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ABSTRACT

The cross-disciplinary writing program at West Chester University (WCU), Pennsylvania is a long-range, three-part program designed to increase the amount, variety, and quality of writing done by undergraduates at WCU. It focuses on enhancement rather than remediation and provides for: writing emphasis courses each semester in traditional liberal studies and in professional studies; a general requirement that all students take three of these writing emphasis courses; and in-house lectures, seminars, and workshops on writing for faculty members in all disciplines. A supporting service called "The Writing Consultancy" was developed for students. Faculty in all departments regularly assign writing tasks of various kinds to attain course objectives. Program outcome measures indicate: WCU students write often and in more various modes; WCU faculty regularly include writing instruction in their courses; and many faculty implement teaching practices in which writing is used as a means of learning the academic discipline. Among specific recommendations for implementing such a program are that: it be designed to include components of faculty development, curriculum development, student services, and effective administration; it publish newsletters, handbooks, and aids for students and faculty; and on-going assessment be conducted for quality control. The faculty handbook for the writing program, comprising over two-thirds of the document, is appended. (SM)

THE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY WRITING PROGRAM:

Faculty Development and Curriculum Change

at

West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania

1977 - Present

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

ABSTRACT

To increase the amount, variety and quality of writing done by undergraduates at West Chester University, a long-range, three-part program was designed and implemented. Faculty were provided with workshops and seminars in the philosophy and method of "writing across the curriculum"; the University curriculum was modified to require at least three writing-intensive courses beyond the freshman composition sequence; and a support service called "The Writing Consultancy" was developed for students. Program outcome measurements indicate that WCU students write often and in more various modes, that WCU faculty regularly include writing instruction in their courses, that related faculty development activities have continued successfully since 1978, and that many faculty implement teaching practices in which writing is used as a means of learning the academic discipline, not just being tested on the discipline.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

West Chester University's cross-disciplinary Writing Program was begun in 1978 as a pilot project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Pennsylvania State College Educational Trust Fund. Building on the skills developed in English composition courses, the program was based on the assumption that writing is integral to all academic learning in liberal and professional studies. The program's focus is therefore not on remediation but on enhancement; the University regards writing as much more than a set of basic languages skills. The program provides for:

(1) Writing Emphasis Courses each semester in traditional liberal studies (for example, English literature, history, anthropology, sociology, chemistry, and physics) and in professional studies (for example, criminal justice, early childhood education, nursing and public health).

(2) A general requirement that all students must take three of these writing-emphasis courses, in addition to English composition, before their senior year.

(3) In-house lectures, seminars, and workshops on writing for faculty members in all disciplines.

The WCU Writing Program has been recognized for its scope and achievement by the Association of American Colleges. The Writing Program is administered by a director and a committee of eight faculty members representing different fields of study.

All students who enter with fewer than 40 credits must take at least three approved writing-emphasis courses at West Chester. Transfer students who enter with 40-70 credits must take two writing emphasis courses. Students who transfer more than 70 credits must take one writing emphasis course. Each writing emphasis course may simultanouely fulfill another degree requirement.

Pertinent literature about writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) programs in general is collected in Teaching Writing in all Disciplines, ed. C. Williams Griffin (Jossey-Bass, 1982) which cites the WCU program, and in Robert H. Weiss, "Writing in the Total Curriculum: A Program for Cross-Disciplinary Cooperation," in Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition, ed. Timothy R. Donovan and Ben W. McClelland (NCTE, 1908). Further discussion of the WCU program appears in Robert H. Weiss, "The Humanity of Writing," Improving College and University Teaching, March 1979; for the WCU faculty workshop as a blend of writing strategies suitable for all areas of the curriculum, not just liberal arts, see Robert Weiss and Michael Peich, "Faculty Attitude Change in a Cross-Disciplinary Writing Workshop," CCC, Feb. 1980. Somewhat similar programs for multi-purpose institutions were also funded by NEH and FIPSE (for example, at San Bernardino State College and Vermont State College); these programs differed significantly from the more "liberal arts" oriented programs at small private colleges (Beaver, Lycoming) or large universities (Michigan, Maryland, Texas).

The WCU Writing Program design is to educate regular faculty

in all departments to ways they can use writing tasks of various kinds to help attain course objectives (that is, to help students engage in and learn the material, as well as to communicate effectively what they have learned). Approved in 1979, the Program mandated three writing-emphasis courses for all undergraduates beginning in 1980 (the class of 1984). Some aspects of this program brought managerial concerns and slight program shifts over the years to accommodate transfer students and to provide sufficient inventory of writing-emphasis courses to meet the needs of 8,000+ undergraduates.

The program publishes a newsletter 4-5 times a year, has published a 33-page Faculty Handbook for the WCU Writing Program, conducts free-lunch-for-faculty sessions where writing-emphasis teaching strategies are shared, and provides a 3-day intensive workshop in May just after the end of the Spring semester. The free-lunch sessions and the 3-day workshop enjoy a good reputation among faculty and administration and are seen as a valuable "faculty development" activity. At least 10 WCU faculty have published or present professional papers on WAC. The Writing Program has been funded over the past 4 years by small grants from the WCU Faculty Development Committee and for two years by grants from the state university system's Faculty Development Council (SSHE), the latter providing for the inclusion in the May workshop of faculty from 13 institutions.

Among other visible results, WCU has an inventory of over 275 courses revised to emphasize writing. Past evaluations were published by the Program Director and included in the final report to NEH. Later evaluations gathered data on program

effects on students and faculty. Evaluation at present consists of surveying students to determine their perceptions of program content and usefulness.

The WCU Writing Program succeeded in its objectives because (1) its philosophy responded effectively to faculty and student needs in writing and learning, (2) it was pragmatic and down-to-earth rather than theoretical, (3) it was effectively administered, and (4) it was diverse and flexible enough to embrace many different conceptions of writing and teaching. The program is now concerned with quality control, on-going assessment, and leadership succession.

BACKGROUND

West Chester University's cross-disciplinary Writing Program was begun in 1978 as a pilot project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Pennsylvania State College Educational Trust Fund. It now serves all of the University's more than 8,000 undergraduates. The WCU Writing Program is based on the assumption that writing is importantly related to thinking and is integral to academic learning in liberal and professional studies. Its focus is not on remediation but on enhancement. The Program provides for:

1. Approximately 140 Writing-Emphasis courses each semester.

2. A General Requirement that all students must take three (3) of these Writing-Emphasis couses each semester.

3. In-house lectures, seminars, and workshops on writing.

4. An in-house newsletter.

5. Special activities involving students.

Like many other colleges and universities, WCU has been dismayed at the marked decline in the literacy skills of its entering students. Frequent complaints were heard from professors in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences about the writing abilities of their students. Whereas from 1962 to 1973 the mean SAT Verbal aptitude scores of entering freshmen ranged from 485 to 507, in 1977 the mean was 546, with two-thirds of the scores ranging between 380 and 540. Overall, the total writing ability of students entering WCU showed weakness on all levels: the organization and development of ideas, the formation

of effective paragraphs and sentences, vocabulary, and use of the conventions of standard grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. This is especially significant if considered in light of the college's tradition of educating future teachers for Pennsylvania schools. The tested verbal abilities of students entering WCU and going through freshmen composition programs suggested two major needs: for more instruction in and reinforcement of basic skills, and for writing experiences to help them learn a discipline and within it to exercise their knowledge comfortably.

In the late 1970's, WCU was ripe for a program for writing in all disciplines. Because of the efforts of the program director, the University piloted a program for Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC). At the time, WAC was a nationwide reconsideration of the role that writing plays in the learning of all subjects. Synthesizing research in cognitive development and writing theory, WAC programs aimed to increase the quantity and quality of writing done in academic courses and thereby to improve both student writing and comprehension of subject matter. To do this, WAC programs offered faculty a forum for discussing writing and teaching and provided specific training in the use of writing as a learning device.

Research indicated that communicating the importance of writing to students in the classroom helped improve their writing. Other research indicated that the effective use of writing in teaching can substantially improve learning.

Across the nation, instructors indicated three major reasons for their interest in WAC. First, they found measurable improvement in the quality of learning when WAC techniques were

used systematically. Since their primary interest was in such learning improvements, they saw WAC as something to help them do a better job of teaching.

Second, the effectiveness of basic skills instruction, that is, composition courses, was consistently reinforced across the University in WAC programs. Faculty increased the amount of writing students did in various clases, which in turn improved general student literacy. Graduating students who had this superior training helped give the University a good reputation, thus helping to attract more talented and well-prepared students.

Third, faculty who participated in WAC seminars and workshops reported that as a result they themselves felt more comfortable writing, wrote more, and believed they were writing better. Ultimately, not only were student writing and learning improved, so also were the quantity and quality of faculty writing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WCU WRITING PROGRAM

The Writing Program at West Chester University was established to guarantee students continued practice in writing beyond freshman composition courses and to provide students with a variety of writing tasks throughout their academic careers. The long-range goal of the program is to improve student writing and learning. Specific goals are:

1. To encourage and assist faculty in developing writing-intensive courses in all disciplines.

2. To help create enough writing-emphasis courses so that students are guaranteed a reasonable selection in fulfilling their 3-course requirement.

3. To approve courses for the "W" designation and to monitor the quality of the program.

Building on the skills developed in English composition courses, the program is based on the assumption that writing is integral to all academic learning in liberal and professional studies. The program's focus is therefore not on remediation but on enhancement; the University regards writing as much more than a set of basic language skills.

West Chester students' scores on the SAT-Verbal test have declined about 50 points since 1970. Over 40% of all West Chester University student place into remedial composition. If students complete their composition requirement, they would ordinarily get only occasional--and inadequate--attention to their writing. With the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Writing Program was begun in 1978 to

remedy this inadequacy. The program aimed to make all departments responsible for some components of writing instruction or reinforcing writing skills. The Writing Emphasis requirement became operational with the revised General Education requirements.

