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Editor's Page

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Editor's Page

I'd like to take this opportunity to make a few comments after finishing my final year as Editor of the *Basic Communication Course Annual*. I'll begin by offering my sincere thanks to the folks who have helped me with this task, then, by providing a preface to the essays in this 15th edition of the *Annual*, and, finally, by offering some final personal comments.

First, thanks to the members of the NCA Basic Course Commission for entrusting me to this assignment. The past three years have been quite a learning experience for me; one that I've enjoyed a lot. I hope I haven't let you down. Second, as always, thanks to each member of the Editorial Board for the time and energy spent reading and thoughtfully critiquing the essays. It really is your work that makes each issue of the *Annual* what it is. Finally, thanks to the authors for their careful attention to the reviewer suggestions when revising their manuscripts. It can sometimes be a daunting task. You have done well and your essays are now even more helpful to the field!

In the first essay, Judy Sims challenges our thinking about the use of video streaming to improve student speeches. Her results are valuable; particularly those she didn't anticipate finding. Her article points to the need for instructors to do more than merely consider using technology in the basic course; it is time to implement it if we claim to be student-centered.

The second and third essays ask us to reconceptualize our definitions of “at-risk” and “educational risk.” Deanna Fassett challenges us to redefine the inevitability of educational failure as an important human accomplishment. She argues, essentially, that educational success, failure, and risk are phase-like and a result of conflicting ideologies. As such, she urges us to consider how we define “at-risk,” as well as the strategies we implement with our students as a result. John Warren continues to challenge us by examining the complications of a performative pedagogy in the basic course. He, too, asks us to re-conceptualize what constitutes “educational risk” and “at-risk-ness” in the classroom.

In the fourth essay, Dwyer, Carlson, and Dalbey examine the important role of a public speaking curriculum to reduce communication apprehension. What makes their article unique, however, is that they focus on the impact of high school preparation on oral communication apprehension among college students. Although we might presume such an impact, it had not been validated in a scholarly study until now. Hence, their findings will be helpful to us as we find ourselves justifying the important role of public speaking fundamentals in the general education of students.

Finally, Turman and Barton offer an answer to the pressures of servicing large numbers of students in public speaking courses on a tight budget. The concept of using undergraduate instructor assistants to help in this regard is not new. However, their examination of the efficacy of using them might prove helpful to basic course directors who attempt to justify such an approach to administrators.

I have to say that 2001-2002 has been quite a year. The events of September 11th, the volatility of the stock market, and the reactions of the American people to these events show a real change in the cultural atmosphere. That change is reflected in this year's *Annual*, as well. The essays are certainly not "typical." And, yet, they certainly do yield interesting insight to the field. I might even go so far as to say that this issue reflects an educational risk, a departure from the norm of academic scholarship. This seems fitting in a year when what was "taken-for-granted" is no longer. I hope you enjoy what you read. But, more than that, I hope it challenges you to think differently about the basic course, about journalistic scholarship, and about the way we—the profesorate—relate to our students and with each other.

Sincerely,
Deanna Sellnow