

Introduction

"The schools in which I was educated were by most standards first-rate. But they were, as our schools generally are, indifferent to the place and to the culture in which they operated.

Among my science courses I took two full years of biology, but I never learned that the beautiful meadow at the bottom of my family's pasture was remnant virgin prairie. We did not spend, so far as I can remember, a single hour on prairies -- the landscape in which we were immersed -- in two years of biological study."

-- Paul Gruchow

It is with great pleasure that I present volume 4 of *Tillers*. The idea for this journal was stimulated by two significant events at Grinnell College, the inauguration of the Center for Prairie Studies and changes in the Biology Department's curriculum. The former is a college-wide effort to connect faculty and students with our prairie place -- geographically, biologically, historically and aesthetically. It seeks to undermine our tendency to ignore the lessons of our own locales, and thus cultivate in ourselves an appreciation of place, wherever that may come to be. Concurrently, the Biology Department began a series of changes in curriculum that further emphasize active learning. As one of several sections of *Introduction to Biological Inquiry*, *Prairie Restoration* introduces students to basic concepts in biology while emphasizing the ways that biologists ask questions, test hypotheses through observation and experimentation, and communicate their results. Our goal is to provide beginning students with a sense of the excitement -- and the ambiguities -- of authentic research. The journal creates a community of learning across the years, allowing students to build upon and modify the studies of their predecessors -- just like scientists!

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The title of the journal is meant to evoke consideration of the interaction between the botanical, agricultural and aesthetic histories of the tallgrass prairie. I leave it to the reader to discover these meanings.

Jonathan Brown, Editor