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### Initiation Writes

Margaret K. Bass  
*University of Iowa*

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## **Initiation Writes**

**Margaret K. Bass**

University of Iowa

**Diversity in the academy means more than simply having people of color present on faculty; it may mean that institutions will begin to see some variation in the meaning of scholarship.**

My essay critiques the academy for, on the one hand, expecting minority faculty members to perform duties and tasks above and beyond the normal faculty load, and on the other hand, expecting them to successfully undertake and complete a viable program of research and writing. I also criticize the false dichotomy that is made between scholarship and creative nonfiction writing and suggest that diversity in the academy may mean more than simply having people of color present on faculty; it may also mean that institutions will begin to see some variation in the meaning of scholarship as well as colleagues who have little desire to write solely for other academics. I do not intend to generalize, so to guard against such generalizations I incorporate brief autobiographical sketches to illustrate my arguments.

Ultimately, the research institution remains a fraternity closed to all but a few minority scholars, for the relationship between faculty hired and faculty tenured is skewed in favor of hiring. Among the primary reasons for the denial of tenure is failure to complete requirements for writing and research. Does this simply imply that faculty of color cannot write, or does it suggest that institutional requirements are too rigid? I argue the latter.

### **PRESENTER**

**Margaret K. Bass** is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Bass describes herself as a reluctant academic. She graduated from Wilmington College with an A.B., received an M.Ed. from the University of Mississippi, and completed her Ph.D. work at Louisiana State University. She taught public school in Mississippi for 10 years.

Her higher education teaching experiences have included Vanderbilt University, St. Lawrence University, and The University of Iowa. Bass' areas of specialization are autobiography and Caribbean and African American literature. She has spent extensive time in the Caribbean, particularly in Jamaica, thanks to a Fulbright Dissertation Fellowship, and in St. Lucia, thanks to the Organization of American States.