The original proposal for the Writing Program and the Writing Emphasis requirement contained a mandated faculty development component that was eliminated by the Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee (CAPC) when they approved the final plan in 1980. In Fall 1983 the Writing Program Committee evaluated the program and submitted a status report to the Dean of Arts and Sciences. In March 1984 the Executive Committee of Arts and Sciences scrutinized the writing-emphasis requirement, and their concerns were answered through a written response by the Writing Program Committee and an informational meeting for department chairpersons and deans. One change in the program did occur: CAPC reviewed the 3-course Writing-Emphasis requirements in 1984 and altered it so that a student could take all three "W" courses in one subject.

To encourage and assist faculty in designing Writing-Emphasis ("W") courses in all disciplines, the Writing Program hosts 1 or 2 afternoon seminars and a 2-day summer workshop in May, publishes at least 4 newsletters a year, and developed a bound handbook.

To help create an adequate number of "W" courses, the Writing Program director holds occasional information sessions for department heads and deans, monitors the Master Scheduling process, and reminds faculty members and department heads about

using the "W" notation.

To approve courses for the "W" designation, the Writing Program Committee has developed a standard form to be completed by an interested faculty member; holds meetings to evaluate and vote on the courses; upon approval, contacts the faculty member, department head, Registrar, and Management Information Systems; and upon disapproval, works with faculty members to improve their materials. The Committee also surveys students and faculty as a check on program effectiveness.

The Writing Consultancy support service was divested in May 1985 to put tutoring services under one roof; the function was assumed by the Center for Academic Excellence.

All faculty receive the Writing Program newsletters and have received the longer publication. At least 200 faculty members have participated in one or more afternoon seminars or summer workshops; faculty from all departments have participated, many by being featured as speakers. Since there now exist 262 different Writing Emphasis courses taught by as many or more faculty, at least this number of faculty have thought about and gone through the process of course approval for the "W" designation. From 3000 to 3500 WCU students take "W" courses each semester. The Consultancy was used by about 45 students a semester for a total use of about 150 hours per academic year.

Five changes have occurred in the Writing Program since 1981. Summer faculty workshops, which had been part of the original program, were restored in 1984 after an absence of 2 years. The 3-course requirement for all students was modified in

1984 so that a student is now able to take all three in one subject. The Writing Consultancy function was given to the Center for Academic Excellence in 1985. In 1983 the Program began to report to the FAS Dean instead of the Provost. In 1985 the Faculty Development Committee began to support some Writing Program activities.

The Director publishes the Newsletter; arranges, staffs, and conducts the faculty seminars and workshops; calls and conducts meetings of the Writing Program Committee; keeps records of minutes and course inventories; monitors Writing-Emphasis offerings on each Master Schedule; seeks funds to support program activities; communicates with university units; and has overall administrative responsibility for the program. The Committee approves courses for the "W" designation, recommends to CAPC on policy matters and to university administration on procedural matters, and advises the director on faculty development and student activities.

No FTE faculty are assigned to the Writing Program except as part of regular assignments. The director's time on the Program is 5-10% FTE, including summer. The half-time graduate assistant aids in writing and publishing the newsletter and in other program activities, and the secretary duplicates, distributes, and files program materials.

The Program Director has a national reputation for having developed the WCU program in 1978, has helped other universities establish similar programs, and has published articles on writing across the curriculum.

The Writing Program has little real cost: an estimate 10% of

secretarial time (about $1100) and 50% of a graduate assistant ($1750). The Program Director and another faculty member who codirect the May workshop have each been paid a week's salary. In the past two years, other costs involving contracts for external consultants have been paid with funds from the Faculty Development Committee.

RESULTS

Of the externally funded original years:

Qualitative:

1. A full complement of 25 faculty signed up for the first week-long faculty WAC seminar; there were no empty places, and there was a waiting list. In 1979, 11 faculty participated even without funding for nominal stipends.

2. Faculty participants wrote testimonials to the WCU administration and project staff praising the workshop for its philosophy and usefulness.

3. The 40-person WCU Curriculum Council approved in 1979 the new graduation requirement for 3 writing courses. This major academic requirement has changed only slightly since then.

4. A survey of participating faculty (N =16) in 1983 indicated satisfaction with the program.

5. The program proposal was selected as a model by the American Association of Colleges.

6. The original evaluation of the faculty workshop was done by Robert P. Parker (Rutgers U) and the program director. Parker favored a more theoretical approach, while Weiss favored the practical blended with the theoretical.

Quantatitive:

1. The program generated 7 published papers and over 10 presentations at academic conferences by 10 faculty. Several of these continue to be cited in the professional literature (Griffin, Parker, Hillocks).

2. Subsequent quasi-experimental research undertaken

by the program director and colleagues investigated relationships among writing tasks, writing apprehension, content learning, and writing improvement. See:

> Robert H. Weiss, "A Recent Project on Writing to Learn," paper delivered at NCTE conference, November 1979 (ED 191 073).
>
> Robert H. Weiss and S.A. Walters, "Writing Apprehension: Implications for Teaching Writing and Concept Clarity," paper delivered at Conference on College Composition and Communication, March 1980 (ED 189 619).
>
> Robert H. Weiss and S.A. Walters, "Writing to Learn," paper delivered at American Educational Research Association, March 1980 (ED 191 056).

Subsequent Evaluation:

1. Two components of the Writing Program have been evaluated over the past several years: Writing Emphasis courses, and faculty development activities. Assessment of Writing Emphasis courses has consisted of tallying their number and variety over a 6-year period, of two surveys of student opinion regarding those courses and the entire program, and a sampling of anonymous faculty opinion on the same. Assessment of Writing Program faculty development activities has consisted of tallying the number of events annually and the number of participants in those events, and surveying participants.

Since beginning in 1980, the Writing Emphasis Course requirement has affected all students and all departments. The number of "W" courses offered each semester has stabilized at a comfortable range of 3300-3800, all departments now cooperate by offering at least one "W" course, and the number of student complaints or requests for exemption has dwindled to a trickle.

Students were surveyed in Fall 83 (N=262) and Fall 86

(N=215). In Fall 83, 23.7% of students said they were not well informed about the Writing Emphasis course requirement, this percentage was 28.4% in Fall 86. In 1983, 51.9% of students said that their faculty advisor informed them of the "W" requirement, while in 1986 only 33.5% so claimed. The percentage of students experiencing difficulty in finding courses to fulfill the "W" requirement decreased from 38.5% in Fall 83 to 25.1% in Fall 86. Whereas in 1983 as many as 52.7% of students noted that their "W" courses had been greatly or moderately effective in giving them practice as writers and improving their writing, in 1986 this percent was 42.3 (the question being phrased differently). Sixty-seven students (31%) disagreed in 1986 that their "W" courses had improved their writing. Nonetheless, 67% of the students in Fall 86 (1983 students were not asked) agreed that the Writing Emphasis requirement should be increased or retained as is.

From 1978 to 1986, the Writing Program held the following faculty development activities:

Date	Activity	# of Participants
June 19-23, 1978	Writing Emphasis Workshop	29
June 20-24 1979	Writing Workshop	9
April 11-12, 1080	Faculty Writing Seminar/Workshop	10
May 19-20, 1980	Writing Workshop	43
November 14, 1980	Holistic Assessment of Writing	10
March 20, 1981	Writing Workshop/Seminar	21
May 8, 1981	Writing Program Workshop	19
October 23, 1981	Writing Your Own Textbooks	48
December 2, 1982	Three Kinds of Writing-Emphasis Courses	7
October 13, 1983	Reunion and Discussion	13
April 25, 1984	Review of Writing Emphasis Program	31
May 28-29, 1984	Writing Across the Curriculum	15
October 17, 1985	Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving and Writing	10
December 5, 1985	Collaborative Learning Workshop	18
March 20, 1986	Technical Writing	8

May 28-29, 1986	Writing Across the Curriculum	8
November 4, 1986	Essay Exam Panel Discussion	21
December 1, 1986	Remedial Writers	12

Faculty participants in the 1987 and 1988 summer workshops have been surveyed regarding the quality and utility of those programs. Of 14 persons responding to the overall assessment of the workshops, 10 stated that they were excellent, 4 that they were good. For improving their effectiveness as teachers, 10 said excellent, 4 said good. For practical ideas for designing writing assignments, 11 said excellent, 3 said good. All 14 would recommend this workshop to their colleagues and would attend a similar workshop with new information and ideas.

2. In Fall 1988, over 450 students were surveyed on program content and delivery. The data have not yet been reported.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the WCU Writing Program has endured well beyond the original period of external funding, recommendations regarding overall outcomes are current. WCU is satisfied with the program as it has evolved: it is especially pleased with the program's faculty development activities and their results in the undergraduate curriculum. Specific recommendations are:

1. That any WAC program embrace a wide-ranging and practical philosophy rather than a narrow and idealistic philosophy of writing instruction, no matter how theoretically appealing. Include traditional writing tasks such as term papers, book reports, and essay exams, but also teach faculty the use of short learning centered writing tasks and rhetorical variety in writing assignments.

2. That the program be designed to include components of faculty development, curriculum development, student services, and effective administration.

3. That faculty development be part of a long-range plan and that the specific hourly activities of faculty development activities be carefully planned by knowledgeable workshop activities and program directors -- if necessary from other campuses.

4. That intensive faculty development activities be conducted in a retreat-like environment over 3-10 days and that faculty participants be paid a stipend.

5. That curriculum development for writing emphasis or writing intensive courses be contingent on (3.) and be planned also

to avoid pitfalls. For example, participation should be required of all departments, and policy must be written for transfer students.

6. That provisions of student services be guaranteed by an internal funding committment of the University administration to an English Department, a Writing Center, a Tutoring Center, or some similar service; and that appropriate training be provided for helpers of students.

7. That program participants at all levels -- faculty, administrative, student peer tutors, and students -- be encouraged or required to write about their participation in the program.

8. That the program publish newsletters, handbooks, and aids for students and faculty.

9. That an awareness of activities and appropriate publicity be planned to inform the various audiences of the program's goal and accomplishments.

10. That program administration derive its support and direction from a broad campus constituency, and that the English Department not dominate.

11. That program management include attention to important details such as how writing-emphasis courses will be tracked on the computer, how they will be noted on a transcript, and how many seats and how many courses are needed in a semester.

12. That on-going assessment be conducted and that quality control be a real issue for program administrators, but that evaluation of writing proficiency not necessarily be part of this

assessment because it is costly and difficult to administer.

