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# Retrospective

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MEGAN LAMBERT

*Megan Lambert is co-editor of Stylus. She has worked with the journal since Fall 2015.*

I am honored to play a role in observing and celebrating the 10th anniversary of *Stylus: A Journal of First-Year Writing* because of how much it has meant to me and how it has influenced my work in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric. While I may have only been involved with *Stylus* for half of its years of publication thus far, I've seen remarkable growth over the past five years. In this issue alone, we're publishing an ePortfolio and a podcast for the first time. These genres weren't the result of any kind of special call for the 10th anniversary issue; rather, they are the authors' creative approaches to the assignments they were tasked with in their first-year writing courses. What you'll find in any issue of *Stylus* over the past ten years are pieces by students who saw their assignments as opportunities to learn more about the ways writing and rhetoric are relevant to their lives and shape the world around them. Read any of these pieces and you'll be inspired, as I have been, by the ways these authors have engaged in the discovery and knowledge-making of writing at such an early point in their college careers.

When I first started teaching, I was a graduate student here at the University of Central Florida. I was so excited to teach the classes I still teach now, ENC 1101 and ENC 1102, because of what I'd learned in my graduate class about teaching composition, and because of what I'd seen that UCF students could do from the publications I'd read in *Stylus: A Journal of First-Year Writing*. Now in my fifth year as a full-time instructor, I'm still just as thrilled to teach first-year writing, because while the courses may be the same, the students are always different, and the work they produce never fails to amaze me. I believe *Stylus* plays a large role in that, as both a model and a platform.

One of the challenges I experienced teaching for the first time was knowing that the best way for students to learn how to write within new and unfamiliar genres is through guided practice and seeing examples of what those genres look like, how they're written, and what their conventions are across iterations. As a first-time teacher, I didn't have any prior responses to my assignments that I could share with students as a model. But I did have *Stylus*. I spent hours reading through the work represented in each issue, taking notes on which articles would best reflect my own assignment requirements, but overall just appreciating the smart ways these published authors were taking up the concepts and literacy skills I planned to teach.

My students that first semester certainly benefited from seeing examples of literacy narratives, rhetorical analyses, and research papers like they were being asked to write, and I have continued to use *Stylus* in my classroom ever since then. Because not only does *Stylus* serve an important role in the teaching of our first-year writing courses by providing students with models they can learn from, but it also offers students a platform for their own writing to be elevated and disseminated. When they see work published by students just like them, work crafted in the same class they're taking now, they start to think about the tasks they're assigned as more than check marks on their to-do list toward graduation. They start to see ENC 1101 and ENC 1102 as more than just general education requirements. They start to see writing beyond the classroom. It has been my greatest joy as a teacher to read through papers that already deserve high marks and see students eager to improve further still, because they know now that writing is not perfectible and this is more than just a grade; it's an opportunity to share what they've learned.

Then, as Matthew Bryan graciously invited me into the role of Co-Editor, I learned more about the behind-the-scenes work that goes into the publication of *Stylus*. I got to work with all of the students involved, from the authors to the editorial team, as well as with my colleagues on the faculty advisory board. Serving in this role has been just as rewarding an experience as teaching.

What a joy it is to experience the excitement of the authors when you let them know that their work has been selected to be published in *Stylus*, and then to coach them through the process of responding to suggested revisions by the faculty committee and the copyeditors to finalize their work for publication while still maintaining their purpose and voice. These authors are some of UCF's best and brightest, students who have often declared majors outside of the College of Arts and Humanities and express pride and even surprise at this writing-related accomplishment.

Then it's even more incredible to see some of these authors return, feeling a connection to *Stylus* and wanting to continue their involvement as student editors. Each issue of *Stylus* is made possible by a team of students who serve as the editorial review board, reading all of the submissions we've received and working together to select those that move on to the faculty advisory board, as well as the production editors, who review the selections for publication and give careful and thoughtful feedback for revision to help the authors best reach their audience. These editors bring valuable perspectives about writing and engage in enthusiastic conversations around the work that *Stylus* represents and what our audience will appreciate and learn from each publication. Every semester that they return, I've gotten to see not only how they're developing as scholars in their chosen fields, but also as readers and writers.

Over the years, I have seen how *Stylus* serves as a motivating factor and site of professional development for UCF students, and also for myself. In ways, it has made me a better teacher; because of *Stylus*, I have innovated assignments, I have given more thoughtful feedback, and I have developed working relationships with some students that have gone beyond my classroom. And now as I look forward to the future of the journal, serving as its editor, I hope I can continue this legacy of excellence started and upheld by Matthew Bryan for the first ten years, doing my part to provide opportunities for students to see themselves as writers and to shine a light on the excellent work our authors, editors, and faculty members engage in year after year.

## **Megan Lambert**

Megan Lambert is an instructor and Composition Coordinator for the Department of Writing and Rhetoric. She has been teaching at UCF since 2013, first as a Graduate Teaching Associate and then as a full-time instructor. She loves all things Orlando, USWNT, and Disney.