

# HOW DID WE GET HERE?

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Welcome to the *Currere Exchange Journal*, our first issue. It would be inaccurate to say that this scholarly work came about overnight, though sometimes new things look like they have simply burst on the scene. Instead, this journal has happened purposefully and with great care. This isn't always our MO, perhaps, and others may think we rushed the gun no matter. Ultimately, we can't really help that, except to say that we intend to do what we do the best we can and learn from our mistakes. Maybe that's all anyone can guarantee.

This all started while Denise and I were interviewing doctoral candidates for program admission in January of 2015. We had been discussing our interest in raising our PhD program's profile, getting the word out nationally and internationally more completely and thoroughly about all that we had to offer, including the courses and our scholarship and our outstanding faculty. Our scholarly interests had been converging for some time, especially around autobiography, and we began to discuss the idea—basically out of the clear blue during a break in the interviewing action—of hosting a conference at Miami to introduce prospective students to our work. In that moment, there was never any better clarity; in just a few moments of conversation, we resolved to host a conference by the next summer and to focus the event on *currere*. We are both busy people with big plates full of projects and students, but we never doubted for a moment that we would and could pull it off. And so, here we are.

The decision sat for a while, maybe a month, but I began querying our university's conference staff about the idea in March 2015, booked some dates ahead, and started roughing out the particulars of the conference with Denise including a statement about what we thought this was all about. Always in the backs of our minds was the notion of creating a journal, if we generated enough interest in the conference and thought that people were ready to produce scholarship based on their conference presentations. And, we hoped to do some things with the conference that would make it look and feel different than most conferences we attended.

For starters, we hoped to treat the time we were together with participants for the First Annual *Currere Exchange Retreat & Conference* in 2016 more like a retreat than a conference. Meaning, everyone would have a chance to “present” their work so they could get academic credit for their trip (we made sure to list each person's name and the title of their work-in-progress in the retreat program), but the presentations would take place in roundtable settings with the goal being to surface key ideas and get feedback, to generate dialogue instead of answers. We wanted participants to relax, to slow down, perhaps even to have some time to write. We hoped to bring up the idea of creating a journal at the conference, but we decided we would only do so if we could see talent and potential in the work of the participants during the conference. We did!

At the closing session of the First Retreat in Oxford in June 2016, I broached the subject with the collective body after many participants had begun asking Denise and me on the side if we were thinking about starting a journal. When I brought the subject up collectively, the room buzzed with excitement. Many of the participants, like us, had been working the existing journals in education over the years to squeeze our work in but didn't have a place to submit manuscripts for review that focused on autobiography and curriculum. Doctoral students at the conference who had been exploring *currere* for use in their dissertations obviously saw a new outlet for their work. “A new journal focused

on *currere* and autobiography could provide a new outlet for our work, legitimize it, to some degree,” I said and announced at that time that a tentative title would be *The Currere Exchange Journal*. If anything happened officially, the participants in that room would be the first to know! Many of them submitted articles for review for this issue.

Because I had helped to host two large curriculum conferences at Miami in the past (Curriculum & Pedagogy Group’s annual meetings in 2005 and 2006), I was instrumental as chair of the publications committee when C&P began its own scholarly journal, and I helped begin another journal from scratch as a founding co-editor (The National Network for Educational Renewal’s Journal *Education in a Democracy* in 2009-2011), I didn’t fear the work or the responsibility of starting something new like a conference with a journal. I felt energized by it, happy about it, excited. Denise and I both embraced the energy from that first meeting and the excitement for the work ahead. We had steeled ourselves against disappointment. We had decided to just slink back to our corners if we couldn’t get people interested in the conference or the journal; no harm done. But, we were at a point where we had been celebrated for the work at hand and ready to commit to next steps, to growing it.

