

Introduction to Volume 22, Issue 3-4

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As 2025 draws to a close, I am struck by the disruption taking place across the higher education landscape. The back-and-forth negotiations between the Trump administration and elite universities over admissions policies, diversity initiatives, and federally funded research are almost surely the most widely reported challenges. The top ten schools in the country may possess the wherewithal to navigate these legal and policy disputes. But most students who rightly see a college degree as a path to a more secure future attend a school with far fewer resources, and many of those students' institutions have little choice but to adapt and adjust. At many schools, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives have quietly (or not so quietly) been rolled back or rebranded. Changes coming to financial aid eligibility will affect many families, complicating affordability for both undergraduate and graduate education. Universities large and small with long-running federal research grant projects are struggling to adapt to new, much lower facilities and administrative rates, after relying on a stable framework for decades. The Department of Education itself is on the chopping block, with profound implications for both K-12 and post-secondary education. While many of these changes are tied up in court, many of them will impact higher education for years. Added to those challenges are the disruptive technologies of generative AI, with important implications for the classroom, critical and creative thinking, reading, and more.

ATD continues to move forward with its commitment to equity and inclusion through a more transparent and expansive submission and review process to help authors and reviewers. Officially launched this past summer with our publication of new guidelines and use of the WAC Clearinghouse's submissions system (see <https://wacclearinghouse.org/atd/submissions/>), over the last six months authors and reviewers have embraced the changes. As part of our inclusion effort, we have also expanded our pool of consulting readers, with a particular focus on newer voices. It is too early to report a fully complete transition to either the new reviewer guidelines or the submissions system, and we continue to invite new consulting readers. But we are making good progress.

This issue contains four articles, as well as the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum's (AWAC) inaugural column. Through a 2024 memorandum of understanding, *ATD* became the official journal of AWAC, and we are excited that Crystal N. Fodrey, AWAC Chair, offers readers an update on AWAC's work. We look forward to regularly featuring an AWAC column in *ATD*. Readers interested in reading strategies and transfer, generative AI (GenAI) in college writing, graduate school personal statements, and academic writing expectations across disciplines will find something meaningful in this issue. Of the four research contributions to the issue, three involve studies of undergraduates, with implications for WAC/WID, writing center administrators, and faculty in a variety of disciplines. For those who coach students on medical school applications, Faith Kurtyka's study of students' writing processes offers valuable insights, as well as a pedagogy that others might adapt. Alisa Russell reports results from a study of faculty perspectives on academic writing, which will undoubtedly interest WAC/WID administrators. WPAs working in first-year writing, writing centers, and

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WAC/WID programs will be eager to engage with Ellen Carillo's article on the transfer of reading practices beyond first-year writing. And any faculty member or administrator who wants to better understand undergraduates' uses of generative AI as part of an effort to develop and refine appropriate assignments and pedagogies will likely find the results from Cheryl H. Duffy, Rose Helens-Hart, and Stephanie M. Weigel's study of students to be quite helpful.

Alisa Russell's contribution, "Faculty Expectations for Expert vs. Upper-level Undergraduate Academic Writing," leads the issue. Her article reports results from dozens of interviews with faculty in STEM, social science, and humanities disciplines. Interested in the relationship faculty see between academic writing in their disciplines and their expectations for advanced undergraduates, Russell frames upper-level, undergraduate academic writing as a transitional genre that aims to enculturate students to writing in specific disciplines. Among the most significant contributions this paper makes to the field are Russell's finding that academic writing is an identifiable genre that functions across disciplines and her identification of eight "major characteristics" of academic writing: questions, situating, argument, engagement with literature, methods + data, analysis and implications, structure, and conventions and style. Russell's article is required reading for anyone responsible for faculty development in WAC/WID. This contribution is also important for scholars whose work explores writers' development of discipline-specific genre knowledge at either the undergraduate or graduate levels.

