

# ABOUTCAMPUS

ENRICHING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

## AUTHOR GUIDELINES

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# WRITING FOR *ABOUT CAMPUS*

## What We're About

We, the editors of *About Campus*, feel strongly that in order to challenge and inspire our colleagues in higher education—and to address hard issues honestly and directly—we need to present the experience and knowledge of a unique mix of researchers, public figures, professionals, faculty members, students, and those working in both student affairs and academic affairs. Although you may recognize many of our contributors, we reach beyond widely published researchers and professionals to include the insights and perspectives of the many other practitioners who are thinking creatively about higher education, testing new ideas and practices, and assessing the effects of the policies put in place on our campuses.

## What An *About Campus* Article Should Do

- In each article, authors take a stand on how to advance our shared agenda of “enriching the student learning experience.”
- Authors have something original, timely, and interesting to discuss.
- Each article discusses a topic of general interest to a broad audience of educators including administrators, faculty, and staff. For example, even if an article is specifically about classroom teaching, the authors don't assume that the reader is a classroom teacher.
- Each article speaks to a broad audience by using clearly defined and inclusive language (i.e., an article either explains clearly or does not contain phrases that only a select group of the educational community might understand, such as *holistic learning* or *metacognition*).
- Each article relies on a thorough understanding of current literature but does not include or sound like a traditional literature review. Technical or discipline-specific terms are used only when necessary; when such terms are used, they are clearly defined.
- Authors write in an engaging and sophisticated style that includes examples, specific stories, and even metaphors to help ground the topic and *show* the readers, as opposed to just *telling* them about it. Readers “meet” the authors and the subjects of the stories, but the stories are not too chit-chatty or unnecessarily autobiographical.
- The article is not overstated or overreaching. The author doesn't need to have a “Final Answer” that solves or fixes everything, but the article does address possible solutions or new approaches.

## The *About Campus* Article Types

### Features

Leading thinkers and researchers, practitioners on the front lines, and leaders in higher education explore far-reaching and critical topics, analyze new research, and detail implications for practice. Features provide an in depth look at issues in a range of areas affecting higher

education. They draw upon current literature to offer appropriate background for the issue (although they do not include a traditional literature review), present results of new research, and explore new perspectives. Each feature approaches a timely topic from an original angle and shows how the topic affects student learning in a variety of contexts.

*Length: Between 4000 and 5000 words.*

### **In Practice**

In Practice articles profile innovative campus practices that foster student learning. Describing best practices in a college or university setting, each article describes the purpose, context, and players involved in implementing the practice; uses assessment data to report the learning outcomes of the practice; and includes implementation challenges and strategies to address them. Articles offer readers key insights to help them adapt this practice to multiple contexts.

*Length: Between 1800 and 2400 words.*

### **Taking the Pulse**

Formerly “Assessment Matters,” Taking the Pulse articles examine one of the most essential, but also most challenging, issues involved in successful educational practice: how to determine whether students are learning. These articles profile assessment practices that are accessible to a wide audience and useful in a variety of contexts. Each article should provide readers with practical ideas and principles about using assessment as a tool to inform their everyday work.

*Length: Between 1800 and 2400 words.*

### **Views from Campus**

Formerly “Campus Commons,” Views from Campus has candid first-person portraits and stories that model how educators work with students in various contexts to promote learning. These stories shed light on the special issues and challenges faced by those who live and work on our campuses — students, faculty, and staff alike. Stories can range from the humorous to the heartbreaking. These articles can examine personal experiences, campus events, everyday life events, or special moments.

*Length: Between 1800 and 2400 words.*

### **Bottom Line**

These provocative, persuasive articles bring readers’ attention to a particular issue or challenge facing higher education. Authors clearly state their position, draw upon evidence as necessary to make their case, and show how the issue or challenge affects student learning. These articles should call readers to action and help them consider how the issue or challenge affects their own practice.

*Length: Between 1800 and 2400 words.*

Note: For general inquiries, please contact the *About Campus* Editorial Team at [aboutcampus@vt.edu](mailto:aboutcampus@vt.edu).

