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Editor's Page

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Editor's Page

Joseph P. Mazer, Clemson University

The *Basic Communication Course Annual* features the best scholarship on topics pertaining to our discipline's introductory course, our "bread and butter" class, the "front porch" course, or whatever metaphor you would like to use to characterize the great work that happens here. And Volume 32—the final volume in my editorial term—reflects the great work happening in our corner of the discipline.

The articles presented in Volume 32 encompass a wide range of topics that advance our understanding of basic course pedagogy, practice, and administration.

Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, Karla M. Hunter, Joshua N. Westwick, Angela Hosek, Kristina Ruiz-Mesa, John Hooker, and Lindsey B. Anderson open Volume 32 by mapping existing quantitative measures onto the six essential competencies and associated learning outcomes established by the Social Science Research Council Panel on Public Speaking. This manuscript compiles dozens of measurement resources, aligned by outcome, and identifies areas where future assessment measure development is needed.

Ashley Jones-Bodie, Lindsey B. Anderson, and Jennifer Hall explore the formal and informal resources students enrolled in a basic communication course use to gather information and receive feedback about their course experience, including presentations and work in the class. Their study reveals emergent themes related to student-provided explanations for differing uses and descriptions of sources of information/feedback, including being readily available, providing personalized feedback, being credible and authoritative, and providing examples.

Brandi N. Frisby, Renee Kaufmann, Jessalyn I. Vallade, T. Kody Frey, and Joe C. Martin examine the use of virtual-reality speaking rehearsals as one technology that instructors can adopt to enhance students' public speaking efficacy. In their research, they found that students' efficacy was enhanced in five ways including preparedness, realism, self-awareness, feedback, and comfort level. Conversely, efficacy inhibitors

included the lack of presentational aids, technology issues, and lack of audience realism.

Combining traditional classroom instruction and online instruction—hybrid/blended learning—has emerged as a popular option to mitigate rising enrollments and nontraditional student needs while maintaining known advantages of the face-to-face learning format. Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, Andie Malterud, Anthony Arciero, and Katherine E. Hyatt Hawkins evaluated the effectiveness of a Fundamentals of Communication course (also known as the “hybrid” course) taught in the traditional face-to-face format and in the hybrid/blended learning format, which included the equivalent of one credit taught face-to-face and two credits taught online (graded together as one course). They found that students in the blended format had stronger performances in two areas of their speeches (introduction and overall impression), had higher attendance, and had higher engagement for all types of engagement. However, there were no differences between groups in exam grades, overall course performance, or the amount of growth in self-report competence measures. Overall, results indicate that the blended lecture-lab format of the class can be at least as effective as a fully face-to-face version of the course when designed well, and course format can drive student engagement.

Joseph M. Valenzano III offers various ways of defining “public” and “speaking” as a way of arguing that even courses titled as “Public Speaking” need not rely solely on presentational speaking assignments and instruction in their courses. In other words, he argues that “public speaking” should be a more liberating than restrictive course title and should shift our attention from specific assignments to communication outcomes the course is designed to achieve.

Given that students may not find inherent value in their general education courses and in particular the basic communication course, Jessalyn I. Vallade, Renee Kaufmann, and T. Kody Frey qualitatively explore instructor behaviors and student motivation in the basic course through the lens of self-determination theory. Students’ open-ended responses revealed 28 themes organized by students’ needs of relatedness, autonomy, and competence.

The basic communication course is generally a well-established fixture in the first-year college curriculum. Tim McKenna-Buchanan, Stevie Munz, Anna Wright, and Jeremy Williams compare students who completed both a first-year experience course and a basic communication course alongside students completing only a first-year experience course. After examining data from two cohorts of students, they

found associations between courses taken and retention at the university. The results also revealed that the combination of both a first-year experience course and a basic communication course during the first year fosters emotional support and classroom connectedness.

During my term as editor, I elected to build upon the work of my predecessor, Joe Valenzano, and continue the *Annual's* forum series. This feature is designed to invite scholars and basic course practitioners to propose and debate specific key questions related to the basic course. Submitters to Volume 32 were asked to highlight best practices for *recruiting* to and/or from the basic course. In the section's three essays, scholars address best practices for recruiting students from the basic course and the need to cultivate assistant basic course director positions to be more intentional and deliberate in recruiting and nurturing a pipeline of future course directors. I am certain that you will find these essays helpful as you navigate your role as a basic course instructor, administrator, and/or scholar.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all members of the editorial board who graciously give of their time and energy to ensure the journal features the best scholarship related to the basic communication course. The journal's editorial assistant, Kody Frey (University of Kentucky), spent considerable time preparing the final accepted manuscripts for the publisher. I thank him for his great work. I would also like to thank Maureen Schlangen from the University of Dayton's Roesch Library for her dedication and commitment to the journal. The publication of Volume 32 completes my three-year term as editor of the *Annual*. The journal is now in the very capable hands of Brandi Frisby of the University of Kentucky. Under Brandi's leadership, I am confident that we will continue to publish the best scholarship on our discipline's introductory course.