

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to share with you Volume 7, Issue 2 of the Minnesota Undergraduate Research and Academic Journal. This year, we present the hard work of our authors who come from a wide breadth of backgrounds and disciplines. Our authors held themselves to the highest academic standards to produce novel research and contribute to their fields of study. We also commend our reviewers for their dedication and insights, which made this volume possible. The final product is the culmination of months of intense dedication from over 100 University of Minnesota students throughout the MURAJ team, and represents some of the best work conducted across the University of Minnesota campuses.

In such uncertain times, we are proud to support young researchers and scientists in their pursuit of academics and novel research. Our In-Action grant supported the research of two University of Minnesota students, and we showcase the work of previous In-Action grantees. We hope to continue our mission of diversity, inclusion, and academic excellence in future years, encouraging students from underrepresented fields and backgrounds to join in our mission.

Lastly, this issue was made possible by the support of our faculty advisor Dr. Victoria Munro. Without Vicky's continual guidance and support throughout this year, this endeavor truly would not have been possible. We also thank the University of Minnesota and Publishing Librarian Kate Sheridan, who guided us through the ups and downs of managing an entirely student-run journal. Additionally, we thank Dr. Dunja Antunovic, Dr. Bonnie Klimes-Dougan, Dr. Joshua Feinberg, Dr. Victoria Munro, and Bridget Bergin for serving as faculty readers. We also express our greatest appreciation for our students reviewers and cover artist, Boyu Wen, for making this issue possible.

We are honored to have served on the MURAJ Editorial Board, and hope that MURAJ's continued presence on the University of Minnesota campus can provide hope and inspiration to the future of academic research. We encourage everyone to explore the various avenues to get involved in MURAJ, whether that be as a reviewer, author, board member, or In-Focus writer at our website, [z.umn.edu/MURAJ](http://z.umn.edu/MURAJ).

Sincerely,

*Cynthia Shao, 2024-25 Editor-in-Chief*  
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