

## Instructor Introductory Letter

18 December 2008

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter as an introduction to Erin McHale's entry for the spring 2009 issue of *Writing the University: A Journal of Undergraduate Writing across the Curriculum*. Erin's essay, entitled "Genetic Modifications in Humans," was the third essay assigned in my English 1A class this past semester and was a research-based assignment that went through a process of peer response and teacher-feedback before the final portfolio version was submitted for a grade.

The prompt for the essay included the following directions: "Write a paper on a controversial issue of your choosing that interests you and support your topic investigation with research-based evidence, explaining claims supporting the pro side of the issue and claims supporting the con side of the issue." Students were also instructed to "pay specific attention to the 'gray' areas between these polarities" and to "point out opposing views and acknowledge flaws in their own argument if they notice them. Finally, students were instructed to examine all the positions fairly and then "weigh which position or positions is/are the stronger, or the one(s) you find more convincing, and analyze your assembled evidence to support your own position."

Erin's essay is an effective example of writing in the discipline because it employs a variety of sources that are used deliberately and conscientiously within the scope of the essay. Erin's essay is an exploratory one, and as a writer, Erin takes care to recognize the many points of view involved in the genetic modification argument. In addition, her questions within the essay refer back to those "gray areas between the polarities" that are so important to recognize in research.

Sincerely,

Heather C. Donovan  
English 1A TA/Instructor