13. That external consultants to a campus writing program not be theoreticians but should include managers of similar programs and non-English faculty from diverse institutions.

A writing program such as WCU's is viable elsewhere. The program director has consulted with a number of faculties and assisted them in developing similar or even superior program designs, most recently at Kean College of New Jersey.

FACULTY HANDBOOK

FOR THE

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

AND

WRITING-EMPHASIS COURSES

This handbook was developed by Robert Weiss, Chris Gesualdi, and Linda Brant under a grant from the WCU Faculty Development Committee.

December, 1987

FACULTY HANDBOOK/WRITING PROGRAM

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Attachments

Acknowledgments

Many individuals and groups have advanced the idea of the West Chester University Writing Program:

- The National Endowment for the Humanities, which gave us our start in 1979;
- The English Department, where such courses originate;
- The Writing Program Committee, which has existed since 1979, and on which over 30 faculty and students have served well;
- A contingent of Writing Emphasis faculty too large to list by name in this handbook;
- The Faculty Development Committee, who through recent years have provided grants to support the various seminars and speakers for the Writing Program; and
- Current and past administrators, especially Richard Branton who as Provost helped the Writing Program to begin, and William Morehouse who as Acting Provost and Acting Dean has provided continued support and guidance.

With these and other friends and participants, West Chester University has had almost a decade of high quality programs, seminars, workshops, and other activities for faculty interested in improving students' abilities to write and think.

Production of this Handbook has been underwritten by the WCU Faculty Development Committee. My intent as primary author has been to reflect the diverse aspects of our current programs and to aid faculty members in improving their teaching and their students' learning.

Bob Weiss
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I. Why Write?

Writing, it is generally said, is connected with learning and thinking. If so, writing must be useful in every college classroom. As an instructor, you may accept this position as generally true, but you may have some reservations about using writing in your classes. How much of a burden will writing add? How much time will writing steal from your coverage of course material? Are you expected to teach "English"? How will students react to writing tasks? This guidebook explores each of these concerns.

Rodin's "Thinker" may be one of the few thinkers who doesn't have a pencil in his hand. Most typical thinkers at some point have pen or pencil poised to jot down the numbers, schemes, designs or words that capture their thoughts and allow them to build and extend them. Writing pins down an elusive idea and allows the thinker to explore it, see its implications and possibilities, test its truth and worth, and use it as a stepping stone to other thoughts or as the cornerstone to a concept or structure.

The connection between thinking and writing is so close that what are sometimes called writing modes are really ways of thinking. Students who take in lectures passively, as if watching T.V., are learning less effectively than if they were actively involved and engaged with the course material. If they write, they are no longer passive receivers: they will be originators, synthesizers, and producers of thought. The act of writing imprints learning on the mind and in memory. The use of

so many senses--kinesthetic in the physical act of writing, auditory as the students listen to their inner voices, and visual as they create a graphic record before their own eyes--all reinforces the concepts being learned. The written record they produce is then visible, permanent, and available for instant review both by themselves and others.

Writing is also connected to learning in that it gives students unique access to their previous knowledge and experiences. Writing reveals to students what they already know and what they still have to learn about the subject. Writing facilitates the learning of complex material. Like a digestive enzyme, writing can break down new, difficult concepts into absorbable components. Students make unfamiliar information their own by putting it in their own words and connecting it to what they already know.

Finally, writing can improve reading comprehension by demanding close reading of the text and by familiarizing students with certain modes--for example, explaining a process or comparing. If they practice these modes in their writing they may better recognize them in their reading.

So how much writing are we talking about? As much as satisfies your goal for improving student thinking and learning. As a mimimum, we recommend that you have students do some informal writing which does not require correction, write one or two short papers connected to a major course objective, and answer an essay question in each exam.

As an instructor you may be wondering if this will mean more work for you. It will, but it is manageable work and it will also make you a better teacher. You will be doing something to solve real problems your students have in learning and communicating. Yes, it will take longer to evaluate essay exams than to score an Op-Scan test form. But the results of using writing throughout the semester will make it worth it. You will be encouraged and excited about seeing what your students can achieve.

Can you be expected to teach English? Not at all. No one expects you to use your class time to teach syntax, grammar, or prose style. When you read a piece of student writing, your concern will be with the student's grasp of course content, astuteness of thinking, and clear communication of ideas.

What about correctness? You may be bothered by your students' incorrect usage, but you probably don't remember many of the rules yourself, you probably acquired your sense of correctness through extensive reading, and you probably can write adequately or well without much recourse to rules. You can help your students learn correctness by demanding a reasonable degree of it. For example, you can take off points if your students can't spell key terms specific to your course, ones that you have been working on all semester. You can demand that your students write in complete sentences and observe conventions of standard English needed to understand the message. In other words, you can reinforce the importance of correctness by

having some element of it count on certain writing assignments. You can make one general comment on these aspects, but you do not have to mark each error.

Suppose you have students who can't write well but can get an "A" on an objective test? Won't this penalize them? Yes, it will, but in order to maintain the "A" they should be forced to learn to articulate concepts, to spell key terms and to make sense in complete sentences. Their employers will expect this much and may demand retraining on the job to achieve it; their senior professors on thesis committees also have a right to expect genuine literacy.

What if your students object and say, "This is not an English course, so why should our knowledge of English be counted as well as our knowledge of the course content?" Just remind your students that the separation of English from other disciplines does not occur in the outside world. The ability to write a simple report or summary, to keep a chart or log, to write a memo, letter, or proposal, and to set forth a position and back it up are an integral part of a college student's future, whether that future is in trade, technology, business or a profession. This "public" kind of writing is part of the equipment necessary to function well in the world. The real-life situations about which your students will have to communicate in the future will never present themselves on Op-Scan forms.

While English is a separate discipline on campus, use of the

English language is also an essential component of virtually every class. The English word, whether heard, read, or written, is the medium through which the class is conducted. The task of communicating clearly and in writing what was learned is an expected part of every Writing-Emphasis course and could be a part of almost every other class.

II. What is Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)?

What is Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)? WAC is a nationwide reconsideration of the role that writing plays in the learning of all subjects. Synthesizing research in cognitive development and writing theory, WAC programs aim to increase the quantity and quality of writing done in academic courses and thereby to improve both student writing and comprehension of subject matter. To do this, WAC programs offer faculty a forum for discussing writing and teaching and provide specific training in the use of writing as a learning device.

Research has indicated that communicating the importance of writing to students in the classroom has helped improve their writing. Other research has indicated that the effective use of writing in teaching can substantially improve learning. University faculty have contributed in both areas: learning to write,

and writing to learn

Across the nation, instructors indicate three major reasons for their interest in WAC. First, they have found measurable improvement in the quality of learning when WAC techniques are used systematically. Since their primary interest has been in such learning improvements, they see WAC as something that helps them do a better job of teaching.

Second, the effectiveness of basic skills instruction, that is, composition courses, is consistently reinforced across the University in WAC Programs. Faculty increase the amount of writing students do in various classes, which in turn improves general student literacy. Graduating students who have this superior training help give the University a good reputation, thus helping to attract more students who are talented and well-prepared.

Third, faculty who have particiced in WAC seminars and workshops report that as a result they themselves feel more comfortable writing, write more, and believe they are writing better. Ultimately, not only are student writing and learning improved, so also are the quantity and quality of faculty writing.

How can you support WAC? There are a variety of ways faculty can participate in WAC. These can range from merely stressing the importance of writing well in all your teaching, to participating in a faculty seminar and reconsidering the role writing plays in your teaching. To participate most effectively, you should know about the West Chester University

program, which is one of the oldest and most respected in the United States.

III. What is West Chester University's Program for Writing Across the Curriculum?

West Chester University's cross-disciplinary Writing Program was begun in 1978 as a pilot project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Pennsylvania State College Educational Trust Fund. It now serves all of the University's more than 10,000 undergraduates. The WCU Writing Program is based on the assumptions that writing is importantly related to thinking and is integral to academic learning in liberal and professional studies. Its focus is not on remediation but on enhancement. The Program provides for:

1. Approximately 140 Writing-Emphasis courses each semester.
2. A General Requirement that all students must take three (3) of these Writing-Emphasis courses.
3. In-house lectures, seminars, and workshops on writing.
4. An in-house newsletter.
5. Special activities involving students.

This section of the Writing Program Faculty Handbook will tell you about these major aspects of the University program and about three important procedures for faculty:

6. How to get a course approved as Writing-Emphasis.
7. How to get the "W" course into the Master Schedule.
8. How else to get involved in WAC.

1. Approximately 135 Writing Emphasis Courses each semester. According to the policy adopted in 1980, each student will take at least three Writing-Emphasis courses at West Chester. (The requirement is reduced to two for transfer students with 40-70 credits, and to one for students transferring 71 or more credits.) Courses with the Writing-Emphasis designation are not additional requirements but regular subject-matter courses that by themselves can fulfill other general education, cognate, or major requirements. These courses are offered in almost all departments. They differ from other courses only in that their syllabi and assignments call for a significant amount of writing and their instructors provide significant attention to improving student writing.

Writing-Emphasis courses are not English composition courses but are courses that reinforce the competencies established in them. Also, Writing-Emphasis courses are not intended to be senior seminars in which extensive written work is ordinarily required; rather, as envisioned for this requirement, they are

less advanced courses, many of which may be suitable for general education on the freshman, sophomore, and junior levels. One of their main purposes is to prepare students to attain some of the competencies that are called for in senior seminars.

2. A General Requirement that all students must take three (3) of these Writing-Emphasis courses. The three Writing-Emphasis courses, in addition to English Composition, are preferably to be taken before the senior year.

In evaluations of the Writing-Emphasis policy conducted in 1983 and 1986, it was found that students were well informed of this Writing Emphasis requirement. Most student respondents agreed that they had had no trouble in finding a Writing-Emphasis courses, and that the Writing-Emphasis courses had helped them improve their writing.

3. In-house lectures, seminars, and workshops on writing for faculty members in all disciplines. Some are in the summer, some a series in Fall and Spring. WCU faculty members as well as outside experts are often invited to pa icipate in or lead these. In ten years, over 250 members of the WCU faculty have participated in one or more Writing Program events.

