

INTRODUCTION

Journal of Communication Pedagogy

2018, Vol. 1(1) 1-2

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DOI: 10.31446/JCP.2018.01

Central States Communication Association

Making a Difference: The Launch of the *Journal of Communication Pedagogy*

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As this volume goes to press, it will mark the end of my 30th year of college teaching. Since I began my teaching journey in Fall 1987 as a graduate teaching assistant at Illinois State University, I have had the opportunity to teach a variety of courses across a variety of formats at several types of institutions. These courses have ranged from general education requirements (including the basic communication course) to graduate seminars. I have taught these courses face-to-face as well as in blended and online formats. My course enrollments have spanned from as little as two students meeting in my office to as large as 200 students gathering in an auditorium. These schools have served both residential and commuter students enrolled at institutions as varied as the community college, the private college, and the Research 1 university. And through it all, as I mentioned in a 2013 *Spectra* article, my goal always has been to be viewed by my students as an effective instructor who, “as clichéd as it may sound, might possibly make a difference in [their academic] lives” (Myers, 2013, p. 22).

When I was asked to serve as the editor of the *Journal of Communication Pedagogy*, I welcomed the opportunity to assist the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) in creating a journal devoted specifically to the pedagogical practices and ideas that also could make a difference in the teaching lives of CSCA’s members. Despite the contributions made by formal education courses, the implementation of departmental or institutional training programs, the availability of established programs and lines of educational communication research, or even influential mentors, communication pedagogy should be at the forefront when it comes to effective instruction. Mottet and Beebe (2006) conceptualized pedagogy as “the systematic study of teaching and teaching methods. . . . [that] is primarily directed at teacher behaviors and self-perceptions of teacher efficacy and teaching satisfaction that contribute to enhanced learning” (p. 10). Adding to their conceptualization, I would suggest that *communication pedagogy* is the systematic study, reflection, and identification of teaching practices across communication course curricula that results ultimately in effective classroom instruction, gains in student learning, and the establishment of a supportive learning environment.

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As such, this volume is organized around these three practices. *Original research studies* (i.e., the study of teaching practices) are articles that focus on the teaching, the assessment, or the scholarship of teaching and learning of a specific communication course, extra-curricular activity (e.g., forensics), or curriculum (e.g., internships, concentrations/areas of emphases, undergraduate programs). *Reflection essays* (i.e., the reflection of teaching practices) are articles that center on a pedagogical problem or issue encountered by instructors when teaching a specific communication course. *Best practices* (i.e., the identification of teaching practices) are articles that offer tips for teaching or assessing a specific communication course, extra-curricular activity, or curriculum. This volume contains two original research studies, three reflection essays, and eight best practices articles, all of which represent exemplars of communication pedagogy practices, albeit in different forms. Furthermore, I would contend that while recognizable (and well-researched) bodies of instructional literature (i.e., instructional communication, the basic course, critical communication pedagogy, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and service-learning) do exist, these bodies have the capability to inform communication pedagogy scholarship, and vice versa. To support this contention, this volume contains a forum that reviews the evolution of communication pedagogy as a field of study and offers ways in which these five aforementioned bodies inform the study of communication pedagogy.

Staton (1989) posited that effective instruction requires instructors to be both content specialists and competent communicators. I would add further that effective instruction also requires instructors to be(come) well-versed in communication pedagogy. It is my hope as editor that the *Journal of Communication Pedagogy* emerges as a resource that enables instructors to do just that by not only assisting them in increasing their classroom effectiveness, but also helping instructors teach in a manner that does, indeed, make a difference in their students' academic lives.

References

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doi:10.1080/03634528909378777