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Editors' Introduction

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Re-imagining professional communication pedagogy for the globalized classroom

Special issue introduction

Our special issue of the *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization* investigates the changing character of professional communication pedagogy in an increasingly integrated world economy. To that end, the articles in this special issue explore how to adapt the teaching of professional communication in a way that meets the demands of an increasingly globalized student body. We hope, too, that this special issue promotes RPCG as a channel for future streams of research and thought for scholars to engage the interculturally-shaped pedagogical issues emerging from our present globalized classrooms.

As our classrooms become more and more internationalized and our organizations more global, we face constant demands to understand student needs and expectations in new ways and to adapt our professional communication pedagogy accordingly. The authors published in this special issue represent the forefront of academics who have begun to recognize the serious challenge that internationalization presents to the conventional pedagogy of tertiary education.

Professional communication is positioned at the forefront of pedagogical issues emerging from our increasingly globalized student body, and the need to share our pedagogical knowledge is paramount. We believe that the three articles published here do just that.

One of the most rapidly-changing factors allowing for breakthroughs and new approaches in pedagogy is the use of technology to bridge the physical distance among students and allow for international interactions. The use of technologically innovative simulations is exactly what Kelly Grant, Timo Lainema, Elizabeth Tuleja and Jeffrey Younger have done in their “Teaching Professional Communication in a Global Context: Using a Three-Phase Approach of Theory Exploration, Self-Assessment, and Virtual Simulation.” In their paper, the authors describe a collaborative teaching endeavor employed across three universities in Austria, Finland and the United States. The students from all three locations worked together in a virtual team simulation called Virtual Teams in International Business or VIBu. The authors explain the innovation of real-time simulation that connects professional communication theory with actual practice. In describing the simulation, they show how their students were led to challenge their own preconceptions and actively recognize and apply their classroom knowledge of different values, beliefs, and norms to work successfully in international teams.

As the field of professional communication grows, new pedagogical tools are developed. One such tool is explained and charted by Joseph Moses and Ann Hill Duin in their contribution to this issue entitled “Intercultural Connectivism and Personal Learning Networks in Course Redesign.” The Personal Learning Network (PLN)—though still largely seen as an innovative practice—is not in itself an entirely new idea. What is new, though, is the application of PLN to intercultural professional communication pedagogy. A PLN is an intentional strategy for learning with others through distributing knowledge across a network of connections, a process called *connectivism*. The PLN approach is particularly relevant to an increasing level of connectivity among the electronically-linked students now entering the university classroom. Because of its interactive and personalized character, the authors argue, the connectivism that comes from applying PLN to intercultural professional communication allows for effective visualization of cross-cultural understanding.

Finally, another factor affecting professional communication pedagogy as well as nearly all fields in higher education is the presence of large numbers of international students in the domestic classroom. How one teaches professional communication or any other subject must take into account the multinational composition of the classes being taught. The general prevailing wisdom is that international students have markedly different needs and expectations from domestic students. That said, very little empirical research has shown whether this strongly-held pedagogical belief is or is not true. This gap is why Linda Macdonald and Binod Sundararajan’s research paper here is so noteworthy. In “Understanding International and Domestic Student Expectations of Peers, Faculty, and University: Implications for Professional Communication Pedagogy,” Macdonald and Sundararajan examine expectations in a Canadian university where the number of international students has increased by 300% from 2009 to 2013. They surveyed one cohort of professional communication students’ expectations for a number of issues during their first, second and third semesters. What they found challenges the presumption that international and domestic students would have markedly different expectations. While they did find some differences in the two groups, on the whole, the study shows an increasing convergence of expectation among international and domestic students. By contrast, they found a much more substantial gap between instructor expectations and all

students than existed between foreign and domestic students. The conclusion Macdonald and Sundararajan reach is as jarring as it is important:

This study debunks commonly held beliefs about both international and domestic students. Generations Y and Z have grown up in a globalized environment. As a result of this globalized view, the commonalities among students as a generation significantly outweigh the differences. Rather than adjust our pedagogical practice to suit our perceptions of the needs of international students, we must adjust practice to suit the needs of a globalized generation.

It is our hope that the articles presented here help move our pedagogical thinking and practice forward to correspond with current drives to enhance our conceptualization of culture and the implications of globalization for rhetorical and professional communication practice. We believe that this special issue has showcased the emerging knowledge and new pedagogical and research methods that help us understand how we are adapting to meet the critical professional communication demands of today's globalized classroom.