In 1986 and 1987, for example, workshops were led both by WCU faculty and professors from around the country. Judith Scheffler of WCU conducted a seminar on "Technical Writing," and Ruth Sabol of WCU conducted a seminar on "Remedial Writers: What to do in the Classroom." Among the outside faculty participating were Cynthia L. Caywood from the University of San Diego,

whose topic was "Female Students in the Writing Classroom," and Gail Hearn, Biology Department Chairperson at Beaver College, whose topic was "Why Writing is so Difficult."

Other WCU faculty members participating in recent workshops were: George Maxim of Early Childhood and Reading, Leigh Shaffer of Sociology/Anthropology, and Walter Fox of the English Department.

Other visiting workshop leaders were: Stephen Conrad of Bard College and Community College of Philadelphia; Barbara Nodine (Psychology), Beaver College; Leon Markowitz (English), Lebanon Valley College; John Trimbur (English), Boston University; and Christopher Thaiss (General Education Program), George Mason University.

4. An in-house newsletter by and for faculty. Over twenty newsletters have appeared in the history of the Program, most recently three or four during each academic year. These are distributed to all WCU faculty members here and have been requested by faculty across the country.

A typical newsletter will have information on what the WAC Program at WCU is doing or has done, or news about writing-emphasis programs around the country. Occasionally the newsletter will have features on what WCU faculty members are doing in their Writing-Emphasis courses. Some specifically useful past newsletters have been written by Susan Slaninka of the Nursing Department and John Turner of the History Department.

5. Special activities involving students: These have included a Writing Day, a Writing Month, and a humor contest. Students have also participated in panel discussions and received awards for good writing.

6. How to get a course approved as Writing-Emphasis. In order to get a course listed with the "W" symbol a faculty member must fill out a Criteria and Checklist for Writing-Emphasis Designation (see Attachment B). The form lists the four requirements for a course to receive the "W" designation. These include a "writing summary" approved by the chairperson of the department, and the Writing Program Committee's approval before the course can be listed as a "W" on the Master Schedule.

7. How to get the "W" course into the Master Schedule. When the course has been approved, the "W" notation can be added by the Department Chairperson to the printed Master Schedule for the coming semester. Sometimes the Department Chairperson has to be reminded to add this comment ("W") on the Master Schedule.

8. How else to get involved.

- Talk up writing among your colleagues.
- Offer one or more Writing-Emphasis courses.
- Make sure your students know that writing is important.
- Reward good student writing in your courses and in your departmental major.
- Write an article and share it with your students.

- Participate in a Writing Program seminar.
- Ask to serve on the Writing Program Committee.
- Write another article.
- Volunteer for Writing Program activities.
- Find articles on writing in your field and share them with your colleagues and the Committee.
- Conduct research on the effect of writing on your students.
- Develop a means of publishing your students' writing.

IV. How Are WCU Writing-Emphasis Courses Taught?

In practical terms, what do individual West Chester University instructors do in teaching their Writing-Emphasis courses? From an inventory of over 250 Writing-Emphasis courses, ranging from general education requirements to advanced offerings in a major, we have selected a variety of approaches to writing emphasis.

Rather than restrict the way an instructor sets up writing tasks in such a course, the committee's criteria and checklist both allow for considerable individualization. The checklist (Attachment B) includes four criteria for the syllabus:

1. There must be a "writing summary" which shows how the writing assignments will be used in class.

2. There must be a commitment to use some of the writing-emphasis ideas recommended by the Writing Program.

3. There must be a commitment to use examples of student writing to explain writing techniques applicable to the course.

4. There must be a commitment by the instructor to provide constructive comments to encourage improvement.

These four criteria are worth some explanation. The first, which calls for a writing summary, is primarily intended to enable an instructor to think through the writing objectives and writing tasks for a course with the same thoroughness usually afforded lectures on course content. Why, after all, are we assigning research papers, essay exam-inations, learning logs, etc.? Each instructor formulates an individual rationale in his/her writing summary, which may then be examined for approval by the Writing Program Committee. The task of composing these summaries calls for instructors to examine the rationale for using writing in a given course, encourages improvement in managing currently assigned writing tasks, and promotes innovation in forms of written expression.

To assist instructors in developing their writing summaries, the Writing Program Committee has issued a separate list of recommended writing activities (Attachment C: Some Recommended Writing Activities). These suggested activities fall into three categories: those requiring evaluation by the instructor; those that may or may not be evaluated by the instructor; and "other."

For the most pa , those activities requiring evaluation are improved versions of familiar academic assignments. The Committee wished to discourage such practices as simply assigning a term paper with only a few minutes of talk and letting the students go on their own, or giving essay exams without explaining what is being sought in the answers. From the perspective of the Writing Program Committee, the most likely end of such assignment-making would be student failure.

For writing to be used effectively in traditional ways, the Committee has concluded after reviewing current literature on the subject that you must take time to explain to your students what you are looking for in their tests and papers. It is also helpful to have brief conferences with your students to assess their progress on papers. With your constructive criticism the students will be able to make adjustments and improvements in their papers before they hand them in to be graded. More attention to early drafts means less work on later drafts, and it usually means better final products. Some instructors prefer to look not at sloppy first drafts but at what they call "first readable drafts," cleaner versions which can be read and responded to quickly. Another suggestion is to have your student write rough drafts before the assignment is due and to have a conference with the students about one of these; this practice eliminates the problem of trying to rewrite the paper after it is graded.

The same principle applies for essay exams. By distributing

a sample essay or diagramming on the chalkboard what an "A" essay should include, you can help improve your students' essay exams before they are written. If the students know what you are looking for, chances are better that you will get it.

The "other" kinds of writing activities recommended by the Writing Committee have been developed as "writing to learn" exercises and do not require evaluation. Here instructors may deal extensively with "affective" issues. For example, students may be shown how the thought-process works in writing to help them see that writing is not as difficult as it looks. Further, by having students work among themselves by critiquing each others' writing, they will begin to see different ideas of writing about the same topic, and they may begin to notice mistakes. They may offer ideas to each other on style, and be able to improve not only their peer's paper, but their own as well.

Other innovative writing exercises that may aid in learning are: having your students write a letter to a named audience, analyzing and summarizing articles, keeping a subject-matter journal, editing poorly written pieces, peer group editing, and writing their own essay questions. We call writing exercises like these "writing to learn". Research has shown that the result of using "writing to learn" in university teaching is an increase in student learning, better grades, and, as important, better writers.

An instructor may assign any combination of traditional or

writing-to-learn activities, but will at the least provide the students with guidesheets and samples of the type of writing desired. This way the students are not alone with what they do but are helped through example. In addition, instructors may help through conferences, and peers may help in group editing exercises.

Following the recommended guidelines, nineteen of the West Chester University Writing-Emphasis Courses are described in the next pages as examples of the program's diversity:

	Title	Instructor	Phone
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HIS 100	Mainstreams in History	R. Young	2654
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MGT 402	Organization Theory and Behavior	Staff	2304
MGT 405	Business Policy and Strategy	Staff	2304
MGT 408	Business and Society	Staff	2304
MHL 340	Medieval Music	S. Murray	2563
NSG 311/312	Adaptation II	S. Slaninka	2331
PED 100	Foundations of Physical Education	M. Greenwood	2424

PHI 190	Ethics	L. Meiswinkel	2550
PSC 359	The American Presidency	J. G. Smith	2562
SOC 200	Introduction to Sociology	P. Luck	2400
SPA 322	Latin American Culture and Civilization	E. Braidotti	2372
SPP 107	Communicative Disorders	Staff	3401

We are grateful to the faculty members teaching these courses for allowing us to print the following descriptions and for updating them as needed. Additional descriptions will be requested for future editions of this booklet.

When reading these descriptions of Writing-Emphasis courses, please keep in mind that they are not a complete list of all that the WCU faculty offer. They are a representative sampling of the methods used by WCU faculty for Writing-Emphasis, whether those methods are innovative or traditional. There are many more that, due to limited space, could not be reviewed in this guidebook.

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With this writing regimen, Sermas attempts to actively

involve his students in learning. Having them keep a notebook that will be graded causes them to pay more attention to class lectures and helps them take better notes. Sermas hopes that their note-taking ability improves in other classes as well.

Sermas also has students do free-writing, which allows them to express opinions without hindrance. The free-writings are collected and graded for content. Peer critiquing is also used to allow the students to talk among themselves and help each other in their writing about art.

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Students are taught how to write brochures, flyers and advertisements; how to write survey forms; and how to write a handbook for parents. These are also exchanged in peer groups for evaluation.

All of these exercises are to be combined into one final

document to be submitted as a request for licensing to the appropriate state agency. In this case it will be submitted for a grade based on the state's requirements.

A Women's Studies class called Women Writing, listed as ENG 400 and taught by Elizabeth Larsen, offers an altogether different method of teaching a "writing to learn" class. This class deals with the problems that women writers have and offers solutions to those problems.

In addition to producing six written projects and other activities, the class does free writing in a few minutes at the beginning of each session. The purpose of this freewriting is to limber up the intellectual muscles: it's a form of practice. Students are also expected to keep notes on their readings and their own writing to be submitted as a journal and as a series of reaction articles. Students also comment on other authors' writing and on each other's writing.

In a basic film class (FLM 200) taught by John Kelly, students do three writing assignments each week. The first is a summary of the movie they saw the previous week, the second a critical review of the same movie, and the third a summary of a critical review by a reputable critic

The purpose of having the students do these three assignments each week is to help them learn how to differentiate between plot summary and critical commentary and to provide them

with practice in applying the insights learned about viewing films to a particular film.

The idea behind having the students summarize a reputable critic's review is to convey insights into how a critic critically views a movie. In turn, the students should begin to learn how to incorporate these types of views into their own reviews of the movie seen in class.

In GEO 210, Population Problems, taught by Arlene Rengert, students are required to take two essay tests, do a major census analysis project, and do two smaller writing assignments such as article summaries or business letters. Some of these activities involve oral presentation as well.

Before each essay test, Rengert gives students an understanding of what what she looks for in an answer. After the exam, when it is being reviewed, selected students are chosen to read their essay answers aloud.