In "STEM Gets Personal: The Medical School Personal Statement as Developmental Writing Opportunity Amid Generative AI," Faith Kurtyka engages with a highly specialized and largely opaque genre, offers valuable insights into medical school applicants' writing processes, and shares an effective writing group pedagogy. As she makes clear, the personal statement is a problematic component of the medical school application because it calls for subjectivity within a field that has been principally focused on objectivity. Admissions committees are uncertain about the value of the personal statement within an application and have long had concerns about the veracity of students' stories. Generative AI is compounding these concerns. Medical school applicants also find the personal statement to be especially challenging when so much of the pre-med curriculum focuses on objectivity. Kurtyka reports findings from interviews with a dozen students who had recently written a personal statement for a medical school application. Equipped with those themes, she developed and presents a pedagogy that aims to validate subjectivity in an overwhelmingly objective application process. Kurtyka's article is focused principally on the medical school personal statement, which is a very particular genre. At the same time, much of what she reports will be of considerable interest to those who work with students as they apply to any graduate program.

Our third article, "Mindful Reading Beyond First-Year Writing," by Ellen Carillo, draws together the literature on reading practices and transfer. Carillo's multi-institutional and longitudinal study of students who utilized her textbook, *A Writer's Guide to Mindful Reading*, in their first-year writing classes explores the ways that students carry forward reading strategies learned in their writing classes. (None of Carillo's students were research subjects.) While students struggled to accurately represent either the mindful reading framework or several key strategies from the text, suggesting limited transfer, Carillo notes that learning transfer can also involve a repurposing of practices and not merely a straightforward application to a new context. One strategy that consistently emerged through interviews was skimming, and Carillo points to a likely reason for its prevalence: the way that reading is assigned within particular disciplines. Her findings, as well as her recommendations, will be of particular interest to WPAs in writing centers and in WAC/WID.

In "Student Perceptions and Use of GenAI for Writing: 'Great Tool' or 'Pandora's Box?'" Cheryl H. Duffy, Rose Helens-Hart, and Stephanie M. Weigel provide a window into students' use of generative AI for aspects of the writing process. They surveyed undergraduates across a range of disciplines and levels in 2024 to explore disciplinary differences in uses and perceived value of GenAI for writing.

They find that students in business and education programs reported much higher levels of GenAI use than students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences disciplines, with STEM and health and behavioral students falling in the middle. Duffy, Helens-Hart, and Weigel find that most GenAI use seems to be clustered in the early brainstorming and the final proofreading phases of the writing process. As their study also surfaces a substantial gap between students' uses and instructors' guidance, it is fitting that Duffy, Helens-Hart, and Weigel draw together current literature and offer recommendations that can position WAC administrators as key supports for faculty uncertain about where and how to engage meaningfully with GenAI in their teaching.

I want to publicly thank those individuals who served as peer reviewers over the last year and acknowledge their hard work. In 2025, the following individuals contributed their time, expertise, and attention to one or more manuscripts submitted to *ATD*: Christopher Basgier, Antonio Byrd, Pamela Childers, Daniel Emery, Bryna Finer, Anne Ellen Geller, Magnus Gustafsson, Jonathan Hall, Lauren Rae Hall, Jack Hardy, Sandra Jamieson, Diane Kelly-Riley, Karen Lunsford, Chris Manion, Rebecca Hallman Martini, Jessie Moore, Justin Nicholes, Jim Purdy, Paul Rogers, Joanna Schreiber, Chris Thaiss, Susan Thomas, and Nicole Turnipseed. These individuals' work takes place mostly behind the scenes, but it is extraordinarily important professional service that helps to shape the field and strengthen the caliber of scholarship published in the journal. As one might expect from writing scholars, all our reviewers offer thoughtful feedback intended to help our prospective authors advance their intellectual projects, even when a manuscript is not being recommended for publication in *ATD*.

We welcome submissions of original manuscripts for review and possible publication in future open issues, as well as inquiries or proposals for special issues. I am pleased to report that we are in discussions regarding two special issues, one on WAC/WID and alternative grading practices and another on generative AI and WAC. We hope to issue those calls for proposals in 2026. *ATD* remains open to bringing in more voices and perspectives, as evidenced by the recent expansion of our list of reviewers and rearticulation of our editorial process and reviewing criteria (see <https://wacclearinghouse.org/atd/submissions/>). We invite individuals whose work intersects with the mission of the journal to reach out to explore reviewing for *ATD*.

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