



Letter from the Editors

Kyla Schmitt* and Jay Taylor**

Welcome to Volume 21, Issue 1 of the Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal (OURJ)! As always, we are thrilled to share the enclosed works of art, scholarship, and research that authors and editors alike have worked hard to hone and bring to publication. This winter, we are also delighted to report the progress that OURJ has made as an academic journal and as a student-run campus entity.

Since Fall 2022, the Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal has undergone a number of transformative changes both as a publication and as an organization. We have modernized the look, feel, and content of our publication while expanding our presence on campus as representatives for undergraduate research. As co-editors-in-chief, we have taken advantage of our new dual leadership structure to specialize in our respective domains—Kyla Schmitt in publications, Jay Taylor in outreach—to grow the journal multidimensionally over the past two terms.

Publications, for one, have a new look: we have made the long-overdue commitment to modernizing the format of OURJ issues, embracing a more contemporary journalistic style, adopting a dual-column layout, and integrating the UO's official marketing font set, among other, more subtle, changes. We have also transformed the editorial process, resulting in quicker turnaround times for publications, straightforward but thoughtful engagement with manuscript edits for both authors and editors, and streamlined rounds of copy-editing.

Additionally, OURJ is proud to have grown its on-campus presence, participating in resource fairs and other on-campus events, offering weekly open-access office hours with both editors-in-chief, and collaborating with other closely aligned on-campus research institutions. In tandem with Affiliated Students for Undergraduate Research and Engagement, the Center for Undergraduate Research and Engagement, and the Undergraduate Research Symposium, we can support undergraduate researchers as they develop and grow into fledging academics. The Undergraduate Research Symposium in May presents an exciting opportunity for students to showcase their research; we hope to make that research as accessible as possible via undergraduate publishing.

Of course, none of this could have been possible without the editors-in-chief and staffers who came before us, laying a firm groundwork from which to further build out the journal. We would like to take a moment to recognize their efforts, and another to recognize those of our current editorial staff, who always have a helpful suggestion or insight to posit as OURJ continues to evolve. We are grateful further for the support of UO faculty in helping us to secure continued funding for editors and for projects. Finally, we are grateful to you, the reader, for supporting undergraduate research publication. We are proud to have your readership and to introduce to you the Winter 2023 issue of OURJ!

**Kyla Schmitt is a second-year Clark Honors College student majoring in environmental science and humanities and minoring in English and economics. In addition to working with OURJ, Kyla is also a peer mentor with Affiliated Students for Undergraduate Research and Engagement (ASURE), treasurer of the UO Society for Ecological Restoration, and member of the Ocean and Ice Lab. Beyond the UO, Kyla conducts ecological research on crayfish and their habitats and head-coaches two secondary-school speech and debate teams. Outside of work, Kyla loves hiking and exploring, taking and editing photographs, curating dozens of Spotify playlists, and collecting houseplants.*

***Jay Taylor is a senior at UO majoring in linguistics and computer science. 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.*