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Letter from the Faculty Mentor

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April 11, 2019

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Dear Reader:

Shortly after my hire as scholarly communication librarian to the University in February 2016, I met with history professor **Dr. David Pizzo** and **Libraries Dean Ashley Ireland** to discuss business going forward for the Office of Research and Creative Activity (ORCA). In addition to sustaining our three annual student showcases and research grant opportunities, ORCA would initiate a new student journal. That fall, the Honors College at Murray State introduced us to some talented undergraduate students who would plan, run, and assist in directing such a journal. These students were **Erin Wallace, Jessie Hedrick, Laura Guebert, and Rachel Wood.**

In our initial planning meetings, we selected a publishing schedule, developed a strategy for recruiting outstanding student work, and came up with our concept of interviewing students to communicate their research to lay audiences. We chose our name owing to the vision of our students moving swiftly over obstacles toward finish lines with aplomb. (For posterity, it should be noted that *Hind-quarterly* was an option on the table.) *Steeplechase* published its inaugural issue on April 19, 2017. The issue presented here is our fifth.

Our original student editors have all graduated, onto brighter pastures. For instance, **Rachel**, who served as our first editor-in-chief, graduated in 2018. She is in graduate school, bearing the honor of a prestigious national Phi Kappa Phi graduate fellowship. **Laura** graduated in 2018 also, and as MSU Outstanding Senior Woman. She is now in graduate school as a double-major in history and library science. ORCA will always remember our first cohort of student editors for their efforts starting and running a journal.

At present, Steeplechase has two student editors. **Kaitlyn Clary**, our second editor-in-chief, and **Virginia (Gin) Sisemore**, our assistant editor and copyeditor. Volume 2, Issue 2 was the first with Kaitlyn and Gin at the helm. Readers may have noticed that issue was shy on original research. Instead, the journal produced three interviews and a single feature, labeled *Peer-review guidelines*. This present issue also contains three interviews, as well as the fruit of the Kaitlyn and Gin's labor over the previous semester, in the form of three formally-peer reviewed research works, with two others in process.

I'd say we now resemble a traditional scholarly journal, but that might be an undersell, considering some of the frontiers that our student journal is pushing into. Beginning with this issue, our peer-reviewers and authors were given the option for *open collaborative peer-review*. The manuscript from **Sarah Stellhorn** received the okay from all parties, and so the author and the reviewer names are listed with that article. When **Emeline Hecht** submitted her manuscript, she had a complete hypothesis, literature review, and study methodology, but was awaiting IRB approval on her data collection. Rather than miss working with Emeline's research before she graduated, this presented us an excellent opportunity to experiment with producing a *pre-registered study report*. Lastly, new to this issue, we are putting the Reference list from each research article right on the metadata page, pushing us nearer to *open citations*.

Fireworks aside, at heart, what excites us at ORCA the most is the student engagement level. Scholarship is a conversation of exploration. In our classrooms, we rightly emphasize the importance of seeking out and listening to ongoing disciplinary conversations. Only rarely, though, do students complete the loop, and add to the conversation. We are optimistic that Steeplechase provides Murray State students with a process in which they can develop their voice, and discover value therein.

Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Arthur J. Boston

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