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Editor's Page

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Editor's Page

Despite its nom de guerre, there is nothing “basic” about the basic communication course in colleges and universities. It has served as a locus for research into communication skills, instructional technology, speech anxiety, instructional design and pedagogical practices. All of the research on these topics impacts more than just the basic course, as it is often relevant to instruction in other courses. The work done in the basic communication course is complex and important for both our students and the discipline. In this, the 27th volume of the *Basic Communication Course Annual*, there continues to appear studies that examine the changing face of the course that is the bulwark of the communication discipline.

For a second straight issue the BCCA contains a set of short essays by scholars devoted to discussing one key question. This time the question addressed is “What is the most important area of training for a new basic communication course instructor?” As with the prior issue’s Forum essays, these are varied in their answers. Such variety indicates the multitude of challenges faced by communication departments who deliver large and medium scale basic courses, and whom rely on new pools of instructors either through adjunct faculty or graduate teaching assistants to successfully deliver their course.

In this issue we find four essays in the Forum that provide a diversity of perspectives in their answer to the

training question. First, T. Kody Frey, John F. Hooker and Cheri Simonds propose that the most important piece of training for new basic course instructors concerns speech evaluation. No doubt this particular task is central to a course that depends upon consistency across multiple sections. The second essay, penned by Trisha Hoffman, Tara Franks and Belle Edson, argues that the generational differences inherent in a student population consisting of millennial students poses a significant challenge for new instructors and thus necessitates a strong training dimension for new instructors. In the third entry to the Forum Luke Lefebvre and William Keith build upon the previous Forum by making the case that new instructors need to be trained not on the production of speeches, but on the achievement of the goal of the course: creating competent communicators. Finally, Cheri Simonds, John Hooker and Anna Wright suggest that new instructors need to be trained on how to manage and maintain an effective discussion in their classrooms. Each of these cases is certainly valid, and is indicative of the plethora of issues faced by new instructors within the basic communication course, and the changing nature of training those instructors to effectively deliver this important course.

Consistent with the complexity and richness of the “basic” communication course, this volume of the BCCA also features five very strong research articles on developments within the course. Joshua Westwick, Karla Hunter and Laurie Haleta provide a unique contribution to what we know about teaching public speaking online and how that medium for course delivery impacts both speech anxiety and self-perceived communication competence. The second essay, by Samuel P. Wallace,

proposes a model for updating the basic communication course to focus on outcomes and not assignments. This model also illustrates how departments can build a course that is embedded within general education programs. John F. Hooker and Cheri Simonds then provide an examination of something the discipline often takes for granted: what employers mean when they say they want communication skills in graduates. Specifically, they examine the 2014 Basic Course Director's Conference held in Dayton, Ohio, and use statements by industry professionals in that venue to help tie both basic course research and justifications for the basic course to practical concerns of a core constituency for the course. Mary Z. Ashlock, William A. Brantley and Katherine B. Taylor then deliver a comparison of speech anxiety found in students registered for traditional 15-week courses and those who took the basic communication course in a more intensive format. The final entry to Volume 27 by Alisa Roost is a thoughtful examination of ways in which the basic communication course can help support veterans as they transition back to student life.

All told, this volume of the BCCA contains significant contributions to what we know about instructional technology, speech anxiety, course design, communication skills and pedagogical practices. This scholarship also provides a foundation to continue the conversations we have on a daily basis regarding the basic course, its place in general education, its ability to impact the lives of our students and its importance to society.

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