

Dear reader,

MURAJ holds a special place on our campus - not only is it an important showcase of hundreds of hours of work researching and reviewing, it also demonstrates a fundamental love of our community. Just a year ago, I had never even heard about our undergraduate research journal, let alone thought that I could help us publish 25 different manuscripts written by UMN students. Now that I am deeply involved in this community, I see that MURAJ's success is only possible due to the incredible work of our authors, reviewers, and faculty.

However, our journal is much more than just a collection of unconnected research projects. This journal is a culmination of the individual merit of nearly a hundred people with different perspectives and important messages that they want to pass along to the rest of the world. Only MURAJ could put together four issues with entirely different themes while showcasing the strength and intellectual power of students on our campus. Our papers this year tackle a diverse set of questions and movements, from the Black Lives Matter movement to environmental sustainability to analyzing economic growth, yet the authors only share the common factor of location. That is our strength. Few other journals could display this diversity in such a fashion, and I am so proud to have been involved with all of the students and authors who made this happen. I take no credit for what is being published. It is the intellectual and emotional product of our students' journeys, and if this is what they can achieve as undergraduates, I have no doubt that our next generation will be the best there ever is.

I, along with my peers, have felt the pressures of a virtual semester where the world around us is in turmoil. I have seen my fellow students speak out against the police force that cannot protect us, and I have seen them propose new and interesting ways to solve lesser-known yet important scientific problems. I personally want to help move science away from a method to exploit the environment into a way to support and work with the Earth's natural processes. In this issue, I see other students proposing new science that changes their field for the better, and I am proud of what they have accomplished

What I find most with our papers is that there is no issue too big or too small. These authors have tackled everything with a passion for contributing to our community in the way they best can. That is the true strength of our interdisciplinary journal: our manuscripts are not all formatted or made the same. We have the unique benefit of lacking the rigidity and narrowness of traditional research. I am proud to present our second issue of four, and I hope that our readers can appreciate the true depth and breadth of our research community that our students so wonderfully highlight. Thank you all for reading, and I hope that you can grow along with our student authors and reviewers.

Sincerely,

Katerina Graf
Editor-in-Chief