

Dear Readers,

With the Spring 2023 return of the UC Merced *Undergraduate Research Journal* in its 15th year of serving the undergraduate community, our team has had the pleasure to publish meaningful research. The opportunity to have worked with such talented authors and skilled researchers has been both inspiring and humbling. This issue is a testament to the fact that despite UC Merced's recent inception, our students are future leaders of industry and academia, capable of producing work that will have a tremendous impact in their respective fields. This issue is a collection of diverse studies and reviews that stemmed from a single question, ranging from health promotion interventions for Native American communities to the analysis of cancer prevention from the perspective of evolution. It is my hope that you will find something to cultivate the same curiosity in your mind.

I have nothing but gratitude to the exemplary team that has spent many hours to put this issue of *The Undergraduate Research Journal* together. This semester, the team undertook the arduous task of rebuilding the journal from scratch, and this production would not have been possible without the talent and effort of every individual on our board.

Professor Susan Varnot, our Faculty Advisor, was the foundation and backbone of our team, and her support and guidance was imperative to the success of the journal. I want to thank Alexia "Lex" Wasson, the Managing Editor of the Outreach Team, as she was the forefront of our journal's marketing and events. Her efforts were the initiative that propelled the journal to greater exposure on campus. Thank you to Maxwell Vanderbilt, the Managing Editor of the Editorial Team for undertaking the important task of putting this issue together as without his coordinating efforts, this production would not be possible. Thank you to our skillful team of Section Editors, Christopher Finley, Fernanda Vilchis, and Sarah Ford. I am grateful for your commitment, attention-to-detail, and professionalism, which you displayed with every author. You are the reason we have a journal today. Thank you to Jorge Coria and Emily Hu, our Digital and Web Operation Directors, who were essential in establishing our new website and managing online communications. Thank you to Ruby Arceo, our Social Media and Publicity Manager, for producing much of the content that increased our online presence and engaging other institutions present on campus. Thank you to Rosario "Rosie" Lopez for your effort and dedication in creating successful fundraisers and planning our 15th Anniversary Gala Launch. Thank you to Darah Carrillo, our Art Director, as she was the architect of the beautiful and evocative designs and photography that make up our website, social media, and journal cover.

I would like to also acknowledge the Associated Students of UC Merced for providing the funding that has significantly supported this publication, especially Internal VP Lawson Lasch who has personally promoted the journal's initiatives. I'd also like to thank GAMWS for their generous funding that has helped fund some of our outreach events. Their support and cooperation have made *The Undergraduate Research Journal* the publication that it is today, a platform for student researchers to voice their work and gain exposure for their personal and professional careers.

Lastly, thank you to all the students that submitted their work and gave our team the opportunity to amplify their voices. Our team is aware of the vulnerability and humility it takes to share these personal works, and we are grateful for everyone who has taken steps in this journey alongside us. I am elated to see where this publication and the students who were a part of it will go in the future. This issue of *The Undergraduate Research Journal*, Volume 15, Issue 1, is our collective story, and we hope that it will display the brilliance, research acumen, and communicative power that is very much alive and present in the UC Merced undergraduate community.

Warm Regards,

Kyle Magro

Editor-in-Chief

The Undergraduate Research Journal