

Editors' Introduction

We are excited to present the passionate work of University of Tampa students in the newest volume of *Royal Road: A Journal of Undergraduate Research*. The eighth volume of *Royal Road* could not have been completed without the collaboration of student authors, mentors, professors, and editors. As a result of their time and effort, this volume features the best research produced during AWR 201: Academic Writing and Research courses in 2022-2023. With meticulous revisions during the 2023-2024 academic year, the authors corresponded with the student editors to more effectively communicate their findings and enhance their prose. A special thank you to Dr. Steven Mollmann and the editorial board for selecting these manuscripts and Dr. David Reamer for his guidance throughout the process.

Lilliana Haight's contribution to the issue discusses the psychological components of susceptibility genetic testing. Her research explains that patients can be left feeling tremendous distress when they are not given adequate information about the nature of genetic testing, such as the possibility of false positive results. Haight shows her readers firsthand accounts of patients who received genetic test results indicating that they were predisposed to developing life-threatening diseases and describes how the lack of explanation provided to them left them feeling isolated and distressed. While Haight does delve into the negative experiences of those who participated in susceptibility genetic testing, she also shows how patients can use these predictors to take potentially life-saving precautionary measures. She concludes that as long as patients have sufficient scientific literacy and take the time to research and discuss their results with a trusted healthcare provider, susceptibility genetic testing can give those who are predisposed to specific diseases the power to make informed choices about their health.

As the problem of climate change worsens, Logan Cooper's essay "The Death of the Carbon Tax: How Political Short-Termism Sabotages Climate Progress" urges politicians to shift their priorities toward long-term goals. He discusses the psychological causes of short-termism in individuals, such as psychological distance, optimism bias, and uncertainty avoidance. By analyzing climate data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report and the passing of House Concurrent Resolution 86, Cooper offers solutions to combat short-termism in climate policy. His work serves as a call to action as he writes, "It is crucial for the global community to advocate for policies that combat political short-termism to ensure a more sustainable future for humanity."

Gabriel Mudd's essay, "AI's Role in the Future of Education: The Potential and Ethical Danger of Implementing Learner-, System-, and Teacher-Facing Programs," explores the ways that artificial intelligence has been and will likely continue to be integrated into the education system. Mudd describes some of the potential benefits of AI in education but also dives into valid concerns about privacy, data quality, and equitability. He distinguishes between learner-, system-, and teacher-facing programs, ultimately concluding that while system- and teacher-facing programs have the potential to be safely integrated into education, educators and administrators should proceed with caution. He also advises avoiding implementing learner-facing systems until more is known about the safety of AI education tools. As with much of AI ethics scholarship, Mudd's essay also addresses concerns about losing the human element of education, which may be an irreplaceable component of pedagogy.

The eighth volume of *Royal Road: A Journal of Undergraduate Research* includes essays dealing with a wide range of topics. However, there is a common thread between all three, and

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that is a genuine concern about public health and well-being on both community and global scales. Haight's essay concerns an individual's ability to make informed decisions about protecting their health. Cooper's work describes how long-term solutions will be required to solve the global climate crisis and protect future generations. Mudd's piece addresses the importance of protecting quality education alongside technological innovation. During a period of significant global unrest, it is heartening to read the contributions of these young scholars and gain new insight into how we can care for ourselves and each other. Thank you for reading, and we hope you enjoy!

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