From the Editors

Our journal exists to encourage University of Rochester undergraduates to participate in research and to exhibit some of the greatest contributions Rochester students make to research in their respective fields. But what exactly is research, and why do we feel so strongly that college students should be engaged in it? Of course, many undergraduates at the University of Rochester work in laboratories with professors of biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, and other sciences, and often this work involves serious research elements. But research comes in many forms. On one hand, there are biologists who observe life in a Petri dish and chemists who examine different reactions. On the other hand, there are geologists who perform field work in a remote mountain range and historians who evaluate old, forgotten letters and newspaper clippings in a library. The Journal of Undergraduate Research has featured articles from all of the natural sciences, and also from many disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, showcasing the diverse and broad range of research that Rochester undergraduates complete.

And why do we feel it is so important for undergraduates to involve themselves in research? There are two compelling reasons for this. First, any original research adds at least a small piece of information to the global pool of scientific knowledge. Additionally, it is an invaluable experience for those who intend to go into a research-oriented career. This is reason enough for many students to participate in research, but doing so has other benefits as well; engaging in research is a remarkable opportunity for a student to experience both academic and personal growth. There are few better ways to nourish one’s ability to reason than through a sustained research effort. Research as part of a group can provide excellent exposure to “real world”—style teamwork. And unlike the usual coursework, a student engaged in original research is seeking out knowledge that is entirely new; such an experience is a chance to explore one’s creativity, to push one’s intellectual boundaries, and to begin to truly understand oneself.

Sincerely,

Andrew Niles, 2008
Harshika Satyarthi, 2009
Editors-in-Chief