

Dear readers,

With a new academic school year, the Fall 2023 semester has been a new beginning for many of us at University of California, Merced. With that being said, our team is proud to present the *Undergraduate Research Journal: Boldly Moving Forward*, Volume 16, Issue 1.

In this issue, the editorial team chose this theme of boldly moving forward to reflect what happens for our team, authors, and readers. Our team ran into complications, which we had to overcome, and boldly move forward. We hope our authors continue their great work, boldly move forward, and make the impact we know they are capable of. For our readers, we hope that this work inspires you; boldly move forward in our topsy-turvy world.

Boldly moving forward is about growth after experiences. As editor-in-chief, I, Evelyn Roque, wanted to show how the team grew from our experiences creating this issue, as represented in the following statements:

Being part of the *Undergraduate Research Journal* (URJ) at UC Merced has been a highly enriching experience. This journey has not only fostered an increased sense of confidence within me but has also instilled a belief in my own capabilities. Collaborating with authors, a task I had not envisioned myself undertaking, has been particularly enlightening. Navigating the collaborative process has exposed me to diverse perspectives, methodologies, and writing styles, expanding my horizons within the scholarly landscape. I hold profound admiration and appreciation for each written piece, recognizing its unique contribution to the ethos of UC Merced and the URJ. Moreover, this involvement has facilitated my personal and academic growth.

Best Regards,
Mireya Contreras
Associate Editor & Art Director

My role as the managing editor for the URJ has provided me with invaluable experience that will stay with me as I move forward in school and, eventually, into the workforce. This position granted me the opportunity to learn new skills that helped me and everyone complete their tasks efficiently while maximizing their work output. It pushed me outside of my comfort zone, encouraging my growth as both an editor and as a team member. I am endlessly grateful for the amazing URJ team that, despite being small in number, pushed forward to create the newest issue. They created a space where growth is encouraged, and mistakes are learning opportunities. I would like to extend my thanks to the student authors who submitted their work and offered us the opportunity to promote undergraduate research at UC Merced.

Best regards,
Emily Le
Managing Editor

What I learned from the URJ is that working with a team is very important. Teamwork is important because you have someone who can look at your work and also to ask what is going on in the assignment and editorial tasks you are looking over. Having a team, you can bounce around ideas, a practice that can be very helpful when coming up with an idea and a plan. Also, having differing opinions and thoughts is very insightful, as you can see why your fellow editors did what they did and chose to approve a piece. It is nice to have companions to talk to about the same projects, to see a point or two that you did not think about, and to have more ideas to discuss.

Best,
Jorge Matias Conde
Campus Outreach and Event Coordinator

Through my participation in the *Undergraduate Research Journal*, I have developed a greater sense of self-assurance. This meant that I would always enter class with a positive attitude and engage in conversation with my team. Even though I have been involved in many organizations throughout campus and have been very social outside the classroom, when it came to inside the classroom, it was different. I have become more confident communicating with my peers, which was something I found particularly challenging to do during my previous semesters. By consistently meeting deadlines and submitting assignments on time, I acquired valuable time management skills. I also gained insight into what to anticipate when undertaking a research opportunity in the future and writing my own research paper. Additionally, I improved my writing skills by adhering to styles such as MLA, APA, Chicago, and others. I acquired the knowledge to consistently assist individuals in need, whether they are my team members or my author. This knowledge ensures that I am always assisting those in need.

From,
Joseph Sanchez
Social Media and Publicity Manager

The URJ has taught me that research is much more than academic papers. Research is connecting with other students. Learning from other disciplines can spark ideas within my own focus. The lessons coming from being a part of the journal are a myriad, swirling ball of change that can only fully be understood from within the URJ itself. And from the

position of putting the journal together, I learned I must expand, yet I must become like the journal itself. I learned to swirl and change to see from new perspectives and must continue to swirl as time pushes forward.

Best,
Christopher Finley
Podcast Development Coordinator
Podcast: Insert Research Here

What did I learn? I had to unlearn being in charge. I learned that each person brings personality, insight, and skill to make a team not just function but also create something that otherwise never before would have existed. A number of small steps adds up to incredibly complex and networked outcomes – in the research process and in publishing a journal. Process becomes product. Product is a testament to process. In learning and in publishing, make room for mistakes. Have a belief in process. Have a belief in learning by doing and by creating a reflexive environment to honor all.

Best,
Professor Susan Varnot
Advisor

My lesson came in all different colors. The biggest lesson I had to learn was that I could not do everything, and I especially could not do everything by myself. Collaboration is such a crucial aspect to life and what the URJ is built on – collaboration between editors and authors, between authors and other researchers, between researchers and the public. In the creation of this issue, I also tried to tackle school, three jobs, and being a president of a club, all on top of being editor-in-chief for the first time, all by myself. Except I wasn't entirely by myself...and I will never forget that.

Trusting people.
It is how I boldly move forward.
We, together, grew.
And now we are
boldly moving forward.

All the best,
Evelyn Roque
Editor-in-Chief
The Undergraduate Research Journal