

Dear Reader,

I am honored to share with you the five manuscripts in Volume 4, Issue 6 of the Minnesota Undergraduate Research and Academic Journal. I hope that you find the work of these authors captivating, thought-provoking, and thorough. Our authors have undergone a vigorous review of their respective manuscripts and have worked diligently to contribute to the work of their disciplines. These authors have subjected themselves to an extraordinary task in their undergraduate education while also continuing to participate in classes, be members of the university community, and work through publication during a global pandemic. The skill, grace, and hard work that these authors have demonstrated this year is a testament to the university's commitment to research and excellence.

This issue speaks volumes to MURAJ's ability to share research across a range of fields while retaining high merit and value in their respective disciplines. Our interdisciplinary team of reviewers for these manuscripts dedicated their precious time and extensive knowledge to provide expeletory feedback and recommendations that contributed to the excellence found in these manuscripts. Our editorial team at MURAJ remains firmly committed to our values of academic rigor, professionalism, and intellectual merit, and we have the privilege of continuing to work to publish the outstanding work of undergraduate researchers.

I believe that undergraduate students are the lifeblood of the University of Minnesota, and they constantly work to stretch the bounds of research at this institution. During the global COVID-19 pandemic, I am proud to be a part of a university of students that have remained steadfast in their studies; diligent toward their service to their friends, family, and many communities; and have questioned the institutions and the world around them. I believe that the University of Minnesota is an institution that creates critically-thinking students with extensive creativity and an expectation of better for the world and our home. I am grateful to the many authors, reviewers, and the university faculty and staff for their commitment to sharing undergraduate research and promoting the exchange of ideas at our university while faced with so many obstacles, moments of distrust, and dismal times.

I would like to extend profound praise and thanks to this year's outgoing editorial board members Katerina Graf, Abigail Spoden, and Alexa Carlson for their dedication and service to this journal. They, along with past board members, have worked tirelessly in dedication to the development of this journal and maintaining the highest distinction for years to come. I am deeply honored to have another year to serve the MURAJ community and to further grow the breadth and depth of our work on campus through MURAJ: In Focus, MURAJ: In Action, and our annual publications. I hope you stay connected to the work of MURAJ and enjoy this issue.

Sincerely,

Allison L. Graper
Managing Editor & Treasurer