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Tom Heston mixes informal with traditional academic writing tasks when teaching his advanced history Writing-Emphasis course, The American Experience (HIS 150). His students keep a daily journal on index cards, which he collects at the end of each class. Each student is expected to summarize the theme of each class session on a card. He reviews these cards but does not grade them. However, students failing to submit cards will be penalized.

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Heston also requires students to read and summarize four journal articles related to the course material. These articles are chosen for their literary as well as historical merit. Students are to read each article and draft a rough summary that is reviewed in class by a peer group for clarity and expression.

Heston moves from group to group to join in the reviews. After the review, students are expected to revise their drafts and submit them at the next class. Students are also encouraged to further rewrite "completed" papers through Heston's policy that the initial grade assigned may be replaced with a higher grade if the revision merits it.

All of the writing and rewriting has a purpose, according to Heston, which is to concentrate on clear, logical, effective communication as a means of understanding history. Student work is constructively critiqued throughout the course and students are shown the benefits of multiple revisions.

In teaching a basic history class (HIS 100) as a Writing-Emphasis course, Robert Young uses three kinds of "writing to learn" assignments combined with progressively more difficult formal assignments. Young believes in the necessity of emphasizing writing in introductory courses. As he puts it, "Virtually all students taking HIS 100 are freshmen. Of these, approximately half are simultaneously enrolled in English 000. Therefore, we expect our efforts to reinforce, albeit within a discipline, essentially the skills dealt with in ENG 000 and ENG 120. Our particular emphasis relates to enhancing writing skills in note taking and essay writing in the context of examination skills."

Young's syllabus calls for weekly writing drills, which are writing-to-learn activities that become more difficult as the

semester moves along. These drills support his more formal writing tasks and his course objectives. The first drill is to have his students familiarize themselves with note taking; they choose a "notebook partner" to share notes and enhance note-taking skills for the first two weeks. Later, the notebooks will be collected and evaluated.

In weeks three and four, Young's students take sample quizzes to help them develop clear and concise sentence structures. These quizzes are collected but not graded. They are also evaluated in peer groups and discussed in class.

By week five, when the first of three graded quizzes will be given, students are expected to write in clear, coherent sentences because of the preliminary drills. The quizzes are discussed in class after they are graded and returned.

Beginning with week six, the writing assignments become longer and more frequent. Students must now write in complete and coherent paragraphs. Week six also marks the beginning of weekly writing assignments about course readings, and these writings require a personal critique at an office appointment. These writing tasks and conferences will continue until the end of the semester.

Young feels comfortable with the idea of "writing to learn" and with gradually increasing the difficulty of writing tasks. In adapting assignments to the level of his students, in this case freshman who are taking ENC 000 or ENG 120, Young can incorporate writing with his course material without the

disadvantages (for instructor and students) of requiring longer papers.

In MAT 350, Foundations of Mathematics Education, which presents methods of teaching math in schools, William Seybold has his students involved in four different writing activities, all related to the teaching of mathematics. In writing, they plan and explain a math-lab exercise suitable for a secondary school classroom. They read, summarize, and react to articles from journals in mathematics fields, and some of the better summaries are presented during class as examples of good writing.

Students also do a large research paper which addresses a particular trend, past or present, in mathematics education. The paper must describe the trend precisely and present authoritative information which explains the trend and reveals its implications. Form as well as content is important here: sentences and paragraphs must be well constructed and formatted and all references be documented by footnotes and a bibliography. Poorly written papers may be resubmitted, but the new grade will be no higher than a "C". Seybold tries to eliminate the resubmission of poorly written papers by providing papers from previous semesters to serve as models of acceptable form and content. Also, he makes himself available to the students for conferences and constructive criticism to help improve the papers as they are being composed.

Seybold's tests also emphasize writing in a novel and productive way. The midterm and final exams take the form of a controversial question in mathematics education which the student is to argue either pro or con. Since this type of exam is expected to take considerable thought and research, students are assigned the question in advance and prepare a written response. Then, during the exam hour, they debate the question, after which the written responses are collected for evaluation.

A Business Administration major will do much writing in the business and marketing classes taught by S. Reed Calhoun, Richard Murray, and David Paden (MGT 402: Organization Theory and Behavior; MGT 405: Business Policy and Strategy; and MGT 408: Business and Society). Their students are responsible for preparing several "case studies" of different companies, products or services. Case studies require many hours of research and writing, and in most classes an oral presentation must be given along with the paper. The purpose of these long assignments is to enhance a student's ability in writing such reports in the world of business.

Some classes require three to five papers of 8-10 pages with presentations for each, while other classes concentrate on one long paper, usually over 20 pages, with presentations along the way. Both kinds of classes have written tests throughout the semester.

In most of the Business Administration classes, students

work in groups of four to learn how to share the work equally and also to bounce ideas off of each other to produce a better paper. However, when a Business Major reaches the senior year, he or she will be individually responsible for a paper and presentation.

Medieval Music (MHL 340) as taught by Sterling Murray requires two take-home essays and a research paper. Murray assigns his essay questions in advance and expects his students to organize a carefully thought-out answer that addresses the questions accurately. He provides advance samples of acceptable and unacceptable essay answers. In addition to content, Murray is also looking for correct use of spelling, grammar, and the ability to construct clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs.

The research paper is pursued in stages, according to Murray. First the student will select a major topic in consultation with him and then give him a propectus. After he approves the topic and permits the student to begin research and note-taking, he reviews the notes in periodic conferences. Then the student hands in a rough draft for formative evaluation. which consists of helpful comments and suggestions for the final draft. To further assist his students, Murray places on reserve at the Music Library a previously written research paper as a model of correct format.

The Nursing Department offers a ten-credit course, Adaptation II (NSG 311 & 312), that runs over a full year and has a heavy emphasis in writing. Half of the year is dedicated to theory, and the other half to clinical work. Both halves require a great deal of writing.

Several Nursing faculty teach the course collaboratively. The clinical segment calls for students to submit a weekly journal of their clinical experiences, to prepare a comprehensive written evaluation every four weeks that describes and assesses their clients and their future treatment plans, and to submit a term paper. While writing this paper, the students must meet with their instructor for a conference. A rough draft must be submitted for comment before the final draft is due. Again, to assist the students in their writing, different models of writing are distributed.

The theory half of the class builds upon what was learned and experienced during the clinical session. Here students refer to the journal kept during their clinical experience and clarify the events by adding their own feelings, ideas, and opinions. Students must come up with their own nursing care plans to fit their patients, document what they are doing with their patients each day so that others could follow, write a term paper on a nursing treatment plan that they used on two of their clients during the clinical part of the semester, and do a variety of free-writing activities. The free-writing tasks are assigned regularly by instructors to introduce a new topic,

summarize an old one, or allow the students to react to a film or lecture.

In Nursing 311-312, clear and coherent communication among students, teachers, and clients is extremely important. Effective writing is essential in the health care field, and through these classes students learn not only how to take care of people, but also how to share that care with others through writing. Two Nursing faculty, Susan Slaninka and Kathleen Devlin-Kelly, participated in the first Writing Program summer seminar in 1978 and have been instrumental in emphasizing writing in Nursing 311-312 as well as other departmental courses. Their article, "Writing Across the Curriculum," appeared in the February 1981 number of the the Journal of Nursing Education.

PED 100, Foundations of Physical Education and Sport, taught by Mildred Greenwood and other department members, is a general education Writing-Emphasis course that stresses good writing. Each class is introduced to the professional organizations and journals in the physical education field, and students write article abstracts from three different journals that relate to the material being taught in the class lectures. Students also write a documentation of a field experience that could be an interview, a professional conference, or a workshop. In addition, students are required to write a short personal philosophy of education. Another skill covered in this class is

how to draft a resume and cover-letter to a possible employer.

Lauren Meiswinkel takes another unique approach to Writing Emphasis in a general education Philosophy class (PHI 180), where he mingles "writing to learn" techniques with more formal writing tasks. Meiswinkel's students write a diagnostic paper at the beginning of the course, which is used as a pretest to evaluate each student's writing ability. Later in the course, the students write a four or five page standard research paper that in process is evaluated by peer groups. The students are also required to answer essay question on tests.

Meiswinkel systematically applies the "writing to learn" method to traditional academic writing. He provides the students with examples of both good and poor writing, holds peer group meetings, sets up conferences with each student, and requires that at least one rough draft be turned in with every paper for evaluation and helpful comments before a final draft. By these methods, Meiswinkel believes, students improve their writing. He works with them rather than just giving them the assignment and letting them produce on their own.

In his course on The American Presidency (PSC 359), James G. Smith makes writing a part of his teaching in several ways. As a daily regimen, he has his students summarize class lectures and discussions throughout the semester. These are collected. Smith's students also write a term paper, which is critiqued

throughout the semester by peer groups who offer comments and suggestions for revision. Smith provides examples and guidelines for the papers, evaluates and discusses them in class, and if necessary asks for rewrites. Smith then assigns each student to read another's final paper and write a reaction to it.

Patrick Luck uses five different kinds of writing in his Introduction to Sociology (SOC 200). He gives five essay exams which he grades for grammar and spelling as well as content. But beforehand he provides examples of good, average and poor essay answers and discusses the criteria that influenced their evaluation.

All of the other assignments are related to either the textbooks or class lectures, so Luck feels that they do not require excessive planning on his part. Students rewrite in paragraph form their notes from his lectures on "Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology." They read the textbook chapter on "Love and Property" and then draft a letter to an imaginary friend who is about to be married, in which they must explain how family relations are relations of property. They then write a brief essay analyzing some aspect of their own experience from a sociological perspective.

Additionally they read and answer a journal article that addresses a social problem. Their answers are written in essay form and must criticize the article as a statement of sound reasoning, noting the positive and negative aspects of the

argument, its definitions, evidence, cause-effect relationships, value judgements, and its proposed solutions or lack of them.

Latin American Culture and Civilization (SPA 322) taught by Erminio Braidotti combines "writing to learn" with traditional modes.

The syllabus calls for mandatory and optional writing tasks. Mandatory are a book report, a research paper, a reaction paper, and a four-part letter done the first day of class. Additionally, students are to choose four of a number of optional writing tasks: keeping a log of the class; keeping and explaining a cultural folder; interviewing a foreign person on matters agreed to by the instructor; explaining a cartoon or a joke; analyzing a Latin American country or comparing one to the U.S.; doing a critical observation of LA culture; attending and reporting on a LA cultural event; that is, pinpointing in literature some of the major points discussed in class (culture through literature); and reviewing course (what the student learned). Rather than select apparently easier tasks, students must spread out their choices almost equally among the ten options.

