Retrospective

DANIEL TRUESDELL

Daniel Truesdell’s article, “Constructing Identity in Academic Writing: A Case Study on Rhetorical Awareness in Engineering Discourse,” was published in Stylus 6.1 in Spring 2015 and earned 1st Runner-Up for the 2015 John C. Hitt Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing. He also served as assistant editor for Issue 6.2.

Five years ago, I began writing a research paper for my ENC 1102 class and I never would have guessed that it would be the start to a journey that I’m still travelling on. At that time, I was an undergraduate engineering student and figured that a research paper assignment on writing and rhetoric would have little to do with the career path and work that I envisioned myself doing after I graduated. So, I approached the assignment like most others I had done before: do well enough to earn a good grade from the professor. But this assignment was different from the others—there was a journal named Stylus, and if I did a good enough job on my paper I could submit it to Stylus and maybe have it published! The stakes for my paper were suddenly higher, making it unlike any assignment I had worked on before. I was writing the paper not just for my professor, but also for a group of Stylus faculty and student reviewers, and hopefully the academic community of Stylus readers. The prospect of publishing my paper in Stylus pushed me to dig deeper into the research process to produce something that was bigger than a grade in a class. I needed to develop, investigate, and answer a research question that would matter to my new audience, which turned into a months-long effort that made me realize how much I loved the research process, and how relevant writing and rhetoric actually were to my field of engineering.

My paper ended up being accepted for publication in Stylus, and the following semester I served on the student editorial review board. I enjoyed the whole experience so much that I participated in research opportunities in engineering for the rest of my time at UCF, and ultimately decided to attend graduate school to train for a career in research. Not only did my experience with Stylus prepare me for these tasks on a macro-scale, but the details I learned while writing my research paper assignment have carried over to help me communicate my research more effectively by increasing my rhetorical awareness as a writer within the research paper genre. Looking back on the experience, I’m so appreciative of the entire Stylus team—editors, faculty, and student reviewers—for providing such a great opportunity to recognize and share the writing produced by UCF’s composition students. Having my paper published in Stylus was rewarding, but it wasn’t the fact that it got published that caused me to start my journey into writing and research; it was the process of writing my paper and the things I learned along the way that inspired me to pursue my current path. So, my advice to UCF students is to use Stylus as motivation to treat your writing as more than just a class assignment. You might be rewarded with recognition and a larger audience for your work if you choose to invest the time and effort, and you never know how you might be inspired during the process.
Daniel Truesdell

Daniel graduated from the University of Central Florida in 2016 with his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. He received first runner-up for the John C. Hitt Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing for his article in the spring 2015 edition of *Stylus: A Journal of First-Year Writing*. He is currently a 4th year PhD candidate in electrical engineering at the University of Virginia, where he is actively researching on topics related to low-power integrated circuit design for internet-of-things and biomedical applications.