A Note from the Editor

2021 has been a year not only of incredible scientific breakthroughs but also intense scrutiny and sometimes suspicion of science. Over the course of the pandemic, the public has come into frequent contact with medical professionals, researchers, and experts. While expert advice has been a balm for some, misinterpretation of basic scientific knowledge has also bred fearful mistrust in others. The only way to combat such skepticism is by increasing familiarity between scientific experts and the public. As Purdue Honors College's 2021 Aronson Lecturer, Dr. David Baker illustrates how cooperative ventures between scientists and the public can promote scientific literacy and expand research past the physical walls of the laboratory.

Dr. David Baker is known for inventing "FoldIt," a computer game that allows players to create novel proteins that can be investigated by experienced scientists. He is the director of the Institute of Protein Design and the Henrietta and Aubrey Davis Endowed Professor in Biochemistry at the University of Washington. His research interests center around macromolecular protein structure. Dr. Baker has been honored by the National Science Foundation, the Beckman Foundation, and the Packard Foundation. He is the recipient of the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences, Irving Sigal and Hans Neurath awards from the Protein Society, the Overton Prize from the ISCB, the Feynman Prize from the Foresight Institute, the AAAS Newcomb Cleveland Prize, the Sackler Prize, and the Centenary Award from the Biochemical Society.

Dr. Baker's work exemplifies how science does not need to be an intimidating beast. Inviting the public to participate in the creation of scientific knowledge may eliminate the reputation for elitism that often accompanies scientists. It is no secret that Americans have fallen behind other nations in many measures of scientific literacy, and we have begun to see the most sinister manifestations of this phenomenon throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. But it is never too late to change course. As the success of "FoldIt" illustrates, learning is bidirectional: endeavors between the public and the scientific community hold promise and benefits for all.

About the Editor

Jannine Huby is an undergraduate student at Purdue University, where she is dual majoring in Political Science and Global Studies with a minor in Professional Writing. She is an active member of Purdue's Honors College and a representative for the College of Liberal Arts on the Honors Leadership Council (HLC). Around campus, Jannine can also be seen performing her duties as a Resident Assistant and as a member of Student English Association (SEA).