# UP FRONT

Senior Ryan Moore, right, talks with doctoral student Olivia Bullock beside the voting booth he used in research about smart phones and voting.

NEXT-GEN ALUMNI

Undergraduate achievers

The work of 200 graduating seniors puts Ohio State's distinction in undergraduate research in the spotlight.

LONG AN ADVOCATE for undergraduates' pursuit of research, Rick Denman '57 had an idea to give such work a platform that would draw competition and attention. The concept Denman sketched on a napkin 25 or so years ago has grown into the prestigious Richard J. and Martha D. Denman Undergraduate Research Forum, which in February showcased the research of 200 graduating seniors from agricultural communication to zoology, arts management to welding engineering. Meet four students who presented this year and have advanced their fields, staying true to Denman's goal of placing Ohio State at the forefront of undergraduate research. — **KAYLIN HYNES** ✳
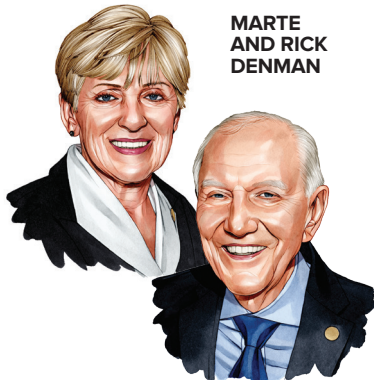
MARTE AND RICK DENMAN

RYAN MOORE
SENIOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ECONOMICS

"Information Search at the Voting Booth: The Effect of Smartphone Use on the Quality of Voting Decisions"

After smartphone use in voting booths became a hot legal topic during the 2016 election, Ryan Moore wanted to conduct research that could help the public better understand the debate. In an experiment, he asked subjects to "vote" for one of two fake candidates — one was a "good" candidate, while the other had faced accusations of fraud. Using real voting booths and a search engine controlled by Moore, users chose the better candidate when equipped with smartphones in the booth, he found. He also discovered that, regardless of political savvy or experience,

all groups were equally likely to vote for the "good" candidate. Moore hopes to publish his findings and leverage them to spark public conversations surrounding voting laws.

MOHAMMED MOUMEN
SENIOR IN PUBLIC HEALTH

"Efficacy of warning messages in hookah cafes/lounges"

Mohammed Moumen first noted the prevalence of hookah smoking while growing up in Morocco. After recognizing its popularity near college campuses in the United States, he decided to focus his research on the effectiveness of warning messages in hookah cafes. Working with public health professionals and a design professor, Moumen created 12 different warning signs, including one with the current FDA-issued message, to see which sign was the most powerful in conveying health concerns. Using focus groups and surveys, he found the government-issued warning was the least effective of the bunch. Looking forward, he aims to publish his research to help the public make informed decisions.

ISMONI WALKER
SENIOR IN PSYCHOLOGY

"Perceptions of postnatal marital conflict from 9 months to 7.5 years"

Understanding family dynamics

is important to Ismoni Walker, who eventually wants to study at-risk ethnic minority youth whose behavior is labeled juvenile delinquency. Her curiosity led her to research marital conflict at different points after a couple has their first child. Given a list of marital issues, parents rated which were most problematic. Walker found each couple's partners rated the issues similarly. The top three issues at nine months — money, career and sex — were different from those at seven-and-a-half years, when concerns shifted to communication, time spent together and money. Walker wants this research to empower couples to be aware of and address problems that can arise in a marriage following the birth of a child.

WILLY CHEN
SENIOR IN ECONOMICS

"Sanctuary cities' effects on their respective local economies"

Inspired by a course on the economics of immigration, Willy Chen dedicated his research to analyzing how the economy in a sanctuary city — which limits actions police can take based solely on a person's immigration status — is affected by immigrants. Using census data, Chen saw a slowing in the rise of unemployment rates among sanctuary cities while simultaneously finding that incomes had risen, as had the income level for what constitutes poverty. He also noted legal immigrants are less likely to reside in sanctuary cities. Chen hopes to publish his findings and present them at conferences in order to create a more nuanced understanding of sanctuary cities.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Avoiding selfie sabotage

MEGAN VENDEMIA BEGAN HER GRADUATE PROGRAM interested in understanding how people assess the credibility of information they see on the internet. Through a series of experiments, she and her colleagues explored how people detect and assess various forms of manipulation.

While pursuing her doctorate in communication at Ohio State, Vendemia extended this research to explore how women might evaluate other women differently, depending on whether they believed images were altered. A broad body of research documents how exposure to thin and sexualized portrayals of women is linked to negative mental health consequences for women and girls. Vendemia wondered how these portrayals might translate to social media.

The result is a new study, co-authored with David DeAndrea, associate professor of communication, and published in the journal *Body Image*. For the study, which provides insight into how women evaluate thin and sexualized Instagram selfies, 360 female college students viewed selfies. Half were told the women depicted were fellow students, while the others were told they were models. An icon on some images indicated they had been altered.

"When viewers thought the selfies were edited, they were less likely to internalize thin beauty ideals and more likely to negatively evaluate the women," Vendemia says. "A practical outcome is that digital alteration cues could potentially reduce the negative effects of thin and sexualized imagery. This work can also help inform young women about the negative reactions they might experience from sharing these images online." — **LAURA NEWPOFF** ✳

Photos: Jo McCulty; Illustrations by Michael Hoewler