

Writing in PME

4th Quarter, 2020

Faculty Spotlight



Larry D. Miller, Professor of Communicative Arts, U.S. Army War College, holds multiple degrees from Kent State University and a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Michigan. Miller, who was honorably discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps, is a 2009 AWC graduate. In his role as Director, Communicative Arts, Larry has helped set the standard for student writing and research at the AWC, assisting countless authors to refine written work and gain wider audience for their research. Miller has published in a variety of journals, including *Joint Force Quarterly* and *Parameters*. Two of his co-authored articles specifically address writing and research challenges and opportunities within JPME.

A careful reader and patient listener, Larry is a valued collaborator who readily shares expertise with all, from students seeking introductory writing support to Generals enlisting his aid for enterprise-wide projects. He believes writing well is a consequent of, not a prerequisite for, JPME students having something to say. He encourages students to move beyond the rote marching to curricular cadence as a way to develop the writing confidence necessary to find their voice within the larger community of strategic leaders. Encouraging students to find their voices over the course of their military education creates a positive and optimistic learning environment that allows students to develop expansive communication competency in short periods.

For his commitment and long-standing dedication to improving student writing within PME and understanding the interdependency between content area knowledge and writing competency, Dr. Larry Miller is this quarter's faculty spotlight.

What does it mean for a writer to discover their voice? Voice is often associated with feeling flow or stream of consciousness, when perfect words spill out effortlessly, but it can be dangerous when not paired with efforts to critically evaluate. Deliberate steps that force the writer to engage in the phases of the writing process, prewriting, drafting, editing, and proofreading, necessitate evaluation of quality and serve as an effective counter. Yet, over emphasis on process can diminish the potential for discovery. In another sense, voice is a combination of textual attributes, diction, syntax, and tone shaped by process and form. Facility with the diction of a field shapes voice, a result of the confidence of experience. Misusing words, both semantically and syntactically, is common for students new to a discipline. Semantic and syntactic issues can be addressed with brief class periods focused on explicit discussion of definitions and idiom. The last primary component of voice is tone. Tone is largely judged on a positive or negative scale, like sharps or flats in music. Being able to modulate tone is important. For instance, a problem statement requires a negative tone, but recommendations often benefit from a positive tone. Understanding and leveraging the writing process, diction and vocabulary, syntax and conventions, and tonal shifts, channeled through the psychology of military uniformity and willing nonconformist, result in a distinct voice. Ultimately, voice is discovered and balances several tensions, psychological, social, procedural, and textual. Faculty facilitate students finding their voice more quickly by understanding how each aspect affects the other and guiding them through the innate tensions.

Tip for Teaching Writing

Presented by the:

