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Letter from the Political Science Department Chair

Kathleen Montgomery
Illinois Wesleyan University

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It's time again to welcome a new volume of our department's peer reviewed and student edited undergraduate research journal, *Res Publica*. In this, the 23rd issue, we encounter a robust collection of some of our students' best work produced over the past year. The authors in these pages take on issues that are core to the discipline of political science, using a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and country cases. Here you will find research that addresses big questions: Do parties keep their promises? What happens when social integration fails and some citizens feel "left behind" by the forces of socio-economic and cultural change? How does partisanship affect policy? Why do voters sometimes appear to vote against their own interests? Topics run a wide gamut from Brexit to US tax policy, anti-elite sentiment to gender politics and environmental law. In each case, however, there is an underlying concern with what makes democracy work (democratic performance, institutions of democracy, and democratic representation). It is only fitting, then, that for the first time *Res Publica* also contains a collection of five micro-essays drawn from Professor Simeone's Classical Political Thought class, "Democracy in Athens and America". In this class, students practice their argumentation skills using the signature claim-objection-rejoinder format I'm sure our alumni readers will remember!

Res Publica began back in 1996 at a time when the political science department was rolling out a new curricular design. We would greet students with a set of introductory courses designed to build toward more intensive 300-level topical courses; a required theory course; and a two-part sequence involving an empirical research methodology course and a culminating capstone experience, the Senior Seminar. Though some of the particulars of this design have changed over time, the core idea remains: to help student build skills and knowledge that will allow them to carry out their own original empirical research. Some of the best of that research winds up in the pages of *Res Publica*. Over the years, we have watched student contributors and editors use their work in the journal to help secure top graduate school positions and job placements. We believe that *Res Publica* offers our students a unique opportunity at the undergraduate level, and we are incredibly proud of what our students are consistently able to achieve.

Putting out a peer-reviewed journal is a massive undertaking, and it would not be possible without the commitment and dedication of a few extraordinary people. Particular thanks goes to *Res Publica's* lead editors, Brianna Bacigalupo and Zoe Bouras, and their able assistant, associate editor Benjamin Nielsen.

Kudos to them and thank you for reading!
Kathleen Montgomery