

Letter from the Writing Director

Dear Composition Student:

Welcome to the first edition of *Fresh Voices*, a collection of writing that represents the effort, commitment, and talent of English 134 students. While enrolled in the very course you are taking right now, over one hundred of last year's students submitted their work to be considered for publication in this collection. While the selection committee only accepted seventeen essays to be included here, we were fortunate to have had many ambitious and dynamic essays to choose from. However, it's important to note that we do not present these essays to you because they earned "A's" (frankly, we don't know what grades these essays received) or because they are perfect. Rather, these essays are typical of the intellectual engagement encouraged in Cal Poly's writing classes. In effect, our intention is not for you to imitate these essays. Rather, we value the work of these writers because they took sophisticated approaches to the same assignments you are likely to meet in your ENGL 134 course.

The editors' notes that precede each essay are intended to guide you as you read. I suggest reading each essay in this collection with an eye toward your own writing. What can you learn from your peers who have completed English 134? At the end of the collection, you will also find some basic information about composition courses at Cal Poly. In addition, I encourage you to acquaint yourself with the "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism" section. Finally, at the end of collection, you will find information for submitting your own work for consideration in next year's *Fresh Voices*.

As the Director of Writing at Cal Poly, my job is to ensure that you receive progressive and innovative approaches to writing instruction. Thus, you will soon find that writing at the college level requires you not only to hone the skills you have been building throughout your educational career, but also to develop new approaches to writing that you have not considered previously. Your instructor will expect you to work hard and to keep an open mind and a positive attitude. In my experience, students who are committed to their old methods of writing (those who refuse to revise or do everything at the last minute) tend to struggle the most in English 134. For instance, you will be asked to write essays that do not follow the five-paragraph structure—or other formulaic approaches to writing—you may have encountered in high school.

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Instead, you will learn to make your own informed choices as writers by choosing an organizational strategy that suits your topic, using language and punctuation most effective for the rhetorical situation, addressing your audience appropriately, and selecting essay topics you care about.

The selection committee and I welcome you to composition at Cal Poly!

Dr. Brenda M. Helmbrecht
Director of Writing
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