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Letter From the Editor

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Dear Reader,

What a year it has been. The onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an array of hardships for individuals all over the world, including debilitating illness, physical separation from loved ones, social injustice, and loss of employment. For the past year, it seems as though life had come to a screeching halt. Yet amidst these difficulties, ideas have flourished – ideas confronting political and social norms, ideas that challenge us to think differently, and ideas that invite us to show more compassion and empathy.

This issue of *Sigma* consists of just a few of these ideas. In this edition, you will read about the role of religious freedom regarding public aid to parochial schools, the relationship between populism and evangelicalism in the US and Chile, and the various political and social challenges facing Tunisia and Egypt. You will read of the impact of exposure to films depicting LGBT themes on political preferences, the distinct identities of Palestinians in Israel, the US-Russia relationship, and factors shaping environmental policy in countries around the world. We hope these ideas will challenge you to see new perspectives.

We are grateful for the hard work and long nights put into this edition of *Sigma*. I am thankful for our staff of editors that worked tirelessly with our authors to meet deadlines. I am thankful for our advisor, Scott Cooper, for constantly encouraging the editorial team and offering much needed advice. This issue is the product of tireless hands from all over the BYU campus community. Thank you for giving a voice to these ideas.

I am proud to present the 2020-21 edition of *Sigma*.

Sara Lopez