

SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME ESL TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND RESEARCHERS to this volume in the Michigan Series on Teaching Academic English in U.S. Post-Secondary Programs.

Because ESL and former ESL students are playing an ever more important role in the make-up of undergraduate classes in colleges and universities in United States, this series was designed to provide a venue to explore topical issues relevant to the teaching and learning of English for academic purposes (EAP). The books in the series are aimed at educators in undergraduate settings who are seeking insights based on both practice and research. Theorists will find the books to be useful for reference, while their tone, content, and organization embrace the larger audience of practicing teachers and administrators (both experienced and less experienced), pre-service teachers, and teacher trainers. The series is motivated by our belief that we can do a better job of helping ESL students transition to higher education, meet the challenging academic demands of undergraduate course work, and enjoy success as they graduate with two- and four-year degrees. College educators must become better informed about the needs and experiences of these students and their potential to contribute to society. Their diverse backgrounds bring strengths to undergraduate settings as well as challenges.

Enrollment figures for ESL and former ESL students in higher education are significant and continue to grow. We hope that the books in this series will encourage educators who work with these students to reflect on current practices, develop new understandings, and take action when change is warranted. Learning about instructional approaches informed by research and practical application benefits teachers, their students, and their institutions. In higher education, institutional missions include both teaching and research. In contrast to the research mission of most universities, most two-year and many four-year colleges give more weight to teaching in faculty workloads; consequently, teachers in such institutions have heavy teaching loads and limited resources or support for research. This series seeks to provide greater access to important investigations in this area and support practitioners in disseminating their works.

This collection, *Research on ESL in U.S. Community Colleges: People, Programs, and Potential*, compiled by Kathleen M. Bailey and Maricel G. Santos, sets forth a range of issues that now characterize EAP in the United States. This collection of studies—with its focus on community colleges—explores some of the most important challenges for EAP educators in a crucial area of U.S. higher education. Bailey and Santos have organized the studies into five themes: curricula,

technology, retention and persistence, identity, and defining and assessing success. This approach provides a sampling of research in each area and represents varied voices and perspectives.

The volume's part on curriculum focuses on how EAP instructors can effectively blend language instruction with academic content relevant to college settings in California, Florida, Hawai'i, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Texas. The technology chapters are set in Arizona and California and confirm positive response to the use of technological tools in language learning with caveats. The part on retention and persistence explores influential student and programmatic factors in studies taking place in Massachusetts and Oregon. Identity construct, a variable of particular volatility for those experiencing self in multiple cultures and languages, is visited in settings in Arizona and Hawai'i. The collection's final part contrasts student and institutional perspectives on success in California and Florida. The struggle for ongoing reform in all five of these areas is endemic to ESL programs, and readers will gain insights into relevant practice while learning from studies that can serve as a basis for additional research. Part of the community college mission is a strong commitment to meeting local needs, and these studies serve to illustrate community connections and social implications while providing insights across common threads.

In their introduction, Santos, Charbonnet, and Bailey note that there is lack of research in the area of community college ESL for a variety of compelling reasons. At the same time, they express optimism about the spirit of those in these settings to overcome support limitations, carry out research, and publish their findings. As they say in the introduction, "In spite of these challenges, we know from experience that community college practitioners and administrators hunger for opportunities to exchange ideas and build the empirical base on community college ESL students." This book demonstrates the truth of that insight into the felt needs of community college educators—given the opportunity to carry out and publish research about their students and the education offered those students in their colleges, college teachers can do work that clarifies current problems and points the way to changes that correct those problems.

One former ESL student of Miami Dade College (Florida), Rafael Alonso, said about his ESL classroom experiences, "I think you encouraged me and my classmates to continue our education and break all the language's barriers." These words capture the spirit of this volume. "Continuing beyond barriers" is our goal for all ESL students and their educators; proposing and exploring systematic ways to achieve this goal is the purpose of this series.

Cynthia M. Schuemann
Joy M. Reid
Patricia Byrd