# *ABOUT CAMPUS* WRITING GUIDELINES

## Structural Elements and Expectations for *About Campus* Manuscripts

### Writing Style and Approach

Unlike most academic journal articles—which follow a standard structure of Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Results, Discussion, Limitations, and Future Directions—*About Campus* articles use more literary-like structures and organization techniques to guide readers from start to finish.

- ***The Hook:*** You have to capture the reader’s attention—hook them and reel them in—immediately in your opening sentence and paragraph. Successful hooks make the reader curious; some strong ones include anecdotes, thought-provoking quotes, and startling statistics or facts.
- ***A Clearly Stated Focus:*** The focus provides a key idea for the reader to concentrate on very early on—either in the first or second paragraph usually. Remember to maintain your focus; it guides readers along the arc of the story so that they arrive satisfactorily at the end and prevents readers from becoming disoriented as they move from section to section.
- ***The “So What?” Paragraph:*** This paragraph usually follows the lead and tells readers what lessons or insights the article holds. The “So what?” paragraph serves as a promise. The rest of the manuscript needs to fulfill the promise. Imagine that you told a colleague about your story idea and he or she asked, “So what? How is that relevant to my work in higher education?” or “How will that help me enhance student learning?” How would you respond?

Consider this example of a “So what?” paragraph:

Why is reform so hard? We set out to help answer that question using a model that accounts for the teacher’s context and characteristics and how what they think influences what they do. What we found is that teachers build theories about themselves and their situations that either prevent or encourage trying something new in the classroom. The stories of Bob, Martha, and Sam are replicated over and over because teachers believe certain things about themselves.

(Adapted from Jean M. Henscheid, former executive editor of *About Campus*)

- ***Transitions:*** Create action and links between events, concepts, moments, and thoughts. Maintain your focus throughout; guide your readers along the arc of the story so that they arrive satisfactorily at the end.
- ***Thought-Provoking Conclusion:*** You want to leave the readers with suggestions and key

points for further consideration. Ultimately, you want them thinking about their practices, their campuses, and their students.

### Appropriate Use of Language

- Use first person, singular and plural (e.g., *I* and *we*) where appropriate.
- Do NOT use *he/she* or *s/he* and avoid *he or she*, which is awkward. Instead, use the plural as much as possible (Example: *students ... they* rather than *the student ... he or she ...*).
- Use a person's full name the first time she or he is mentioned.
- When using proper names, whether of individuals or institutions, please double-check them for accuracy.
- Use jargon-free and inclusive language (i.e., an article does not contain phrases such as *holistic learning* or *metacognition* that only a select group of the educational community will understand).
- Avoid sexist language such as *spokesmen*, *chairmen*, and *man* in the generic sense. Substitute *spokesperson*, *chair*, *individuals* or *people*, and so on.
- Use the *active voice* as much as possible, and avoid passive constructions. Give credit where credit is due; let those doing the actions DO the actions. See the difference below.
  - Active: For a long time, *educators have accepted* that ....
  - Passive: For a long time, *it has been accepted* that...

Consider this before- and-after example: From “Academic” to *About Campus*

*Before: the “Academic” Approach*

**Educational reform, personal practical theories, and dissatisfaction: The anatomy of change in college science teaching**

The Teacher-Centered-Systemic Reform model (TCSR) recognizes teaching context, teacher characteristics, teacher thinking, and their interactions as influential factors in attempts to implement classroom reform. Using the TCSR model, teachers' personal practical theories, and conceptual change as a framework, the authors of this article studied three college science faculty members as they designed and implemented an integrated, inquiry-based course. The documentation and analysis of context, instructors' knowledge and beliefs, and teaching episodes allowed the authors to identify and study the interaction of factors, including grant support, that shape reform attempts. The results suggest that grant-supported mitigation of structural barriers is a necessary but insufficient precursor to change and that personal practical theories are the most powerful influence on instructional practice. The findings highlight the critical role of pedagogical and contextual dissatisfaction in creating a context for fundamental change.

