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Letter from the Department Chair

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Letter from the Department Chair

LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Two decades ago the students and faculty of the Department of Political Science launched *Res Publica*, a student-produced journal of undergraduate research. The goal at that time was to showcase some of our students' best work. This project has succeeded beyond our expectations. Along the way to building this tradition, students have elaborated their investigations into topics in international relations, comparative politics, American politics, and political theory. These 20 issues of *Res Publica*, crafted by some of our best students, funded by the Illinois Wesleyan University Student Senate and the national honor society of Pi Sigma Alpha, and carefully edited and produced to very high standards, makes us tremendously proud. As we celebrate these two decades' worth of accomplishments, we also look forward to the excellent work that will be undertaken by generations to come. *Res Publica*, this public thing, has come to represent our mutual commitment to excellence in theory, research, and practice.

In this issue of *Res Publica* our students report their journeys from theory to practice in the pursuit of practical explanations of how politics works. Some of the work here concerns voting, as Annie Kehler and Daniel Truesdale offer macro- and micro-examinations of turnout in the United States. Mike Kistner interrogates political institutions in the U.S. and reports his findings about how well some time-honored institutions actually work to advance the public good. Others look closely at political practice, as Casey Plach and Austin Aldag study the processes of both honoring and coaxing public acknowledgement of important values. They deserve a wide audience.

Beyond these individual achievements that are, in their own right, quite notable, the persistence of this journal reflects a sustained level of excellence across our classes and the structure of our curriculum more generally. As students make their way from our introductory courses, to those at the mid-level, to upper-level research venues, they also gain the skills and confidence to join the broader community of scholars. We know we have all done our jobs when students challenge our positions, when they add to our collective understandings of how the world works, and when they begin to leave campus to confront injustice and dysfunction, and to build programs that improve the lives of fellow citizens. This spring we again celebrate the graduation of many talented young women and men, several of whom have poured many hours into producing this journal. Thanks in particular to Sarah Bergman and Mike Kistner for editing this issue of *Res Publica*, assisted by Austin Aldag and Annie Kehler. As our graduating seniors take their leave from IWU, we congratulate them, and we look to the next generation to take up the reins of our journal, and more importantly the leadership positions they will need in order to confront the challenges of a complex world. The easy problems have already been solved. Let's get to work.

Greg Shaw