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## Editor-in-Chief of the Laureate

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## Editor-in-Chief of “The Laureate”

I feel incredibly fortunate to have worked on the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of “The Laureate.” The experience and the process of gathering, choosing, editing, ordering, and finally publishing creative works proved enjoyable and exciting. Having been published last year, the opportunity to see the process of formulating an edition of the journal from the other side was valuable—understanding what I looked for in submissions as a reader and editor influenced and ultimately improved my own writing.

Early on, I would characterize my process as trepidatious. I felt overwhelmed and uncertain about best approach for advertising the journal. I enlisted the aid of my friend, a graphic design student, to make the poster, and one of the assistant editors and I walked around campus and Kalamazoo to place the adverts in approved locations. Looking back, I would have planned more than one day for posters, since many fall off over time, so replenishing them once or twice could have increased the number of submissions we received.

Additionally, I found social media to be an inefficient means of attracting potential submitters: not too many people subscribed to the Facebook page, and there are few Western Michigan University Undergraduate writers on my own friend list. Word of mouth seems to be the most effective medium for garnering submissions, and so if I were to do it again, I would be more active in visiting creative writing classes. Similarly, I wish that we would have received more visual art, and even though we accepted music submissions this year, we did not receive any.

I found that our method for determining the final list of submissions, and their order in the magazine, to be pragmatic. I created a Google Excel Spreadsheet, to which all three assistant editors and I had access, where we indicated our thoughts on the different submissions. We each marked our opinion either as “Yes,” “Leaning Yes,” “Leaning No,”

and “No.” After we all read through most of the submissions and communicated our impressions, we met in person to decide the pieces that were to be published in “The Laureate.” I included the pieces we mostly marked “Yes” and “Leaning Yes” and disqualified the submissions that received mostly “No” and “Leaning No.” Then, we discussed the pieces that received mixed reception to decide one way or another. Once we had a master list of submissions, we put them in order. This order was not based on genre, because we wanted to create an effect where if the journal is read from beginning to end, the pieces together would feel cohesive and work in tandem to produce a tone that progressed and changed. While this was time consuming, I believe that the quality of the journal shows as a result of this process. This process, however, was not nearly as rigorous as the editing process.

Becky Cooper, the faculty editor, found and marked hundreds of typos, grammatical errors, lineation concerns, and made numerous suggestions to improve the pieces’ flow and readability. Before sending the submissions to Becky, we did our own preliminary edits and suggestions, but they were more for basic clarification concerns and plot consistency, and less of a focus on line edits. Forming a cohesive manuscript in a single document is a tedious, frustrating task, as Microsoft Word can be difficult to use when large bodies of text are frequently imported and exported. Many fonts and line breaks change, and so keeping the pieces properly spaced and appearing as the authors want them required attention and repeated review. Over time we managed to spot all of the areas of concern, and contacted the authors for their approval on the edits. After they expressed their own concerns or proposed their own changes, we finally had a complete draft of the journal! From beginning to end, it took several weeks to form the manuscript, edit it, and work with the authors. However, this was one of the most rewarding parts of the whole process. I am much more aware of what to look for in poems and fiction as an editor, and also learned some grammar rules that I previously did not know or was not clear on. Furthermore, spending so

much time with the manuscript and reading through the same pieces multiple times and paying attention to minutia makes me feel much more connected to the final product and satisfied with it as a whole.

Afterwards, we sent the manuscript to the Design School, who had a team that comprised of a mix of students and faculty. They worked on the design of the journal itself, created the cover, constructed the pages, and decided the typography, among other things. We worked with them to ensure every piece maintained the author's desired structure and lineation. We printed only a few physical copies of the journal this year; enough for those who worked on and contributed to "The Laureate," as well as promotional copies for the Lee Honors College and Design Center.

The audio engineer who recorded for "The Laureate" last year was unable to help this year. However, he put us in contact with other audio engineers who were willing to record authors reading their pieces aloud for the online journal. On two separate days we recorded as many authors we could reading their short fiction, poetry, essays, or, in the case of one author, a play. While many of the authors expressed doubt in their abilities or the quality of the recording, it was a joy to listen to them and all of them presented their already clever pieces with decisive intentionality and confidence.

The Laureate Launch party serves as the final event that officially "launches" the journal and opens the published works to be viewed by the public. It is the culmination of disparate parts of Western Michigan University coming together in the production of a single collection of literature. Becky Cooper, the faculty editor, and the staff of the Lee Honors College made the existence of "The Laureate" possible. The assistant editors and their insightful readings of the submissions and careful edits helped formulate both the content and order of the journal. The design team's design of the journal is a piece of art in and of itself with an aesthetic that integrates seamlessly with the content of the journal. The audio

engineers further brought this journal to a new level in their recordings of the students reading their pieces aloud to help “The Laureate” share its works through a multi-dimensional medium.