When thinking of my time spent at Western Michigan University, one of the first things that will come to mind will almost certainly be *The Laureate*. My time editing the journal in the 2022-23 Academic year has taught me so much about my own abilities, aptitudes, strengths, weaknesses, and simply what I enjoy. Finding light in the darkness is so important to me, and being able to reproduce that idea within the journal was so encouraging to see.

My journey with the Laureate was multifaceted. I began as an assistant editor in the 2021-2022 Academic year, and got a taste of what editing the journal would be like the next year. Once I had finally taken the reins of the project, I eagerly planned what the year would look like. Through meetings with Becky Cooper, I decided that I, too, would need assistants. I was taking a full course load and had other responsibilities like work and volunteering to complete throughout the year, and many of my ideas couldn’t be executed without help. Recruiting Rachael Hogan and Val Cusumano to help me was the single best decision I made throughout my tenure as editor-in-chief of *The Laureate*. They were my second pair of eyes when it came to submissions, and helped me decide what to include—but most importantly, they helped me immensely with the social media accounts which I simply did not have time to run. They executed my vision, encouraging interaction with the Instagram and Facebook pages, and helped to promote creativity on campus.

The first step to the process was to promote the journal. I did this through social media, on-campus fliers, and classroom visits. Once the word got out about the journal, I hosted a few workshop events in the Fall of 2022 where students interested in submitting could come and have a space to work on their art. It helped to build community between Becky, the authors, and I, and overall was a wonderful atmosphere that promoted a lot of unity.
In late December, submissions closed, and I found myself with over fifty submissions to comb through. While there were some submissions that I found not quite to the standard of *The Laureate*, most of the pieces sparked debate between myself and my assistants. We found ourselves in love with some, and each time there was a piece we didn’t personally connect with, someone else did, and we had to include it. This step of the process taught me that everyone has something valuable to say. What didn’t resonate with me closely resonated with someone else.

Once a rough manuscript had been formed, I began the process of line-editing with the faculty editors, Becky Cooper and Jennifer Townsend. This was one of the most instructive portions of working on *The Laureate*. I overlooked so many things that Becky and Jennifer caught—and it taught me to have a far more critical eye. The most important part of the process, however, was learning how to preserve an author’s voice while improving its technical quality. It’s a difficult feat to achieve, but well worth it. As an editor, the work needs to sound like the author wrote it. It is not our job to write, but simply to support what’s already there. Learning to create something that masquerades in with the original author’s word choice, tone, and message is so incredibly important to editing well.

Working with the Gwen Frostic Student Design Team was another unforgettable portion of the project. Paul Sizer was wonderful to work with, and the graphic designers who laid our text into their beautiful design were friendly, accommodating, and taught me a lot about how the publishing process works from start to finish. I went into our initial meeting very sure of what I wanted, but their own input and ideas were so inspired and beautiful that I left having full trust in their own ability and ideas.

Putting together all of these pieces over the course of six or so months was intimidating to be sure, but by the time of the launch party, I was so happy with the results and the hard work
of every single hand that touched the project. Publishing, writing, editing, designing—all of it is collaboration, and the spirit of those with whom I worked will touch me for the rest of my life. From start to finish, I found the process to be one of the most challenging yet enjoyable aspects of my time at Western Michigan University, and I wouldn’t have anything else for my honors thesis.