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A Review of the Inaugural Issue of The Journal of Access, Retention, and Inclusion in Higher Education

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The launch of the Journal of Access, Retention, and Inclusion in Higher Education (formerly the ACT 101 Journal) comes at a key moment in higher education. With its emphasis on highlighting not only student success, but also access and inclusion in higher education, it stands ready to inform scholars, practitioners, and higher education leaders about the important work being done in these areas. The Journal of Access, Retention, and Inclusion in Higher Education (JARIHE) has a unique opportunity to bring policy, practice, and research together to improve student success, as evidenced by its inaugural volume.

Volume 1 provides readers with a foundational overview of developmental education, strengths-based perspectives, retention and student success, Act 101, and access and inclusion. Articles ranging from *The History of Developmental Education* by Dr. Marie Brunner to *A Comprehensive Engagement Theory* by Dr. Craig Smith provide a foundation for readers unfamiliar with these topics, while articles such as *Mind the Gap: Decolonizing the Developmental Writing Classroom Through a Theory of Cultural Rhetorics* by K. Jamie Woodlief provide more in-depth coverage that should interest even the most experienced readers.

As editor John Craig explains in his note, JARIHE is unique in its emphasis on changing the perspectives on developmental education. Instead of the deficit perspective often associated with students who enroll in developmental courses, JARIHE emphasizes the importance of viewing all students from a strengths-based perspective. This approach has the potential to set JARIHE apart from other higher education journals which focus on access, retention and success, though it will require that the editorial board remain committed to only publishing articles that speak to this vision.

Recommendations

As a relatively new journal, JARIHE needs to establish its voice and identity among the other journals that publish on higher education and student success. In order to do so, we suggest that the editorial board consider four recommendations.

First, to ensure that JARIHE can evolve to broadly inform discourse and practice in these areas, we recommend that the editors consider adopting a standardized organizational structure for the journal. Using the content of Volume 1 (Fall 2018) as a guide, we suggest that future volumes be organized as follows. First, historical, conceptual, or theoretical articles that frame or discuss issues of access, retention, or inclusion, and inspire the reader to think critically about these topics. Next, articles that highlight best practices and the innovative work being done to promote student retention through access and inclusion. Research articles that report on scholarly investigation into these topics might come next. Finally, we suggest that the editors consider concluding each volume with a section that reviews books, reports, or other published works on the topics of access, retention, and inclusion.

A unique way that JARIHE can contribute to the field might be to raise the voices of higher education practitioners and scholars who themselves were participants from access and inclusion programs. By inviting submissions that draw directly from writers' lived experiences, JARIHE will be able to cement its place among higher education as the place to find important published works on special admissions, developmental education, or other access and inclusion programs.

We also encourage the editors to expand the perspectives present in JARIHE by broadening the editorial board or journal staff to include representatives from a wider variety of institutions, institution types, and geographic regions. We also recommend that the journal expand its author base. This growth might be achieved by intentionally identifying potential contributors based on conference presentations, masters' theses, or doctoral dissertations. The increasing public attention on issues of access, retention, and inclusion has resulted in a number of government- and organization-sponsored reports highlighting people and institutions doing innovative work in these areas; JARIHE might also consider using these as opportunities to invite new authors to the journal.

Finally, we recommend that JARIHE establish standards for formatting and organization across articles published in the journal. Doing so will help establish a visual presence for the journal that readers can recognize and identify with while simultaneously providing a framework that might encourage submissions from a new and diverse author pool. A long-term option for the journal may be to follow the models established by other higher education publications and become two publications, one focused on research and the other focused on theory and practice.

In Conclusion

Building on the foundation of the ACT 101 journal, a publication initiated in the early 1990's and concluding with a commemorative issue in 2007, JARIHE's emphasis on research and best practices in developmental education and special admission programs should not be underestimated. A journal focused on access, retention, and inclusion could cover a wide range of topics and lose the focus that made the ACT 101 Journal such a unique contribution to the field. In its expanded form, we encourage the editorial board to nurture JARIHE in an intentional and careful way. In doing so, it will not only establish its role in higher education literature but also ensure that access and inclusion programs remain front-and-center.