

Dear readers,

Welcome to Volume 16, Issue 2, *From Here on Out: Creating Landmarks* Undergraduate Research Journal (URJ)! In this issue, the URJ editorial team chose our theme to be “Creating Landmarks” to signpost the significant accomplishment of publishing research, knowing that this milestone marks the beginning of a beautiful adventure.

As editor-in-chief, I wanted to showcase every person on my editorial team since every member was an integral part to the creation of this issue. Taking on my second semester as editor in chief, I and the team reached for the sky and landed among the stars. This was all thanks to the talented and inspiring team I had every step of the way. Each editorial member represents their experience in the following statements:

Embracing the theme “Creating Landmarks” holds a profound meaning for me. Reflecting on my journey, especially as a first-generation student from an undocumented household, I realize the significance of breaking generational cycles. Each step I take represents a landmark not only in my own growth but also in paving a path for others like me. In my role with the undergraduate research journal, I've learned to value and celebrate every effort, no matter how small, recognizing them as milestones of progress. “Creating Landmarks” isn't just about personal achievements; it's about leaving a legacy of resilience and empowerment for future generations.

Working with the journal production team has been an enriching experience. It has taught me to value and celebrate every effort, regardless of size, as each contributes to the larger landscape of progress. From editing to layout design, every task undertaken to produce the journal has become a milestone in my own development.

Best,
Sheila Chavez
Social Media and Publicity Director

Not all landmarks are made equal, nor created with intention, but all landmarks present themselves as inviting a second glance or more. Oftentimes we see more than a landmark's physical form. As an author and an editor of the URJ, I see the process of getting published itself a landmark in each of our author's careers- a monumental moment worthy of congratulations and great pride. I am proud to have been part of this amazing team and effort, and I am grateful for all the learning opportunities.

Best,
Yu Fang Tseng
Social Sciences Section Editor

A landmark is an easily recognizable characteristic of a place. Getting published by the URJ is just one of the many easily identifiable moments in the lives of our authors. I believe that all of our authors will continue to create many more landmarks in the future, and the title “From Here on Out: Creating Landmarks” perfectly represents this semester’s issue.

Best,
Guadalupe Castaneda
Humanities & Arts Section Editor, Campus Outreach & Event Coordinator

We as a group put the journal together, yet the people who wrote the papers within this journal are the ones who have created landmarks. They have something to reflect on and remember what they have accomplished.

Best,
Christopher Finley
Section Editor of Humanities & Arts, Managing Editor Outreach

Entering the Undergraduate Research Journal (URJ) as a first-year student was the best experience and opportunity, which has taught me valuable skills and growth in myself. There were many challenges along the way, like meeting deadlines, working with more than one author, and having to balance this huge responsibility with my classes and home life. However, I have gained confidence in becoming an editor and being part of the URJ helped me value that. I’m deeply grateful for embarking on the achievements and journey with the URJ and with the authors I’ve worked with this year.

Best wishes,
Genesis Iniguez-Espinoza
Social Media & Publicity Director

Starting on the journal as a first-year student really opened my eyes to the opportunities that come across my way. I never would have thought I would have come across such an

amazing environment in the Undergraduate Research Journal. I learned how important it is to have good people to work with to build a community. This editing journey has taught me skills I never thought I had. Yes, there were moments I got intimidated, but I took the risk of moving forward — like I once wrote, “It all takes one step.” That one step will determine the future we want to create. Being a part of this journey gave me a reason not to look back. I am so thankful I got the opportunity to work with amazing authors and have had this experience as an editor.

Best,
Analee Munoz Luna
Art Director

Our true personalities, values, and strengths get exposed when times are tough. However, because of on-the-job training at the URJ, I became armored with essential life skills that I never knew existed and that were wonderfully contagious amongst team members. Skills like keeping your chin up, putting a smile on your face, and biting your tongue, when everything feels rushed. Skills like truly understanding your constituents’ strengths and weaknesses, and knowing who you can lean on for help. Furthermore, I learned that weaknesses are not negative, and they are what makes us human. I also learned that perfection is a myth, and striving to achieve this myth may not be the best option (especially when deadlines are involved). I saw that my hard work and dedication to someone else's written work was more gratifying than editing my own, and this was where I found solace.

I'm especially proud of my two authors, who truly understood who the real boss is— the reader. Each author was able to adjust the tone of their original great work, and make it more relatable to a broader audience, especially to their family members where English is a second language. Now their published work can genuinely be appreciated by all who matter the most, creating perpetual landmarks that will represent their families forever. The URJ at UC Merced is unique in that regard, and I will never forget this experience.

Best,
Keith Buchignani
Managing Editor STEM Section

Susan Varnot is one of the best professors you can have. Not only did she help me improve as a writer and editor, but her enthusiasm alone for the subject inspired not only myself but also others to continue writing. Let alone in the URJ, the people I've met and

worked with are both amazing and talented. An experience to have and one that will be memorable to myself. From here on out, I wish for the best on the paths my incredible colleagues and professor will take in their futures.

Best,
Angel Perez
Secretary and Club Manager

The title “From Here on Out: Creating Landmarks” reflects all of these authors’ unwavering commitment to create memorable pieces. Every piece represents hard work and dedication from both authors and editors as they worked together to polish their pieces for publication. And I am proud of every author for creating significant milestones for the journal.

Lastly, I am very proud of my URJ editorial team for pouring out their hearts and knowledge into the journal. They made my experience in the URJ very rewarding and fun. I learned from every one of them, and they all left a lasting imprint that made my time spent in the URJ unforgettable.

Best,
Mireya Contreras
Associate Editor & Multimedia Director

I had a lot of fun this semester producing the URJ. People have told me to find a job that doesn’t feel like work, and I feel as though that same sentiment applies to school. Oftentimes, classes I’ve taken in college can eventually become monotonous, but this class only ever felt like a jovial office environment in which we were free to be vulnerable, joke around, listen to great music, eat good food, and talk to each other about what we care about.

Best,
Henry Pacheco
Lead Copyeditor

Each of us has an opportunity to make a mark and contribute to knowledge. Each question, each voice, each hypothesis, and each research project is simultaneously unique and collective, as humans expand what is known, understood, and communicated. The

undergraduate students who have trained and served as editors of this issue have approached each submission with the following goal in mind: “The URJ strives to increase the number and diversity of students participating in research, ultimately establishing a community where students are comfortable participating in undergraduate research.” Each published piece establishes a landmark to guide and create a community for others.

Best,
Susan Varnot
Faculty Advisor
Associate Teaching Professor
Global Arts, Media, and Writing Studies

Now for me, the URJ will always have a landmark in my heart from here on out. It truly has been such an honor to work with and lead my amazing editorial team and the authors represented here to produce an outstanding publication. I knew from the first day that every person involved with the URJ is going to achieve so many things, whether that be in research, copyediting, or otherwise.

My heart lies with my authors. To all my published authors, you are what make the journal! I hope that with this experience- with all the time and effort you put in to get here- that you continue to use your brave hearts and great minds. They can guide you along any path you chose and when you look back on that path traveled, I hope you see a sea of landmarks and accomplishments.

To my authors, to my editorial team, to my readers.
Thank you for sharing this beautiful landmark with me and to many more ahead of us.

All the best from here on out,
Evelyn Roque
Editor in Chief
The Undergraduate Research Journal
University of California, Merced