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# Retrospective

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DAN MARTIN

*Dan Martin is a former UCF faculty member and a founding member of the Stylus Faculty Advisory Board. He worked with Stylus from its beginning in 2009 through 2014.*

When I joined the *Stylus* editorial team 10 years ago, I never imagined the type of resource the journal would become for UCF faculty and students. The longevity of the journal is a testament to its value as a pedagogical and epistemic resource for both students and instructors. *Stylus* carves out an important space for the department to appreciate, validate, and share some of the most insightful student writing taking place in the First-Year Composition program, facilitating a writing culture that extends well beyond the department. *Stylus* has played a major role in the department's efforts to build and sustain a dialogic writing community across the university, and it has contributed to the university's increased support for first-year writing. Broader university support for writing programs and initiatives reshapes how students value their writing. The journal provides students with an opportunity to share their ideas and research with an audience they know and value and that moves beyond the instructor and course, and this has been a great way to motivate students to learn and to build their confidence in their writing and research abilities.

Student publications are dynamic pedagogical resources for teaching first-year writing that instructors can use to model exceptional student writing and research. Modelling essays is important for developing good writers, and it can increase a student's motivation to learn and confidence to write. Using student work as a model is important because students relate to and identify with their peers more than their instructors. Students tend to underestimate themselves and their writing, hindering their motivation to learn and write. Seeing their peers, maybe a close friend or someone they know personally, produce publishable work can convince students that they have a similar scope of learning and potential. Students may take more risks with their writing once they have a chance to observe and discuss what other students like them have been able to produce in their first-year writing courses.

Discussing with students how their peers managed their research projects and contributed to a larger scholarly conversation can increase a student's motivation to research and write, which builds their confidence. Using *Stylus* publications in the classroom to teach students the research process and to demonstrate how students like themselves have been able to join academic conversations about writing, add to those conversations, and extend the field's understanding of how writing works is an effective pedagogical tactic for motivating students to write and research. *Stylus* gives instructors a tool to simulate how writing research is produced, shaped, and delivered for a scholarly community. Having students examine how other students like them were able to connect their research to a scholarly community within their university and contribute to a larger body of knowledge teaches students how writing, research, and learning are symbiotic and gives them a paradigm to develop their own research strategies. Modelling is important for motivating students to learn and write, and modelling student work can increase students' confidence in their writing because students can see what their peers were able to create and then use that as a marker for quality and model to strive towards.

*Stylus* has been instrumental in shaping how first-year writing at UCF is taught. It has given dozens of students an opportunity to share their amazing writing and research, and this has, in turn,

motivated students to write and research and enhanced their confidence in their writing and researching skills.

## **Dan Martin**

Dan Martin is an assistant professor and writing program administrator at Central Washington University where he teaches a variety of graduate and undergraduate writing courses. He is currently developing and implementing a Stretch Program to mainstream developmental writing, and his research examines digital writing and misinformation, writing program administration and open-access institutions, and writing across disciplines.