EDITORS' COLUMN

We begin this issue of *JBW* with an apology: We are sorry that the journal was so late in arriving. We could offer the usual clichés: delays in author/editor communications, problems in the printing process, and the infamous unforeseen circumstances. The truth is that the lengthy delay in getting this issue to you was caused by CUNY's financial problems which necessitated the retrenching of Ruth Davis, the Associate Editor who has managed the journal for the past decade. And we simply could not get the journal to bed in time without Ruth. As many of you know, Ruth was a critical member of our editorial team. She devoted many unpaid hours to *JBW*, working late into the evenings and almost every weekend. Ruth worked on *JBW* from her bed after a serious accident in last year's blizzard; she even worked on the journal in the hospital at her husband's bedside after his open heart surgery. But you all know Ruth's dedication: She called authors, subscribers, and advertisers to make sure that everyone was okay and getting what they needed from the journal on time. Ruth's generosity of spirit, fierce intelligence, and delightful sense of humor made working with her a joy for us. And on the professional side, Ruth took care of all the subscriptions, advertising, correspondence, and printing. She arranged deadlines with the printer, put the journal on-line (for computer editing), and did all final line-editing. This last activity was probably the most significant: Since *JBW*'s readers consist of scholars across the country, Ruth made sure that each issue was edited to a professional standard. She held *JBW* together through many difficult times. It will never be the same with her.

We are deeply concerned about what the loss of Ruth Davis as *JBW*'s Associate and Managing Editor forebodes for the journal and for our field in general. We believe that a vital journal needs a person like Ruth if is to continue to grow and to serve the needs of its readers. Certainly the need and support for *JBW* is greater than ever, as demonstrated by your subscriptions and by your manuscripts which continue to pour in to our office. We hope that this support will convince CUNY that *JBW*--and all of you--need a strong commitment to the journal and its future.

Again, we apologize for the lateness of this issue, but on a happier note, we are pleased that the issue is such a strong one. It begins with Rebecca Mlynarczyk's account of a case study of the revising processes of one of her basic writing students. Grounded in an analysis of relevant research, Mlynarczyk's study yields insights into the complexi-

DOI: 10.37514/JBW-J.1996.15.1.01

ties of revising and suggests possibilities for more productive teacher responses to student writing. One of her conclusions is that too many basic writers are hampered in their efforts to revise by their attempts to follow rigid "rules" internalized from teachers and textbooks. Michael Newman reviews some of these rules in his description of basic writers' conception of "error." He examines the gatekeeping role of error and the message of exclusion that error incarnates. Newman notes that the words and forms used by basic writers exemplify their alienation from academic discourse and academic life and that the task of bridging that cultural and textual gap falls to teachers of basic writing. In the essay that follows, Carol Severino looks at the way a university has tried to bridge this gap. She traces the history and uses of the "urban mission" trope, both nationally and locally, and examines the ways in which this mission has been realized at the University of Illinois at Chicago through its institutional academic support programs.

The next two essays discuss writing evaluation theory and practice. Willa Wolcott describes methods of evaluating basic writing programs using a variety of writing assessments, including impromptu essays, a multiple-choice editing test, a portfolio assessment, and student and instructor questionnaires. She presents data from a series of evaluations at the University of Florida and concludes that comprehensive evaluation is crucial in demonstrating the effectiveness of writing programs and opening up a dialogue among the instructors in the program. In their essay, Kay Harley and Sally I. Cannon look at evaluation from the student's perspective. Their case study of a "failing" basic writer explores the tension between reader response theory and assessment practices. Rooted in an ethnographic research perspective, this case study explains the advantages and flaws of assessing student writing skills through essay tests and portfolios.

This issue concludes with a response by Sharon Crowley to an essay that appeared in the Fall 1995 issue of *JBW*. In that essay, Ed White contended that theorists who argue for the removal of required freshman composition courses represent an elitist attempt to reduce educational opportunities to many students at urban public universities. In her response, Crowley maintains that White misinterpreted her position; she explains her beliefs about the relations among open admissions, affirmative action, and required composition courses.

We are delighted that scholars such as Sharon Crowley take the time to respond to positions articulated in *JBW*, and we encourage all readers to do so. These responses make the journal "interactive"; they also illuminate the controversies in our field. So we look forward to hearing from you. And we hope to get the next issue to you on time. Thank you for your patience and support.

—***Karen L. Greenberg*** and ***Trudy Smoke***