our spaces with on campus. This year, in partnership with the University of Oregon’s McNair Scholars Program, we mint the McNair Special Issue, functioning to strengthen OURJ’s role as a research facilitator on campus and deliver on our mission to serve the University of Oregon’s undergraduate community through tailored publication opportunities for underrepresented groups of scholars.

As we begin this new academic year, this inaugural Special Issue highlights the capstone research projects of members of the McNair Scholars cohort of 2023, whose pursuits span psychology, physics, cinema studies, and anthropology. McNair Scholars are first-generation and traditionally underrepresented college students seeking doctoral degrees in diverse areas of study. Through publishing with OURJ, they gain valuable experience and resume material, able to enter the next chapter of their academic careers with a publication (or two) already under their belts.

We are excited and honored to share in this Special Issue a selection of research and art crafted by four recently graduated McNair Scholars. We are grateful to have been a part of their scholarly development process, and we look forward to this new era of partnership between OURJ and the wonderful organizations—of which the McNair Scholars program is one—supporting undergraduate research on campus.

We hope that you enjoy this inaugural McNair Special Issue!

**Kyla Schmitt, Editor-in-Chief (Publications), is a rising junior majoring in Environmental Science and Humanities and minoring in English and Economics while pursuing a degree from the Clark Honors College. Kyla’s academic interests include wildlife ecology, contemporary history, rhetorical writing, and behavioral economics. Her latest publication sought to characterize the health, behavior, and habitat preferences of Tryon Creek’s native signal crayfish population. Beyond the classroom, Kyla coaches high-school forensics and competes in collegiate forensics, conducts field research with the Tryon Creek Watershed Council and the Sutherland Lab, and spends plenty of time outdoors.*

***Jay Taylor, Editor-in-Chief (Outreach Coordinator), is a senior at the UO majoring in Linguistics. They have served as the Financial Coordinator for the University of Oregon LGBTQA3 office and co-president of the UO Model United Nations club and now help lead the Board and Card Gamer’s Association for Maximum Nerderly (BACGAMN). Jay discovered a strong interest in research when they presented on the topic of mental health in South Korea at the 2020 Oregon Undergraduate Research Symposium. Currently, their research examines autism in a new, non-clinical context. 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.*