

Dear Reader:

I am thrilled to welcome you to the fourth volume of the Journal of Undergraduate Social Work Research (JUSWR). The JUSWR is a result of a highly collaborative effort between students, faculty, and staff. Undergraduate peer editors were instrumental in the selecting, editing, and submitting recommendations for research and creative pieces to be accepted for publication. These undergraduate peer editors worked closely with the Senior Editor, Rebecca Dohleman Hawley, who did an outstanding job providing feedback, guidance, and prowess throughout the entire publication process. This journal would not be possible without Rebecca and her instrumental leadership. In addition to the work of the undergraduate peer editors and senior editor, faculty members also generously mentored their students in the writing and publication processes, of which we are grateful for their time and energy. Fellow Advisory Board Member, Dr. Jan Carter-Black, provided the team with exceptional guidance and feedback. As the Undergraduate Research Program Coordinator for the School of Social Work and Advisory Board Member of the JUSWR, I approached my role with commitment and enthusiasm, assisting with the peer editor training and editing process. Together, this collaborative team proudly brings you the fourth volume of the JUSWR.

The JUSWR was published for the first time in the spring of 2017 and each year sees an increase in submissions, pieces, and readers. Last year, JUSWR Volume 3 was split into two issues to accommodate the number of excellent pieces submitted. We are proud to announce that this year, Volume 4 will also consist of two issues. The current issue, Volume 4 Issue 1, will be available in September, and Volume 4 Issue 2 will be available in December. This Volume includes pieces from Social Work and Political Science undergraduate students. Topics range from mental health, safety, and social-emotional needs among middle and high school students, substance abuse in the military, immigration, segregation and Black poverty, identity, and balancing work and family. These pieces include research posters and papers, opinion pieces, and dance and poetry pieces.

As the new Undergraduate Research Program Coordinator for the School of Social Work, I am honored to join such a remarkable editorial team and direct undergraduate research efforts. The JUSWR originated with the aim of supporting undergraduate research and scholarly work, becoming a platform for students to disseminate their findings and work. Some of the ways students can become involved in research at the School of Social Work include: 1) participating as a Research Assistant to a faculty-directed research project, or 2) leading their own area of research with an Independent Study or Project. Students can find more information about these opportunities in the Course Catalog (SOCW 310, 418, and 480). It is from these projects that many students submit posters and papers to the JUSWR or present at the University of Illinois Undergraduate Research Symposium. Other research opportunities include authoring or co-authoring research papers and presentations for peer-reviewed journals and academic conferences, serving as a peer editor for the JUSWR, or pursuing the Undergraduate Research Certificate Program offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research.

In addition to research, the JUSWR also accepts original creative pieces for publication. These creative pieces may reflect aspects of students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, or perspectives. The JUSWR also considers an array of pieces in addition to research, including policy briefs, class papers, and opinion pieces. As you flip through the current and previous issues of the JUSWR, you will see a glimpse into the knowledge, creativity, critical thinking, and thoughtfulness of the authors across these diverse platforms. Students make contributions that advance social and economic justice, further enhancing their own and their readers' appreciation toward our diverse and constantly evolving social world.

I am please to announce the first issue of the fourth volume of the JUSWR. This publication provides clear and compelling evidence of the high quality of undergraduate social work research and creative works that contribute to knowledge permeating the School of Social Work and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Sincerely,
Rachel Garthe, PhD
Assistant Professor & Undergraduate Research Program Coordinator
School of Social Work