



Letter from the Editors

Sharon Quiroz

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Michael A. Pemberton

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

The four articles that comprise this second issue of *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines* do not all directly address the conflict between “writing-to-learn” and “writing in the disciplines,” but the journal’s mission as a forum for such issues is served by juxtaposing them here. In “Resistance and Reform: The Role of Expertise in Writing Across the Curriculum Programs.” Daniel Mahala and Jody Swilky take the “writing-to-learn” point of view. They directly attack the “second wave” notion that the engine driving WAC programs should be the mastery of disciplinary languages, asserting that such a program subverts the agenda for social change which has been the core of WAC since its beginnings in England. The authors express doubt that research into the languages of the discipline will produce any critique of those proprietary languages and will therefore merely replicate existing disciplinary constructs — for better or worse. In contrast, however, “Students and Professionals Writing Biology: Disciplinary Work and Apprentice Storytellers,” written with unusual wit and grace by Sharon Stockton, who actually does research the language of biology in journals and classroom practice, explicates the gap between professional practice and curricular representation. And she does so, in part, by critiquing disciplinary practice.

The second set of two articles in this issue tries to find a middle ground between these oppositional stances, making the implicit case that it is indeed possible to valorize the discourse conventions of individual disciplines while simultaneously offering students the opportunity to transcend them. The first reports research by a team of investigators, Ann M. Blakeslee, Jo-Ann M. Sipple, John R. Hayes, and Richard E. Young. “Evaluating Training Workshops in a Writing Across the Curriculum Program: Method and Analysis,” appears to assume that it is a good thing to transmit the values of the disciplines,

while at the same time the authors' method of evaluation very clearly sets forth criteria for teaching excellence which assume the student-centered, writing-to-learn pedagogy of traditional WAC programs-in the tradition of Fulwiler and Young, that is. In the second article, "Introducing Students to Disciplinary Genres: The Role of the General Composition Course," another research team argues that first-year programs in English departments can and should introduce students to the more readily visible aspects of writing in the various disciplines, and suggests a plan for doing so. Patricia Linton is joined by two psychologists, John Madigen and Susan Johnson, in making this interdisciplinary argument.

The members of our editorial board take different positions on this issue, embodying as many different shades of positions as the authors of this issue's articles do, and the contributors whose work we have considered but not yet published here adopt, perhaps, an even greater range of positions. However, the majority of the manuscripts we have received seem to assume that WAC exists to teach students the language of the disciplines. We don't often see articles that build from a theoretical or political position like Mahala/Swilky's, and go on to offer the kind of help with everyday practice in "content" classrooms that the remaining three articles in this issue do.

But surely such theoretical and political assumptions are put into practice every day. We know there are instructors trained in other disciplines who share Mahala/Swilky's agenda for disciplinary and social critique and practice it in their classrooms. However as editors of *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, we have seen no manuscript that examines practice in, for example, a feminist classroom other than the author's own, and that will invariably be a writing class. To study "the language of a discipline" and critique it should mean to study the emerging as well as the dominant and residual languages that serve other disciplines-to use the language of Mahala/Swilky. We would like to see more investigations of this type, and we'd like to ask: How does knowledge production and its accompanying rhetorics change over time in disciplinary discourse? Where are the sites of these emerging reconstructions? And what forms of critique are likely to appear with what effects on inquiry, disciplinary conventions, and writing?