

## Preface

As a sociologist who studies social movements, I have been thinking lately about how activists tell stories as part of their work. It turns out that there is a lot of scholarship on narratives. In fact, some argue that storytelling itself is part of what makes us human. We tell stories in all sorts of ways. From tales told around a campfire to testimony in court and documentary films, stories help us to share our lives with others. In doing so, we are immortalized.

So when you click a link to open this journal, you are opening a storybook. While it may not be *The Little Engine that Could* or even a tale from *Arabian Nights*, each article in *TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship* tells the story of hours of work and brainpower by students who dedicated themselves to learn something new. The path each student took to do original scholarship was different. Some spent hours gathering data in a laboratory, or staring at a computer screen. Others went out into the field to collect data on plants and animals, including the human variety. Still others pored over texts old and new. All of them reached a point when it was time to tell the story of their work and what they learned. As storytellers, they had to figure out how to communicate their experiences – how to share their lives – in the most compelling way. We are lucky that they have done so, because now we can join in the authors' adventures by reading their words.

While the details vary, every single narrative here has a plot with a few key characters. First, our heroes: undergraduate researchers who asked intriguing questions and pursued the answers. To do so, they traveled a road of inquiry to discover new knowledge. Next come important and sometimes invisible members of the supporting cast: professors who guided the heroes by helping them pick roads to travel. Often, these professors helped equip our heroes for their journeys. Sometimes, they acted like a GPS, and occasionally like ogres under the bridge to goad our heroes on their way. Finally, each tale includes the objects of study, often elusive and hard to understand.

By staying on the path to pin down and interpret these objects of study, our heroes have captured new knowledge to answer interesting questions. The student authors have wrestled the dragons of ignorance to steal their secrets, and then shared what they learned with us in these pages. And because narratives immortalize people and their deeds, the articles here do more than document original scholarship – they immortalize the authors in the scholarly record. Congratulations to each and every author for this milestone!

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