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# **Perspectives in Learning**

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### **Columbus State University**

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#### **Editor, Bonita Friend Williams**

Reading Education  
Columbus State University  
4225 University Avenue  
Columbus, GA 31907-5645

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## About this Issue

Welcome to Volume 15 of *Perspectives in Learning*. I would like to thank Dr. Jan Burcham for her years of service as editor of the journal and especially for this year of transition as she assumed the responsibilities of Chair of the Department of Teacher Education. During her tenure as *Perspectives* editor, she expanded the interdisciplinary nature of the publication and initiated the online format as a complement to the established print journal. As editor of this issue, I have sought to continue an interdisciplinary focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning and to uphold the standard of excellence for which Jan and other editors laid the foundation.

In the first article, Frederick Gordon shares his exploratory research related to student writing on a controversial topic in a core course required of all college majors. The selected topic, whether or not execution by lethal injection is a form of cruel and unusual punishment, elicited a positive increase in knowledge and level of comfort in writing about the controversial topic. The implications for future research provide insight regarding the benefits of using both controversial topics and writing assignments to improve student learning in core college courses.

In the next article, Kimberly Gill and her colleagues David Kerr and Kyle Christensen highlight faculty responses to reduced university budgets at a time when accountability for student retention, progress, and graduation is increasing. Their paper discusses teaching and mentoring strategies in both face-to-face and online settings that were designed to enhance student learning during such challenging times. Focused at the department level, the paper represents a collaborative professional response that incorporates student-centered pedagogy, technology and real world learning experiences to promote student success.

Amanda Andrews and Jennifer Brown share results of their study investigating reasons for college choice and academic success as college freshmen. Education and health professions majors (nursing, health and exercise sciences) were surveyed and their responses correlated with freshman year academic performance. Findings may be beneficial in recruitment and retention efforts for programs that are preparatory for career entry after undergraduate degree completion.

Though much attention has been shifted to the recruitment, retention, and graduation of undergraduate college students, success of graduates in their preparatory fields is also of importance, especially in the field of education. Jane Finn and Vicki Lynn Holmes share the results of their study of graduates teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Participant interviews revealed perceived strengths and weaknesses of the programs in preparing graduates for teaching success in a global context for this specialized student population.

Allison Kabel, Ying Hsiu Liu, and Jessica Dimka also investigated career preparation programs. Their study of health science programs across the United States provides a big picture of program characteristics, occupational targets, and delivery format. Critical issues are raised regarding the need for healthcare workers and programs available to prepare individuals to meet those workforce needs.

Finally, Sallie Miller offers a view of teacher education from the perspective of increased professional accountability for Georgia Teacher Preparation Programs. Her essay outlines what can be perceived as threats to “business as usual” or opportunities for reform that are realistic and relevant.

Overall, this issue is a compilation of articles that have identified current challenges on college campuses, faculty responses to those challenges, and investigations of the impact of a college education on career preparation that can meet community needs. I hope readers find this issue to be informative, enlightening, and an inspiration to continue or to commence your own investigations. *Perspectives in Learning* welcomes your manuscripts for publication consideration.

*Bonita Friend Williams*, Editor

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\*Editor's Note: This is the correct, final draft of Dr. Miller's article. The article that appeared in the print version of this issue was an earlier draft and was printed in error. My sincerest apology goes to Dr. Miller and readers. The correct draft will be reprinted in the Spring 2015 issue of *Perspectives in Learning*.