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Letter from the Department Chair

James Simeone

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Letter from the Department Chair

LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

You hold in your hands *Res Publica* Volume 13, the culmination of many hopes and dreams, some of them individual and some collective. It is worthwhile to speculate a moment on how such hopes and dreams form.

The ambition to get published might have been a long-standing goal. It may have seized a contributor on the first day of senior seminar. Perhaps it came only after a professor urged the writer to push on for honors. Or was it when Pi Sigma Alpha announced it would offer prizes of \$100, \$75, and \$50 for the top three papers?

When the contributors actually began thinking about their research topic is even more uncertain. Was it during that entry-level political science course? A tangential comment made about reference group theory by a sociology professor? Or maybe a puzzle about the intricacies of causation posed in the research methods class? It is impossible to say. Should we discount the possibility of some dreamy but beautiful mind stumbling upon a model late one night before the first literature review was due? Obviously not.

Besides the contributors, the expectations of the editors and especially the editor-in-chief must be considered. Leah Strege, who graduates this year as a junior, set the highest standard for submissions. She also realized a long-standing goal by calling for papers from students of any class rank and, in one case at least, she was able to offer an acceptance.

We ought to consider too the hopes of faculty who as teachers and mentors have seen the culmination of years of effort. Each professor teaches introductory courses, and each expects to attract a few brilliant students in Gateway or American National Government to the department. The whole liberal arts college is premised on a kind of act of faith tied to this tacit social contract: professors agree to make the extra effort to nurture first and second year students; juniors and seniors agree to become independent critical thinkers, peers in the project of generating new knowledge.

Individual wishes have no doubt been fulfilled. And it is up to the public to decide if our high expectations have indeed been reached. But this much can be said for certain: a collective dream has been achieved. This was the dream of a devoted group of students and faculty to produce something fine together.

Jim Simeone
Acting Chair