Braidotti developed this syllabus after participating in a Writing Program workshop and is pleased to offer his students so large a choice of items to write about. He believes that it is easy to find some interesting writing to do in his class. To help his students improve as writers, Braidotti offers samples of good and bad writing and has conferences with them about

their papers. In all of these writing assignments he stresses correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as content.

Braidotti's final exam is related to what was done on the first day of class, when the students wrote as pen pals to explain U.S. culture to a "foreign" person. On the same day, they wrote what they knew about LA culture, and what they expected to learn from the course. During the final exam, the students are asked to write an organized essay about what they indeed had learned. Braidotti finds that students generally learn a considerable amount about the LA culture, and that in most cases their writing ability also improves.

In a Communicative Disorders class (SPP 107) taught by several members of the department, students learn how to do a case study of a child with speech problems. They are required to write two letters to an imaginary clinic one asking for permission to evaluate a child, and the other thanking them after the evaluation.

Once that is accomplished, each student is required to develop a case history for their child, to research and develop tests for that child, to select and evaluate the materials chosen, to prepare a transcript of the child's speech with the abnormalities defined, and to provide a dialogue to be employed for parent interview. Each student must also make an oral presentation to accompany the written report.

Students thus learn how to write a case history, how to

develop their own tests or use already existing tests to help their child, and how to talk with parents of a child with a speech disorder.

They also learn how to listen carefully, because each student also has to prepare a transcript of the child's speech that documents and explains the child's problem with articulation, phonation, and language. The student must stress etiology as well.

A closely related class, Clinical Principles (SPP 350) furthers the ability to write clinical reports. In this class students are required to observe ten clinical sessions and write a summary report for eac These reports are critiqued and returned. Students also learn how to write a clinical report, which is vital for a student interested in working at a speech or hearing clinic. Additionally, each student must take notes to be used later in writing summaries and for essay tests.

Attachment A

Writing Program Committee Functions;

Current and Former Members

The Committee screens course proposals for the Writing-Emphasis designation, sponsors faculty and other activities in support of writing, and acts as an advocate for the writing-emphasis program. Members serve for two years. Meetings are held at least twice a semester. In addition to student members, current (*) and former faculty members include:

Marshall Becker (Anthropology)*
Jay Browne (English)
Uel Combs (English)
Kevin Dunleavy (Economics)
John Eberhart (Communicative Disorders)*
Maryanne Eleuterio (Biology)
Bonita Freeman-Witthoft (Anthropology)
Howard Freeman (Special Education)*
Phyllis Goetz (Health)
Mildred Greenwood (Physical Education)
James Habecker (Childhood Studies)
Robert Hawkes (Physics)*
Thomas Heston (History)
Walter Hipple (Philosophy)
Allen Johnson (Geology)*
Brent Kaplan (Physics)
Elizabeth Logan (Psychology)
John Lowe (Physical Education)
William Overlease (Biology)
Helen Reid (Chemistry)
Mary-Anne Reiss (Foreign Languages)
Arlene Rengert (Geography)
Robert Schick (Keyboard Music)
Leigh Schaffer (Sociology)
Susan Slaninka (Nursing)
Frederick Struckmeyer (Philosophy)
Shirley Walters (Education)
Stanley Yarosewick (Physics)

CRITERIA AND CHECKLIST FOR WRITING-EMPHASIS DESIGNATION

Steps for the designation of a Writing Emphasis Course:

1. Develop a "writing summary" (samples on reverse of this sheet) and have it approved by your department chairperson.

2. Complete this form and send it with your "writing summary" to the Writing Program Office, Philips 210, c/o Robert Weiss.

3. The Writing Program Committee will notify you and your department chairperson of the approval.

4. Generally, approvals within the first month of a semester will permit a course to be listed with the "W" designation for the follow semester.

YOUR NAME_____ _____CAMPUS PHONE EXT._____

TITLE OF COURSE_____

PREFIX AND NUMBER OF COURSE_____

PERTINENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE (optional):

Please check all brackets:

[ ] The "writing summary" I have submitted with this checklist reflects how writing will be used to enhance the learning of the course content.

[ ] My course plan or syllabus incorporates writing activities recommended by the Writing Program Committee.

[ ] I will accompany course assignments with careful instruction concerning techniques of composition (e.g., logic, movement from one idea to another, use of evidence, tone).
NOTE: It is strongly recommended that students be given examples of superior and inferior writing of the particular type requested in an assignment.

[ ] I will provide students with constructive comments and suggestions on their written material to encourage subsequent improvements in expression and organization.

I have reviewed this course and approve_____ _____
Department Chairperson

The Writing Program sponsors workshops and seminars to aid faculty members in developing a writing emphasis for their courses. All faculty members are notified of these events. In addition, Writing Program Committee members will provide individual assistance upon request.

Attachment E.2

WRITING-EMPHASIS COURSE WRITING SUMMARY
ESS 111 Astronomy (Dr. George Reed)

I. Writing Activities

A. Creative mythology - Students will be required to research and modernize a classical myth pertaining to one of the prominent constellations in the sky during the semester of study.

B. Observing activities - Students will be required to submit written descriptions of assigned observing activities. These assignments will include:

1. observing the night sky at an interval of several hours
2. observing the night sky at an interval of several weeks
3. observing the moon through one entire synodic period
4. observing the changing sunset point
5. other possibilities include a. observing a sunset
   b. observing the moon illusion
   c. observing the motions of planets (if visible)

C. Journal articles - students will be required to read, summarize and react to three non-technical journal articles related to a subject included in class discussions.

D. Reaction papers - Students will be asked to respond in writing, during class sessions, to questions and positions presented during these same class sessions.

E. Test Questions - A portion of each major test will include an opportunity for a written response. All quizzes will require written response.

F. Major Written Project - Each student will be required to submit a paper connecting astronomy to their college major, hobby or personal interest topic. Two non-graded rough drafts will be required prior to the submission of the final paper. The paper will represent a major course grade.

II Comments

Sections of this course that do not carry the writing emphasis designation do not require written observing activity reports, journal article reports, or the major writing project.

The writing assignments and the expectations from the assignments will be carefully described and discussed in class. Student work will be constructively critiqued following completion of the assignments. An emphasis shall be placed upon the writer's obligation to "communicate" with the identified reader. Examples of successful and unsuccessful writing shall be collected each semester for use during future sections.

Sample Writing-Emphasis Course Writing Summary

HEA 241 Community Health

(reprinted with permission of Professor Phyllis Goetz)

I. Writing Activities

A. Log - Required assignment

Students describe and explain their weekly volunteer work experiences in a health agency.

B. [illegible] Writing - Required assignment

Students are given guidelines for writing a good business letter and are required to write at least two such letters. Before the letters are sent, each is submitted to the instructor for comments and correction. When necessary, students are asked to rewrite letters and resubmit them.

C. Thought Reaction Papers - Required assignment

Students write two thought reaction papers on the same subject, one at the beginning of the semester and a second at the end.

D. Articles - Required assignment

After having read ten professional periodical articles, students are asked to identify and to explain the main points of each article.

E. Major Written Project - Required letter-graded assignment

Students are provided with guidelines for writing the project and are given the opportunity to review good and excellent student projects completed in previous semesters.

II. General Comments

Samples of completed writing assignments are brought back to class as a regular course activity in which students are asked to read aloud passages or answers that are well written. On all written assignments, student work is corrected for spelling and grammar errors, and comments are made about composition. When a student's paper contains numerous spelling errors, the student is asked to submit a list of the same words spelled correctly. Students who are unable to express their ideas proficiently are advised to elect additional writing courses.

SOME RECOMMENDED WRITING ACTIVITIES

Requiring evaluation by the instructor

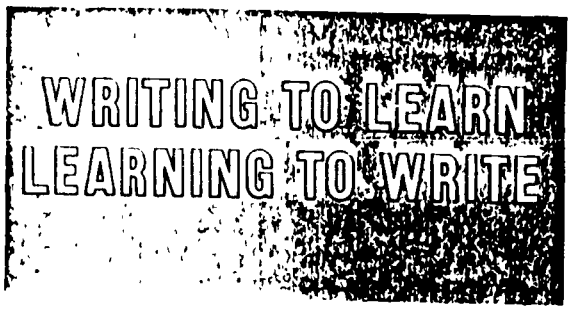
1. Assign a writing exercise in which students address one or more audiences. For example, students could write a letter to a congressional representative on a topic discussed in class, or they could compose a paper for a professional audience with a briefer version for the popular press or a 4th grade classroom.
2. Initiate a correspondence, dialogue, or debate on a subject by having students exchange alternate written statements and responses developed successively from a topic you assign.
3. Have students summarize a technical piece (article, chapter) in more general and less formal terms.
4. Supervise and review the building of a research paper at each stage of development. The final version will be much better--and less work to read--if you have approved a prospectus, an outline, and a first draft.
5. Have students read several literature searches (or reviews of the literature) and then compose one of their own from sources you select.
6. Emphasize writing tasks that call for analysis of a process or analysis of causes or effects, and have students apply readings at each stage of the analysis. Provide examples beforehand.

May be accomplished with or without additional evaluation by the instructor

1. Ask students to rewrite their notes in paragraph form.
2. Ask students to write paragraph summaries of their reading assignments.
3. Discuss the characteristics of writing done in your field: abstracts, reviews, research articles, etc. Explain the hows and ways of writing to a professional audience.
4. Give an editing exercise. For example, after a completed abstracting assignment or reading assignment hand out a poorly written report and ask students to improve it.
5. Use peer review wherever it seems suitable, especially for shorter writing assignments. [illegible] writing tasks can be tallied.

Other suggestions

1. Give brief and [illegible] in-class assignments which ask "what did I learn about _____, and how did I learn it?"
2. Appoint a student recorder or two to record or log each class. Post a copy of the log on your office door.
3. In any writing assignment specify carefully what you mean by such terms as trace, discuss, explain, compare, and define.
4. Before an essay test, distribute sample answers to essay exams and explain what constitutes a superior, average, and inferior response--not just in content but in clarity and precision of expression.
5. Assign a "mock" essay question so that students can practice responding to it.
6. After an essay test, review the writing done on selected actual essay exam questions. For example, you may pick one or two good answers to read aloud in class.



