



Letter from the Editor

Taylor Sarah Ginieczki*, Political Science and Global Studies

Dear Readers,

As I reflect on my last year at the University of Oregon, it is clear that last fall brought us more than a return to in-person education. It also brought us the next chapter of the pandemic, one of learning how to integrate our day-to-day campus interactions into our lives as college students. If my roommate tested positive for COVID, do I go to class? If my roommate's professor's dog licked someone who tested positive for COVID, do I quarantine for five days or two weeks? If someone coughs on campus and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

Digs at our collective pandemic fatigue aside, at OURJ, we have likewise continued to ask big questions of ourselves and each other as we approach the end of this school year. Yet six consecutive terms online with minimal opportunities to advertise — as well as the graduation of two established editors, the departure of two others, and the promotion of a third (myself) — left us with two cohorts of UO students who had never stepped foot on campus, let alone heard of OURJ. Our very small team has had some very big work cut out for us, revolving around a sobering question indeed: How can we ensure the journal's survival? Even further, OURJ does not exist in a vacuum; our organizational reckoning is taking place in parallel with a uniquely alarming point in human history, one characterized by an absolute loss of public faith in the scientific method itself. Facts and evidence are now debated as opinions once were, and the problem today has arguably become less who will do the research and more who will *believe* it.

It is in this climate of extreme uncertainty, underlined by the global public health crisis and existential threats to our planet's future, that we find ourselves situated. Yet it is returning to our roots — in *accessibility* and *interdisciplinarity* at OURJ, in *compassion* and *rigor* as citizens and scientists, and in *environmental justice* as climate crisis organizers — that we find ourselves at all. The challenges that OURJ faces ahead at our microclimate of a college campus — reconnecting to our broader community, making knowledge accessible across disciplines and backgrounds, advocating for meaningful engagement with research, and more — will lead us to solutions that are more-than-translatable to the real world. If (at least part of) the purpose of college is prepare students for this so-called real world, then we are well on our way, and I have total faith in the OURJ team to do all that is necessary. This issue would not have come together without Jay's proactivity and grit, Kyla's sharp attention to detail, nor Sarah's thoughtful and balanced perspective. Micah, thank you for your years with us, and Nicole, welcome to the team! And to Franny and Kevin: thank you for all you have done to bridge OURJ to the greater university and to support me as a student leader.

On behalf of the entire editorial board, I am elated to introduce this 20th issue of the *Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal*.

*Taylor is a senior at the University of Oregon, where she is completing degrees in political science and global studies after transferring from Swarthmore College. She is a research assistant with the Political Science Department, a Wayne Morse Scholar, and a poetry editor and Deputy Editor-in-Chief for the student arts journal *Unbound*. Taylor is currently co-authoring a paper on IR realist theory with Dr. Craig Parsons of the UO PS department, and her recent projects have included a national conference on science journalism (NUCSJ) and a publication on Yugoslav ethnonationalist conflict. Her research interests revolve around topics in international relations, including IR theory, nuclear issues, political culture, and ethnonationalism. Please direct correspondence to tginiecz@uoregon.edu.