I am pleased to introduce the 2015 edition of the Undergraduate Journal of Psychology.

The discipline of psychology spans the social and life sciences. The papers contained in this volume reflect this breadth, with contributions spanning the many subfields of psychology. Here you will find articles that explore important problems faced by our society such as depression and depersonalization. It is also noteworthy that this collection reflects a major trend in the field of psychology, an emphasis on proactive steps we can take to promote positive mental health. This direction is reflected in a number of the contributions, including studies on the beneficial effects of laughter for mood enhancement or yoga for psychological well-being. This is an engaging and sophisticated body of work.

Our faculty are honored to have the opportunity to teach, and collaborate, with a very talented population of undergraduates at UC Berkeley. Psychology remains a very popular major, frequently resulting in large classes at the lower and upper division. Nonetheless, as shown by the work presented here, undergraduate students are able to create an intimate learning experience through their research projects. They are able to not only engage in the intensive study of a problem that reflects their personal interests, but, as important, gain skills in the scientific method. An important part of this skill set is translating laboratory observations into a written work, one that makes clear the question at hand and then presents the results and conclusions in a concise and engaging manner. The reporting process is what makes science a cumulative, community endeavor. The articles you will find here have been selected as representative examples of this excellent body of work.

I want to congratulate the student editors for assembling the journal. They have refined a different set of skills, helping shape the ideas and writings of other individuals to ensure that the papers are maximally impactful.

Congratulations to all of the participants who have put together this year’s edition of the Undergraduate Journal of Psychology.

Rich Ivry

Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology

University of California, Berkeley