WCSC

WRITING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

NO.3: PEER CRITIQUING

Most faculty agree that writing should be encouraged, but many avoid giving the encouragement. After all, someone has to grade all the papers that are written. There is a method, however, that allows an instructor to encourage more writing but keep evaluation at a tolerable level: peer critiquing. Not only does this technique help reduce evaluative pressure for the instructor, it also helps reduce the pressure many students feel about their own writing.

Peer Critiquing In Operation

The method is a simple one. You should request that a rough draft of whatever has been assigned be brought to class on a particular day. Emphasize that only the student writers will see the draft, that you are not concerned with grammar and mechanics at this point in the paper's development, and that the papers will not be graded. The class should be divided into groups of three; include yourself in one of the groups to help relax the atmosphere. Each student should read his paper aloud twice, while the listeners answer two questions: What impressed you as interesting? Where did you want more information? Also emphasize that the listeners are to make no value judgements; they are to confine themselves to answering only these two questions. Repeat this process for the other two students, so that all three will have read their rough drafts. The whole exercise should take about thirty minutes.

Follow-up

This strategy has several advantages but above all else it illustrates for the student that writing is a process, one that is as important as the finished product. To further emphasize this you might ask your students to do another critique of the same paper (in different groups) in a few days. After the second critique, encourage them to read their final drafts to friends, asking these people to answer the same two questions. This way it is possible for a student to have three critiques of a paper before it is submitted for the instructor's evaluation.

Results

Most students experience a shift in attitude toward writing as a result of peer critiquing. The fear of rejection is lessened; no value judgments are being made, but the content and organizational skills of writing papers are being refined. In addition, by providing several writing opportunities, the student's writing confidence will increase. With perseverance and encouragement, you should be able to measure an increase in writing competency.

Michael Peich
English Department

NOTE: The Writing Program office has been moved to the Library's old entranceway. Please remind your students to enter from the Quad.

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES.
ANYONE WISHING TO RECEIVE COPIES SHOULD CALL BOB WEISS AT EXT. 2135

NO. 5: THE ESSAY EXAM: LIGHT CANDLES, DON'T CURSE THE DARKNESS

Are you satisfied with student performance on essay examinations? If not, here is an idea that might help you to improve their work.

Select three or four student essay answers of varying quality--from excellent to poor--from a previous examination. About three sessions before a scheduled examination, reproduce the question and the answers, exactly as they were written, for distribution to your students. Ask the students to read and evaluate each answer, "A" through "F," and to be prepared to state why they awarded a particular grade. In general discussion, arrive at a class consensus on the quality of each answer and the specific attributes which separate excellent from poorer responses.

Then assign the students an essay question to be completed at home and presented at the next class meeting. At that time, ask the students to exchange answers with a classmate and to evaluate the response according to the criteria on a "Peer Critique Form" which asks questions similar to those below.

1. Does the answer relate to the question?
2. Do you find any contradictions or errors which weaken the answer?
3. Are the main points stated clearly in the answer?
4. Are the main points supported with important examples, facts, or references from readings and class discussion?
5. List the important ideas or points omitted from the answer.
6. Does the answer contain a conclusion that relates the response to the significant points raised by the question?
7. Do the paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that states a major point?
8. Do the sentences make sense?
9. Has the author used general words or phrases where she/he could use more specific ones? (Underline those words or phrases; suggest alternatives).
10. Proofread the paper for the author and indicate spelling, punctuation, and mechanical problems.

Once the students have completed the critique, the papers and comments are to be returned and discussed with the author by the peer evaluator.

Finally, you might want to collect this material and review it with an eye to isolating one or two common failings that should be discussed in subsequent classes.

This exercise is no cure-all for poor essay examination performance, sad to say. But it should equip most students with the ability to evaluate their own work against generally accepted standards, and it really should stimulate higher levels of achievement on subsequent essay examinations.

John Turner (History Dept.)

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES.
ANYONE WISHING TO RECEIVE COPIES SHOULD CALL BOB WEISS AT EXT. 2281

NO. 6: WRITING TO LEARN. LEARNING TO WRITE

Whenever we have a need to explain a complicated idea, or to help make an idea clear, or to help remember, we commonly reach for a pencil and paper. We assume that writing an idea down is connected to making it more clear, to organizing our thinking, to helping us remember, to learning. This is such a common-sense assumption that much of schooling is based on it.

Hypotheses Tested

One of the results of last summer's writing workshop is a series of studies designed to collect empirical data to measure and describe the relationships between writing and learning that are part of that assumption. These studies focus on a set of specifically defined writing "feedback" teaching techniques and how they affect the learning of college students. Writing "feedback" in these studies consists of assignments, however brief, in which students regularly respond in writing to course material. A pilot study during Fall 1978 and simultaneous replication studies during Spring 1979 (using a quasi-experimental non-equivalent comparison group design and analyses of covariance and chi square) test the following four hypotheses:

1. The more you write, the more you learn;
2. Ideas written about will be learned more clearly than ideas learned without the help of writing;
3. The more you write, the better you write; and
4. The more you write, the more you enjoy writing.

Design of the Study

Fifteen professors teaching two sections of the same class in a wide variety of subject matter areas are using one section as an experimental group and the other as a comparison group. Both sections are taught the same subject matter using the same teaching techniques, except that in the experimental group significant ideas to be learned are being written about using the designated writing feedback techniques, while in the comparison group they are not. All classes are being pre- and post-tested on achievement in subject matter, writing skills, and attitudes toward writing. The students in the experimental groups are being asked which ideas they learned most and least clearly. Chi square comparisons are being made between expected frequencies and actual frequencies among written, non-written, most clear, and least clear ideas learned. Analyses of the data for the fall pilot study show that written ideas were the most clearly learned and that non-written ideas were learned least clearly. The difference was significant beyond $p = .001$. The studies were designed by R. Weiss, S. Walters, and L. Kurtas with help from E. Peters, M. Higgins, and others.

Shirley Walters

(Secondary Education/
Professional Studies)

WRITING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER – NO. 8

- ALTERNATIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS -

by Susan Slaninka (Nursing)

Writing assignments in many college courses have taken the traditional form of compositions, essay examination questions, or term paper assignments. West Chester University faculty writing workshops have presented a variety of other options for incorporating writing into their courses.

Presented in this newsletter are a number of alternative writing assignments that have been successfully used by West Chester faculty. It is the hope of the Writing Program Committee that some of these ideas may be helpful to others as well. The committee also hopes that you will assist us in our efforts by providing additional suggestions that may be disseminated via this newsletter.

Summarizing Class Lectures . . . For students having difficulty with testing situations, summarizing daily class notes can be very beneficial. The students are then forced to review the notes to clarify and then synthesize the material and make it more meaningful for studying.

Exam Question Writing . . . Several faculty have allowed students to write examination questions. This role reversal is not only beneficial as a writing assignment, but also increases the students' understanding of how difficult a task this is. Problems of level of difficulty, ambiguity, and content selection quickly become as apparent to students as they are to faculty.

Free Writing Exercises . . . This concept is a particularly useful tool for encouraging students' writing because it is non-evaluative. Students can be asked to respond to a question, statement, or idea as part of an introduction to a topic or as a peer-sharing exercise.

Journals . . . The emphasis in a journal assignment is to allow students to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in their own style. Quantity rather than quality is important in a journal assignment. Faculty should refrain from marking journals on spelling, mechanics, or punctuation.

Case Studies . . . Using case study presentations as a catalyst for a writing assignment can be very effective. Case studies that are relevant to the students' program of study can enhance interest in the topic area and encourage writing.

Peer-Critiquing . . . Excluding the faculty member from some assignments can have positive outcomes. Students can be assigned a written task and then divided into small groups for a peer critiquing exercise. This can be particularly effective for first drafts of term paper assignments.

True-to-Life Assignments . . . One particularly important aspect of a writing assignment is making it practical and relevant to the "real life" situation. Finding assignments that meet this criteria in each discipline can be very exciting for students and faculty alike.

Faculty members with additional suggestions about improving student writing may contact Prof. Slaninka or any member of the Writing Program Committee:

	Department
D. Charters	Phys. Ed.
U. Combs	English
K. Dunleavy	Economics
W. Overlease	Chemistry
A. Rengert	Gov't./Planning
L. Shaffer	Psychology
F. Struckmeyer	Philosophy
B. Tumbore	(Student)
R. Weiss	English

We have rejuvenated the Writing Program Newsletter to provide faculty with additional assistance in helping students to write and learn. We invite your comments and your contributions for our future issues.

WRITING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER - no. 11

Susan Slaninka (Nursing) has been invited to share with you some writing activities that are required in her department. You may find some of these activities useful for or adaptable to your own content areas. Because of limited space, she has not included all of the writing activities in the Nursing Department.

Departmental Newsletter

The nursing students publish each semester a BS Newsletter for their peers. Two senior students serve as co-editors of the newsletter and reporters are selected from each class. In this way, many students are involved in the process of writing. The newsletter has become a major means of communication among the nursing classes.

Writing Award

As an additional incentive to students, a Writing Award was established. The main objective of this award is to recognize and acknowledge outstanding achievement in writing. Students are asked to submit both nursing and non-nursing papers for consideration by the Writing Award Committee. All other examples of writing are also welcome. Two awards are given each year--one to a junior and one to a senior. The winners' names are displayed on a permanent plaque in the Nursing Department.

Term Paper Assignments

To emphasize writing as a process, not just as a product, students are asked to submit a first draft along with a written self-evaluation of the draft on the due date. Peer evaluation sessions are then scheduled so that peers can give feedback to each other. Students can also choose to meet with a faculty member for additional guidance. If this option is taken, a writing evaluation conference is arranged. Faculty are discouraged from exclusively "marking up" the papers. Rather, they are encouraged to give a summary of constructive criticism to the student. This form of evaluation has been found to be a more satisfactory method of evaluating students' writing.