So more successes came, and we continued to move. That’s not to say that we didn’t encounter resistance close to home. Of course, the University was thrilled that we would be bringing people to a new conference at Miami for consecutive years. But we encountered slow-to-form, nearly non-existent “support” internally from our own departmental colleagues. They questioned, like they always had, the veracity and breadth of our work, its sustainability, and, ultimately, whether or not they could “co-own” the work with us and call it a “departmental initiative.” In the end, they couldn’t, so while the beginning of this work has institutional support behind it, going forward it will not. This isn’t uncommon for efforts like this, but it is a telling sign of how difficult it is to generate support for the work we want to do. We received some solace from Bill Pinar, who has been a spirited advocate for us throughout our journeys, who has recruited many participants to the work at hand behind the scenes, and who responded this way when I shared with him on email our ongoing, internal battle for support: “No Tom, nothing new in colleagues’ skepticism. Sorry you and Denise face that there. Good news it won’t deter you.” Right, coming from someone who has struggled for an entire lifetime for legitimacy in the work, we feel as though we are part of a legacy journey and feel no shame in going it alone. We hope for future support; we simply don’t expect it.

So while we have received some early monetary support, we have to figure out how to generate future benefactors and how to generate revenue from our ongoing work to keep the projects moving. This isn’t anything new, though, to be honest, we wish it weren’t so. But that’s neither here nor there at this moment. We can’t think of anything we could have done to legitimize the work anymore than we already have. The last thing we can do is commit ourselves to a campaign to make people like us and our work. Instead, we commit ourselves to doing the best work that we can, and we’ll let others be the judge. If no one wants to play anymore, we’ll quit. As long as people feel as though we are filling a need and doing a good job, we will continue on.

Denise and I decided quickly to generate a call for papers that would go out in Fall 2016 to solicit papers for review in January of 2017. Our plan was to create an editorial board made up of doctoral students in our program with experience and proclivity with *currere* (we have been conducting numerous classes and publishing projects using *currere* over the past five years and more). They would provide the core of manuscript reviews, and we asked several board members outside of Miami to conduct blind reviews. By mid-February 2017, our review teams had reviewed all 36 of the manuscript submissions we received and reached initial decisions on publication. After the review

process, we decided that we had enough strong manuscripts to constitute two issues in Volume 1. The issue you are reading is the first; the second issue will be published in December of 2017. The next call for papers will go out for the 2018 Volume 2 in Fall 2017.

At root, we would like to say how much we have learned from the authors who submitted manuscripts for review and especially from the reviewers, mostly our students, who dealt with each manuscript with care, compassion, and thoroughness. We wanted the review work to be ethical, nurturing, helpful, and we wanted to publish as many pieces as possible. We hope that those whose pieces did not make the first volume will continue to submit their revised work. Everyone who does will get a fair reading and a thoughtful, insightful review. We can take some credit for requiring these things from our students and colleagues; they can take all the credit for delivering it. This aspect of the work is worth its weight in gold, and we are very proud to say that our experiences of conducting the work have been rewarding at all points.

There are numerous people to thank for setting the stage for this first volume. The following people planned and executed the First *Currere* Exchange Retreat in 2016 as student planners and hosts: Serian Jeng, Tiffany Williams, and Katherine Smith. The following people served as editorial board members and reviewers for Volume 1 of the journal, appearing here and later in 2017: Jody Googins, Vanessa Winn, Tiffany Williams, Peggy Larrick, Don Murray, Genesis Ross, Kelly Waldrop, Chloe Bolyard, and Katherine Smith. Kelly Waldrop also functioned as our managing editor, formatting the journal and bringing it to press. Denise and I served as journal editors, reviewing all of the pieces and supervising the review process at each step. Many thanks to all who sacrificed their time, effort, and expertise to work with manuscripts and authors this year.

The planning team for the 2017 Retreat was made up of Tiffany Williams, Don Murray, Matt Moyer, and Peggy Larrick.

We hope that this retreat and journal start something that continues for many years to come. What remains to be seen is if there is enough grounded, personal support by academics who want to do the work, who will carry it on no matter what, like no matter what happens to us and no matter what happens to the movement. We can commit to doing the best we can to nurture the work forward and to bring our best work to the forefront. But ultimately, it seems to us that for a movement to thrive it has to have leaders and advocates with tentacles much longer than ours to see it through. We hope that those people emerge and function as leaders of the movement, both internally and externally. The more work that is generated that expands and enhances the movement, the better off we all are. So, we call on everyone close at hand enough to be reading this introduction to join us in the work, attend a conference, and write. We hope to grow with you. At root, please put your best efforts into sharing this issue with colleagues and students, and, ultimately, to contributing your best and most influential scholarship for review to be included in future volumes.