

2016

## Letter from the Editors

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### Recommended Citation

Marston, Rachel and Schlude, Jason M. (2016) "Letter from the Editors," *Headwaters*: Vol. 29, 1-3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/headwaters/vol29/iss1/1>

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## Letter from the Editors

“Headwaters” is an evocative and powerful word. When associated with a community of scholars and teachers like ours, it speaks to an important understanding: our efforts as educators have the potential to grow together into something larger and more influential, a body of human work that we can draw upon to better understand and shape the world around us.

A similar philosophy gives rise to the scholarly impulse more broadly. In many cases this impulse takes as its subject some facet of human identity, especially its evolution over time. And just as scholars beyond our college and university community share our goals, we also share this deep interest of theirs in the human experience across the ages. Our work as scholars often stems from asking who we have been, who we are, and who we may become.

The work in this edition of *Headwaters* presents a wide range of elegant and thoughtful approaches to answering these questions. Vincent Smiles, for example, explores how an extreme conception of materialism has become dominant and led to a “mismeasuring” of what it means to be human, which has produced a string of discriminations and injustices. Interested in a human evolution of a different sort, Louis Johnston and Peggy Landwehr Roske investigate the influence of changing transportation infrastructure on the design of both our campuses. Anna Lisa Ohm then returns us to the tragic, considering how the devaluation of women and children in the 19th century may have thwarted the work of Dr. Ignác Semmelweis and specifically his attempts to reduce death from childbed fever. And while

Elizabeth Wurdak offers us a poem that asks us to think about the way students present themselves differently in different spaces, Christina Mougoyanni Hennessy shows how the Yambiro Project in Otavalo, Ecuador, has led her to investigate indigenism and ultimately argue that miscegenation and acculturation may be “the path to combat segregation and discrimination.”

Yet this issue stands to contribute still more to a discussion of human identity. Samuel Johnson’s ceramics ask us to think about our relationship to vessels, both as objects of everyday use and as objects of art. Rachel Melis’ drawings evoke the sense of wonder present in childhood and in the observation of it. In different ways, both artists invite us to change the way we look at the world.

The second part of the volume consists of a roundtable discussion entitled “We Are Many: Engaging Diversity in the Classroom.” It furthers the conversation about who we are, specifically who our students are and who we as a faculty and staff are at these two institutions. The roundtable stems from important campus-wide conversations about diversity and our need to further explore and expand our understandings of and approaches to diversity, especially pedagogically. In fact, even as this issue of *Headwaters* goes to press, a Mellon grant awarded to our schools in spring 2016 is enhancing our efforts in this area and supporting our work with American students of color. For this roundtable, we asked the authors to consider: Where does diversity exist in this community, what are the challenges and opportunities that it offers us, and how can we as faculty and staff create an environment where it is embraced? In this section, Jon McGee discusses demographic changes in the United States and Minnesota and their impact on our classrooms. Others, like Madhu Mitra, Patricia Bolaños - Fabres, Sucharita Sinha Mukherjee, Mary Jane Berger, OSB, and Patricia Klug, explore how we might better understand our students and propose various approaches on campus toward engendering greater

diversity, from academic coaching to specific assignments and course design. A final piece by Mara Faulkner, OSB, is particularly notable for its illustration of the sheer depth of experience and character among our students. It is wide-ranging, to be sure, but a grappling with pain, suffering, and/or confusion unites perhaps all of our students. These authors ask us to think deeply about the assumptions we make about our students and offer practical and theoretical approaches for becoming more inclusive and student-focused in our teaching.

*Headwaters* is a unique forum, as an internal publication with a wide reach through our Digital Commons. It offers faculty a place to test out and share ideas within our community, as well as providing a space for continued dialogue about issues pertinent to our community. We are confident that the work of the faculty and staff presented in this issue will be true to the name of the journal itself. It provides us with a strong starting point for what we hope will be a robust and vigorous conversation on the human experience, past and present, and how we may best direct it as educators at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. We consider it nothing short of a privilege to share our colleagues' work with you.

Sincerely,

Rachel Marston and Jason Schlude, Co-Editors