Nursing Care Plans

A major responsibility of the nursing students is to utilize the nursing process in a variety of clinical settings. For each client assignment, a nursing history is taken, a physical exam performed, and nursing diagnoses developed. Students then collaborate with clients to plan specific goals and interventions. Evaluation of the plan is the last stage in the process. At this time the student analyzes the effectiveness of the plan and makes necessary revisions.

Free-Writing Activities

The concept of free-writing is introduced during lectures and in the clinical setting. The following are two examples of this very useful technique:

Before the first clinical day, students were asked to write for five minutes on "how they felt about going into the clinical area." Utilization of pre-conference time to share their feelings with their peers proved to be very beneficial. Students were quick to discover that the anxieties they were experiencing were not at all unique.

One faculty member had students in class write about the changes they had perceived in themselves and changes they expected to occur over the next semester. This integrated the concept of change into the lecture.

Susan C. Slaninka
Department of Nursing

WRITING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

NO. 12: DESIGNING ESSAY EXAMINATIONS

There is more to taking essay exams than knowing the facts. Often, some students do better than others not because they know more but because they express themselves better.

Instructors often complain that students write their worst on essay examinations. The pressure of an examination discourages good style. But the chief weakness of examination answers is not that they are unpolished or ungrammatical or awkward; it is that they are not composed at all. Many students do not first plan what they want to say. Too often they begin to write without a clear purpose and assume that as long as they are writing they are somehow answering the question. The result is often an answer that is irrelevant, unclear, and even self-contradictory.

* * * * *

The checklist below summarizes some considerations in designing an essay question:

CHOICE OF TASK

1. Does the question test the students' understanding of significant course content?

2. Is the question sufficiently focused to allow students to say something substantive in the time allowed?

3. Is the question the end point of a sequence of previous writing assignments or other preparation?

4. Does the question allow students to synthesize their learning, make new connections, or see the material in a new way?

WORDING

1. Is the task clarified by exact use of terms such as trace, compare, explain, justify, etc.? (See the list below.)

2. Are any steps in the writing task spelled out clearly?

3. Is there enough context given so that students can immediately plan their answers without spending time figuring out the demands of the question?

4. Would it be appropriate or helpful to frame the question as a simulated professional problem?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Do students know the relative worth of various questions or parts of questions so that they can apportion time well?

2. Do students know the criteria by which their answers will be graded?

(over)

AN ESSAY EXAMINATION WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS

Please announce to all of your classes that a one-hour workshop on preparing for writing essay examinations will be held on December 5 at 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. and repeated December 6 at 11:00 to 12:00 a.m. Location will be Lawrence Center, Room 105 (old Hardee's area), second floor.

The words that follow are frequently used in essay examinations:

SUMMARIZE: Sum up; give the main points briefly. Summarize the ways in which people preserve food.

EVALUATE: Give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; talk over the advantages and limitations. Evaluate the contributions of teaching machines.

CONTRAST: Bring out the points of difference. Contrast the novels of Jane Austen and William Makepeace Thackeray.

EXPLAIN: Make clear; interpret; make plain; tell "how to do"; tell the meaning of. Explain how scientists can, at times, trigger a full-scale rainstorm.

DESCRIBE: Give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of. Describe the Pyramids of Giza.

DEFINE: Give the meaning of a word or concept; place it in the class to which it belongs and set it off from other items in the same class. Define the term "archetype".

COMPARE: Bring out the points of similarity and points of difference. Compare the legislative branches of the state government and the national government.

DISCUSS: Talk over; consider from various points of view; present the different sides of. Discuss the use of pesticides in controlling mosquitoes.

CRITICIZE: State your opinion of the correctness or merits of an item or issue; criticism may approve or disapprove. Criticize the increasing use of alcohol.

JUSTIFY: Show good reasons for; give your evidence; present facts to support your position. Justify American entry into World War II.

TRACE: Follow the course of; follow the trail of; give a description of progress. Trace the development of television in school instruction.

INTERPRET: Make plain; give the meaning of; give your thinking about; translate. Interpret the poetic line: "The sound of a cobweb snapping is the noise of my life".

PROVE: Establish the truth of something by giving factual evidence or logical reasons. Prove that in a full-employment economy a society can get more of one product only by giving up another product.

ILLUSTRATE: Use a word picture, a diagram, a chart, or concrete example to clarify a point. Illustrate the use of catapults in the amphibious warfare of Alexander the Great.

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The Writing Program office also has copies of Newsletter No. 5, by John Turner (History Dept.), which presents a useful way to teach essay examination skills in content courses. Call Ext. 2297 for a copy.

What Happened in the Summer Workshop?

Providing more emphasis on writing and thinking skills in their courses is the best way to help students become better writers and thinkers. Fourteen West Chester University faculty concluded this in a two-day faculty workshop in late May under the sponsorship of the Faculty Development Committee and the Dean of Arts and Sciences. Based on learning logs submitted by all participants from the departments of Physical Education, Art, Health, Psychology, Communicative Disorders, Business Administration, Chemistry, and Childhood Studies and Reading, the event was well worth the time invested.

"Why is writing so difficult?" This question began the workshop. Answers included the difference between speech and writing and the variety of audiences and writing styles. Gail Hearn, Biology Department Chairperson at Beaver College and co-author of the book Writing in the Arts and Sciences, discussed the application of writing assignments in her discipline and how writing can be adapted to any field of study. Hearn noted that surface errors, punctuation, and spelling are students' problems, not professors'. Time should be spent on format, the significance of the writing, and the idea of audience (who the student in writing for). Hearn encourages the use of peer review and self-evaluation in lessening the burden on professors.

Over the next day and a half, presentations by Bob Weiss and Leigh Shaffer covered evaluation, creation of specific writing assignments, and learning-centered writing. Participants discussed their purposes for writing, designed specific writing assignments, and considered new or revised writing emphasis course summaries. As a result, they developed ideas they wanted to try in classes and were thinking of restructuring course requirements.

The learning logs done by the group reveal much enthusiasm and many new insights into writing across the curriculum. The participants seemed eager to try new approaches utilizing more writing tasks.

For several participants, linkages between writing and learning were new and exciting. Before the workshop, Darwood Taylor (Bus. Adm.) had focused on "writing as a communication tool;" now he sees it as "a learning tool," with the communication skill improving "as a by-product of better learning." To Jack Lowe (Phys. Ed.), "Probably the most important element is to understand writing as a learning process in itself and consequently doubly valuable." Gus Sermas (Art) noted that using writing to emphasize what one really knows is the most important idea for him. Rick Murray (Bus. Adm.), who is reformatting his Business Management course into a writing emphasis course, and "will use many more learning centered writing tools in lectures."

Cleavonne Stratton (Communicative Disorders) was one of several participants who became "vividly aware of the importance of identifying the audience to whom you are writing." As an additional outcome, one participant saw in the workshop "a chance to develop more [personal] career goals for myself."

The consensus of opinion was that the workshop was valuable. "One of the most fascinating aspects of this workshop has been the relevance of the information for the numerous disciplines represented," said Dorothy Nowicki (Health). "The suggestions have been easily transferable--for the most part--to my course assignments in Public Health." Connie Zimmerman (Childhood Studies) felt that her "confidence level" in helping students to improve their writing had been supported as well as increased. Sam Moore (Psych.) felt that the workshop was "an excellent experience which generated a wide variety of ideas for integrating writing into the curriculum...." Judy Ray observed, "The greatest contribution was the practical application of all of the information...."

The only negative comment was that it was too brief. Additional workshops for fall and spring are currently in the planning stage. Look for details in coming newsletters.

WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING?

The collaborative learning movement in the U.K. and the U.S. is a response to the difficulty many students have in adapting to college life. What these students were found to need was not an extension of traditional classroom learning, nor tutoring and counseling programs staffed by graduate students and other professionals, but an altogether different means of learning: collaboration with each other. In a major article describing the reasons for and principles of collaborative learning, Kenneth Bruffee urges teachers to try to establish processes whereby students learn from and with one another ("Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" College English 46, Nov. 1984).

"CONVERSATION" AND THE NATURE OF THOUGHT AND KNOWLEDGE

Bruffee defines thought as internalized, private conversation. Because our life in a community generates and maintains public conversation, thought requires us to understand the nature of community conversation. To think well individually, we must first learn to think well collectively and we must learn to converse well in our fields of interest. We need to talk and write extensively in our disciplines, not as individual integers, but as collaborative conversationalists. Thus academic writing and writing appropriate to work in business and the professions are both written within and addressed to a community of status equals: peers.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Collaborative learning provides a social context in which students can experience and practice the kinds of conversation valued by college teachers. Student peers, Bruffee points out, lack the knowledge that would enable them to constitute knowledge communities. But all students bring partial knowledge (experience) and can pool that knowledge, making accessible the normal discourse of the knowledge community they together are attempting to enter. "To learn is to work collaboratively to establish and maintain knowledge among a community of knowledgeable peers...." The continued vitality of knowledge communities depends first on maintaining established knowledge, then on challenging and changing it.

Bruffee, however, cautions teachers not to move abruptly into collaborative learning. Throwing students together with no guidance merely perpetuates conformity, intimidation, and leveling-down of quality. Faculties must instead create and maintain a demanding academic environment that makes collaboration--social engagement in intellectual pursuits--a genuine part of students' educational development.

CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM-SOLVING and WRITING

On October 17, Chris Thaiss and Randy Gabel of George Mason University led a faculty seminar on critical thinking and problem-solving. Both are active in their university's Plan for Alternative General Education (PAGE): an interdisciplinary series of courses that help the student understand the vital connections among many areas of study. Through PAGE, the university strives to give students the breadth of knowledge and those habits of mind that will lead to their success as critical thinkers and problem solvers in their chosen fields. Collaboration by some one hundred faculty members produces these required general education courses. Students develop "literacies" in analytic thinking and in the computer. Course assignments and teaching methods emphasize the students' practice and improvement of their development as writers, readers and speakers in the forms appropriate to all the fields of study they will encounter. The program makes a strong commitment to writing.

A REMINDER:

December 5, 1985, John Trimbur presents a faculty seminar on "Collaborative Learning" in Philips Memorial Library. A lecture will take place from 3:00 to 4:00 followed by a demonstration from 4:00 to 5:00.