EDITORS' COLUMN[1]

The articles in this issue cover diverse ground. They include two explorations of writing the personal statement and one article on the role of the literacy narrative in basic writing classrooms; an investigation of contingent faculty perspectives and experiences; and an archival study of Mina Shaughnessy's relationship to high-stakes testing. Yet despite this diverse subject matter, they intersect on the question of *spaces* for basic writing and the experiences that writers and teachers have as they move within those spaces. These articles return us, in particular, to the familiar space of the margin as they consider how voices of students, faculty, and scholars in Basic Writing cross points of access in higher education, and how those voices are received.

In considering the mobility and reception of voices in the field, the six authors featured here document and theorize the experience of being heard, read or misread, understood, and accepted or contested in the academy. What does it *feel* like to project a voice—to author and shape realities—in the valued spaces of higher education? Does it feel motivating? Validating? What questions and resistances emerge, both for the author and audience? What are the forces that determine the feeling of inclusion for writers attempting to fashion an academic identity and move into new institutional spaces, and where do those forces shut down opportunities of inclusion?

Our first author, Marcia Z. Buell, calls this feeling of inclusion "welcome," and in "Negotiating Textual Authority: Response Cycles for a Personal Statement of a Latina Undergraduate," she explores the dynamics of welcome through a profile of one student revising a personal statement for graduate study. Buell focuses primarily on how "intermediary respondents" understand a writer's purpose and audience in academia and, based on their understanding, how they influence the writer's revision choices. In looking at the influence of intermediary respondents, Buell examines "how basic writers learn to reconcile the authority of institutional voices with their own goals, needs, and emerging understandings of institutional discourse." Working with a Latina student, Buell uncovers a particular dilemma that basic writers of color may face in this negotiation of authority: "even if students learn to affirm a perspective of color in basic writing or college composition courses, color-blind discourses, which close off exploration of minority experience, might be reinforced." Buell's article unveils the effects

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of the color-blind impulse on basic writers and the audiences for whom they compose, including the intermediary respondents who leave an almost invisible but indelible mark on a writer's process *and* product.

Staying with the genre of the personal statement, Steven Alvarez looks at the rhetorical challenges basic writers face in arguing their own merits for high-stakes opportunities such as graduate study, grants, and internships. These statements, Alvarez asserts, are designed to position the author in esteemed academic spaces and promote his or her potential value to those spaces. In "Arguing Academic Merit: Meritocracy and the Rhetoric of the Personal Statement," Alvarez tells the story of assigning the personal statement in his classes to help students think about both their self-positioning in the academy and "education's basic operating principle of meritocracy." By opening up students' awareness of how academia shapes its student body and assigns worth, Alvarez hoped his students would better appreciate how individuals advance in the system and, along the way, learn to "play the game strategically." While students did increase their awareness of structures of power and inequality, and while many gained rhetorical advantage in writing their personal statements, some also "held themselves responsible for their own educational failures, and less often challenged the responsibility of teachers or schools for failure." Alvarez considers students' assumptions about themselves and the educational system, and argues that the personal statement helps students increase both their rhetorical savvy and their awareness of power, access, and reward structures in academia.

In our third article, Anne-Marie Hall and Christopher Minnix extend the discussion from the personal statement to the frequently assigned and discussed literacy narrative in "Beyond the Bridge Metaphor: Rethinking the Place of the Literacy Narrative in the Basic Writing Curriculum." Hall and Minnix trace their experiences doing a curricular revision during which "the literacy narrative became a site of conflict." They argue that the genre of the literacy narrative can get drained of its value—in particular, its political import can be diluted—when it is "treated as a bridge to academic writing, or worse as a means of 'easing students into' academic writing." The authors discuss the restructuring of their basic writing course into a regular composition course with a one-credit studio attached; the added time made room for rethinking the role of the literacy narrative and its relationship to the larger sequence of assignments. Hall and Minnix explain: "By slowing down our course, we were able to use the literacy narrative as a wedge, ultimately creating a space for our students in the world of academic literacies." As a result, they could reconceptualize the

pedagogical benefits of the literacy narrative beyond merely serving the role of a bridge, or route of access, to forms of academic writing that may be more valued in our schools.

Next, Jessica Schreyer moves us from considerations of student voice to faculty voice in "Inviting the 'Outsiders' In: Local Efforts to Improve Adjunct Working Conditions." Schreyer argues that the increasing reliance on adjunct labor, and its importance to our students' experience, makes it even more crucial to continually re-examine the "quality of life for faculty, and the quality of education for students." What can be done to enhance adjunct instructors' sense of inclusion, recognition, and engagement in the departments in which they work? Schreyer looks in particular at the diversity of experience and perspectives among the adjunct populations at many institutions and the challenges such diversity presents. In response to these challenges at her school, she developed a project for supporting contingent faculty with professional development and improved communication with faculty at all levels. She explains the benefits: "As I began to formally recognize the expertise and experience of contingent faculty in my own department, I believe it was a move toward professionalizing their work, which in turn will hopefully lead to better material conditions for them." For contingent faculty, as for so many of our students and their advocates, access to positions of respect from which their voices are heard is critical to basic writing's project of inclusion and equity.

Finally, Sean Molloy confronts issues of access at our field's very foundations: at City College during the time of open admissions, Mina Shaughnessy, and the SEEK program she oversaw. In "Diving In or Guarding the Tower: Mina Shaughnessy's Resistance and Capitulation to High-Stakes Writing Tests at City College," Molloy begins to untangle Shaughnessy's complex and evolving position on the hot button issue of high-stakes tests: their role in the conversion and exclusion of populations of hopeful students, and their effects on both teaching and learning. As Molloy tells the story of City College during open admissions and the trajectory of Shaughnessy's career and influence, he unearths the constraints, conflicts, and capitulations that shaped Shaughnessy locally as an administrator and globally as a foundational voice in our field. Scholarship has sometimes been critical of Shaughnessy's work and its influence, but Molloy argues that few of us can entirely transcend the conflicts she embodies between "diving in" and guarding the tower. As Molloy asserts, "Even as we know that guarding the tower will hurt our students, we are constantly pressured and shaped by institutional neuroses that can be hard for us to see."

With this claim, Molloy brings our focus back to how basic writers and their advocates experience their academic lives. What are the pressures in the spaces of basic writing and how do they operate on the voices and identities of the individuals who populate those spaces? From the experiences of one student writing a grad school application; to one teacher working with a class of writers; to program administrators working on curricular redesign, adjunct working conditions, and the purposes and applications of assessment, this issue explores the spaces of change, movement, and access—and the voices, opportunities, and resistances they generate.

— **Cheryl C. Smith** and **Hope Parisi**