Jargon

Discipline-specific terms; doesn't reach a broad audience

Impersonal, not engaging

*After: the About Campus Approach*

**Why is reform in the classroom so hard?**

Chances are fairly good that a visitor to any college science classroom will find a teacher and students doing what teachers and students have done for at least a hundred years. The teacher describes a scientific function students have been assigned to read about in their textbooks. Students later conduct an experiment on that function for which someone else already knows the answer, and then they sit for a multiple choice or fill in the blank test on lessons from the lecture, the text, and the experiment.

This is school.

It's not just science courses. Inside all types of classrooms, teachers and students assume traditional roles. Even with all that's now known about how students really learn best, in personally relevant, experiential settings where they are allowed to explore real questions, school continues to look like school.

So, why is reform so hard? We set out to help answer that question using a model that accounts for the teacher's context and characteristics and how what they think influences what they do. What we found is that teachers build theories about themselves and their situations that either prevent or encourage trying something new in the classroom. The stories of Bob, Martha, and Sam are replicated over and over because teachers believe certain things about themselves.

The "hook"

Personal, engaging style

Inclusive language

The "so-what" paragraph

Adapted from Jean M. Henscheid, former executive editor of *About Campus*

## References

- ***Appropriately Integrated References in the Text (NOT APA Format!)***: It is important that you pay special attention to our in-text reference style because it is *different than APA style!*

Like other magazines that publish serious nonfiction for a general audience, we ask authors to be selective in their use of references and to identify fully all references within the text of the article. Using an academic reference style can interfere with authors' success in reaching out to a broad audience. It can encourage attention to details that may not be important to people outside of the authors' particular field.

Also, because an academic reference style does not require authors to offer a context for a reference, it puts at a disadvantage those readers who are unfamiliar with particular sources or who may not have the time or interest to seek out the listed sources to understand how they fit into a certain argument. Please integrate reference information for specific facts and sources of direct quotes into the text, as shown in the examples below.

### Consider these examples of how to integrate references into the text of an article:

- As Ernest Boyer explains in *Campus Life*, “American higher education is, by almost any measure, a remarkable success. In recent decades, new campuses have been built, enrollments have exploded, and today, many of our research centers are ranked world class. Still, with all of our achievements, there are tensions just below the surface and nowhere are the strains of change more apparent than in campus life” (p. 1).
- In a recent article of the *Journal of College Student Development*, Patricia King and I describe how this integrated perspective can be applied to learning.
- As Jean Henscheid states on her web site, “Half of all students are above average.” [Note: If a web-based document does not have page numbers, simply include the author’s name and the title of the site in the sentence.]

- ***A Reference List That DOES Use APA Format:*** Even though *About Campus* is not an academic journal and we do not take a scholarly approach to references in the text, we do want to make certain that readers can locate those sources that authors identify. For this reason, we provide reference lists at the end of articles and we ask authors to be thorough and provide all the essential details outlined below. Please use APA style for the reference list.

### Permissions

In most instances, authors may quote words, tables, figures, and other material as long as it is accurate and appropriately credited. However, depending on the source, length, and nature of a quotation, permission from the copyright holder may be needed. Authors are responsible for getting written permission in these instances and supplying copies of letters of permission when they submit a manuscript. We need a signed letter from the copyright holder indicating the material being used and giving permission to use it.

To help authors understand when to seek permission, we offer the general guidelines below:

#### ***What Does NOT Require Permission:***

- a. Any work published before 1906
- b. Most federal government publications
- c. Any quotation from nonfiction of fewer than 300 words or less than one to two percent of the total word count of the work, whichever is less, provided that it is: i) clearly presented as a quotation; ii) not taken out of context; iii) NOT used as an epigraph; iv) full credit is given; or v) not “qualitatively substantial,” that is, it does not go to the heart of the work or quote from the most moving or interesting parts.

#### ***What DOES Require Permission:***

- a. Any table, checklist, or other list taken entirely from another source.
- b. Quotations from nonfiction in excess of 300 words or one to two percent of the total,

- whichever is less.
- c. Quotations of any length from a work of fiction. This includes all poetry.
  - d. A paraphrase of more than 300 words from nonfiction that includes wording and/or a sequence of ideas that are similar to the original (permission is required for both single long quotations and multiple quotations from a single work that add up to more than 300 words).
  - e. Quotations of any length from information publications including speeches, position papers, corporate in-house documents, mission statements, questionnaires, or unpublished dissertations.
  - f. Quotations from personal letters and documents (the recipient owns the letter, but the copyright is retained by the author).

