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Editor's Introduction

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

By Tom Kinnaban

In the following pages you'll find wonderful examples of many different kinds of writing: persuasive essays, literary and cultural analyses, and studies of problems facing our communities today. While their topics and aims differ, they are alike in their excellence. These eight essays were produced by students in Duquesne University's First-Year Writing program, and they won top honors in our annual competition. Of the many outstanding essays submitted to this competition, these were deemed to be the finest—and they truly are excellent examples of what motivated, talented, hard-working students can produce.

The faculty and graduate students of the English Department teach the first-year writing classes (UCOR 101: Thinking and Writing Across the Curriculum, UCOR 102: Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing, and HONR 104: Honors Inquiry I), but the students in the classes come from across the university. This year the prizewinners represent four of the University's nine undergraduate schools: Education, Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Pharmacy. Our goal for first-year writing classes is to provide a space where Duquesne's diverse students come together and have a common intellectual experience. The students here examine everything from improving campus and community health, to the role of racism in the work of Pittsburgh playwright August Wilson, to what Bram Stoker's *Dracula* can teach us about the problem of addiction. Our students are engaging with the world, with creative texts, and with the conditions of their own lives. They are doing what students in a first-year writing class are supposed to do, and doing it impressively.

Although excellent, these essays are not *perfect*; with only a few minor exceptions, I have declined to line-edit them because I want the Duquesne community to see what its first-year writers are actually doing—and to show our incoming freshmen what they can realistically aspire to produce. These essays show minds struggling with complicated issues; they are a snapshot of a process of thinking.

I'd like to thank all of the faculty who undertook the task of judging these essays and selecting winners from the many fine entries we received. This year, our judges were Jim Purdy, Erin Speese, Matt Ussia, Rebecca Cepek and Gregory Specter. Thanks to all of them for their hard work, and additional thanks to Shawntaye Sledge and Hannah Muczynski in the English Department office for their admirable administrative work. As ever, I'd also like to thank the Office of the Provost, whose support keeps this contest and journal going; Gina O'Malley and the staff of the Marketing and Communications office, who design and produce this journal; and of course all of the magnificent instructors in the First-Year Writing program.