

Dear Reader,

It is my honor to present the five manuscripts in Volume 4, Issue 8 of the Minnesota Undergraduate Research & Academic Journal. While facing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of civil rights movements throughout the Twin Cities, our authors put forth an incredible effort in the pursuit of knowledge. This publishing year, MURAJ received a record amount of submissions, demonstrating the dedication and passion of the undergraduate research community at the University of Minnesota. In a departure from previous years, MURAJ published our annual issue in a series of sections due to the quality and quantity of submissions.

As Media Editor, I have the privilege of formatting each accepted manuscript before publication and working with our authors and reviewers to ensure they take pride in their final product. The patience and perseverance our authors displayed throughout the entire review and formatting process never ceased to astound me. Each author committed a substantial effort towards revising and editing their manuscripts during rigorous review rounds to ensure their final product furthered their field. The papers in Issue 8 investigate topics ranging from the psychological effects of COVID-19, psychotic disorders, and housing and employment barriers. From reading and formatting their manuscripts, it is clear these authors approached their projects with the intent to create meaningful and community-relevant bodies of work.

Of course, this year's series of publications would not be possible without the strong support of both our team of student reviewers and the entire Editorial Board. Each person involved with MURAJ displayed incredible dedication to sharing and supporting the academic work of our undergraduate students. Our interdisciplinary team of student reviewers dedicated countless hours to training, reading, and reviewing, allowing MURAJ to put forth a quality publication. Additionally, our Editorial Board has shown a tremendous commitment to both the journal and the research community as a whole through the development of several new initiatives to encourage students to share their work. Overall, everyone involved in MURAJ, including reviewers, authors, editorial board members, and our faculty support, has shown incredible resilience throughout the year. I commend each MURAJ member on their great dedication to furthering undergraduate research at the University of Minnesota.

While I am leaving my position with MURAJ, I am confident I am leaving behind a strong, important organization with great potential for continued growth in its role at the University of Minnesota. From developing a new grant program, MURAJ: In Action, to creating new avenues for undergraduate artist involvement through journal covers, MURAJ continues to find new opportunities to support and celebrate undergraduates at the University of Minnesota. Again, I would like to thank each member of MURAJ during 2020-2021, particularly my fellow board members, for their resiliency and dedication to the journal. Please enjoy the five insightful articles included in Volume 4, Issue 8 of the Minnesota Undergraduate Research & Academic Journal.

Sincerely,

Abigail M. Spoden
Media Editor