**Note about Permissions:** There may be many times when paraphrasing an author's ideas would be as effective as a direct quote and would relieve you of the obligation to get permission (except in the case of item f above), so you may want to consider this option.

## **THE SUBMISSION PROCESS**

**To ensure prompt review of your manuscript, please check to make sure that your manuscript meets all of the following criteria before you submit it to *About Campus*. Refer to the Author Guidelines information above for a more thorough explanation of each item.**

### **Formatting Your Submission**

- Save your manuscript as using your name, a title abbreviation, and the date of submission.  
Eg. "Mary Simmons\_The Mobile Advisor\_6.11.2014"
- Include page numbers.
- Type the manuscript in 12-point Times New Roman font.
- Double space and indent your paragraphs.
- Do NOT vary font size or style for titles, subheadings, or any special text.
- Do not include running headers (this is important, as special formatting can cause problems in e-mail transmission).

### **Title Page Specifics**

- a. Word count (which includes the title, author biographic information, manuscript text, and references). Please put the word count in the top, left-hand corner of the title page.
- b. Title of the manuscript.
- c. Full names, titles, mailing addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of all authors.
- d. Short bios (40 words or fewer) of all the authors, including current affiliation.
- e. Name of the article type (e.g. In Practice, Feature, etc.).



<p style="text-align: center;">TITLE PAGE EXAMPLE</p> <p>Word Count</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Title of Manuscript</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Author's Name Affiliation Mailing Address Phone Number E-mail Address</p> <p>Brief Bio:</p> <p>Article type</p>
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*Note: The Editorial Team reserves the right to send back all submissions that do not follow these formatting guidelines.*

### **Submitting a Manuscript**

*About Campus* submissions are managed through an online portal hosted by Wiley Publishing. To create an account and submit a manuscript, please visit the following link:  
<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aboutcampus>.

### **The Editorial Process: Working with the Team**

Our editorial process is collaborative. We often work with authors at the conceptual stage to identify direction and focus (as well as throughout the writing process through multiple revisions). Our goal is to help cultivate and then publish substantive, engaging articles. You and your co-authors can view the status of your manuscript at any time by checking your Author Center after logging in to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aboutcampus>.

### **About Our Process**

- The Editorial Team will review and provide feedback on your manuscript. We review manuscripts as quickly as possible. Because the team is small, it may take six to eight weeks for an editor to respond to your manuscript. Editorial Team members and authors will correspond until they agree the manuscript is at a final draft stage; most manuscripts will go through several rounds of revision.
- The Editorial Team will notify you when your article has been accepted for publication. Once an article is ready for publication, it becomes a part of our warehouse of articles from which we choose when we put together issues of the magazine.
- When an article is slated for a particular issue, we ask authors to sign a *copyright transfer agreement* (see below). The *About Campus* editorial assistant will notify you when your article has been slated and will e-mail the copyright transfer agreement to you. It must be signed and returned in order for the article to be published.

- The Editorial Team will make necessary changes in the article (including its title) for clarity, length, and conformity to style. You will be sent an edited version of your article for a brief review prior to its publication.

### **Copyright Transfer Agreement Information**

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1. You have supplied an original manuscript for inclusion in an issue of *About Campus*.
2. You agree that the manuscript you have furnished is original and prepared especially for *About Campus*; that it has not been and is not being registered for copyright and/or published elsewhere; and that you will not release it for any purpose prior to publication of *About Campus* issue in which it is scheduled to appear.
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4. You grant the editor and the office of the publisher the right to make changes in the article (including its title) for clarity, brevity, and conformity to style. You will be contacted about your contribution before it is set in type only if substantive changes, which the editor will determine, are made in the editing process. You will not receive proofs; the publisher and editor will be responsible for all proofreading of the article.
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