Letter from the Editors

We continue to be impressed with the quality and the range of the scholarship being produced by WPAs and submitted to the journal. In this issue both range and quality are evident.

David Blakesley is concerned with the ethical and moral issues surrounding placement into first-year composition, and he believes that directed self-placement, properly implemented, can have far-reaching effects on "instructor training, instructor-student relations, instructor and student attitudes, and [. . .] student performance." His article is more than just an argument for directed self-placement; it is a story about persuading an institution to accept change, about how to identify and approach the various stakeholders, about what strategies to consider, and about where to look for potential resistances. Drawing from his experiences at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, he points out that in the process of arguing for and then implementing their program, WPAs there discovered that changes to the placement procedures had implications well beyond the writing program. They were able to "reshape institutional contexts and conversations."

Theresa Freda Nicolay also is concerned with placement and remediation. She asserts that assessment is based on dialogue, writing, and revision, a thoughtful process of teachers coming to know the students in their classes and WPAs coming to know the students in their programs. In this model of placement, the students take responsibility for their own placement and project which course of the composition sequence will help them do their best work. Because students are "individuals who learn in a variety of ways," they must be offered the opportunity to make decisions about how they can use their own learning strategies to meet the demands of the university.

Jeffrey T. Grabill and Lynée Lewis Gaillet show us what is involved in shaping a writing program committed to community-based work. Like Blakesley's piece, this one offers both a concrete description of one particular program (re)design, and a broader vision of the role of writing programs in insitutional change. They argue that as universities interact more with surrounding communities, writing programs are poised to become the institutional home for such community-based work and the new research projects emanating from it. We thus learn both how to build effective relationships between a writing program and the communities and organizations outside the university, and how our identities as WPAs will necessarily change in the process.

Finally, Ruth Mirtz, Susan Taylor, Keith Rhodes, and Kim van Alke-made combined to tell four different stories about "stopping" as WPAs. On the surface the personal reflections look and sound familiar: struggles with colleagues and administrators, frustrations and refusals, and finally just stopping. Yet the stories quickly show us what the authors explicitly affirm: that "WPAs don't stop in any simple way." The work we value and the beliefs about student learning to which we are committed linger beyond the tenure of the position. Like the other articles in this issue, this article provides both local stories and a broader view of writing program administration as a whole.

Dennis Lynch, Michigan Technological University
Marguerite Helmers, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
David Blakesley, Purdue University