

## Series Editor's Introduction

In 1984, with funding from the Buhl Foundation, Richard Young and Joann Sipple conducted a series of writing-across-the-curriculum workshops with the faculty of Robert Morris College in Pittsburgh. For a number of years, Richard – like other WAC scholars – had been considering the difficulties faced by disciplinary faculty who wanted to use writing in their courses but were deterred by the investment of instructional time that would be required to do so in a significant way. In a recent conversation, Richard told me that the key issue was “how to get faculty involved in WAC without increasing their burdens.” His response was to follow the lead of other WAC scholars, such as Elaine Maimon, Toby Fulwiler, and Art Young, who had established the writing-to-learn movement.

“The question I asked was whether we could get faculty to use writing in unconventional ways – ways that didn’t require them to invest a great deal of time in responding to student writing but that would nonetheless give students both an authentic writing task and feedback on their writing,” he told me. Richard brought this concept to faculty from across the disciplines at Robert Morris College, asking them not only to consider some of his ideas for “small genres” but also to develop and share their own activities. The result, he told me, “was quite wonderful.” It is also the basis for the collection of activities found in this document.

In the spring of 1987, while I was taking a course in instructional theory and practice from Richard, he shared a type-written manuscript containing the Robert Morris activities with me and the other members of our class. I kept it, along with my notes from the course. Earlier this year, during a workshop I led at the National Conference on Student Writing and Critical Thinking in Agriculture,<sup>1</sup> I shared the manuscript with the workshop participants. It was well received and I had so many requests for it that I asked Richard for permission to publish it in the WAC Clearinghouse.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/wac/proceedings/> for the proceedings.

Richard asked me to encourage those of you who read this collection to contribute to it. If you have your own “small genres” that you would like to share, please send them to me at [Mike.Palmquist@ColoState.edu](mailto:Mike.Palmquist@ColoState.edu). I’ll add them to the document.

The spirit of cooperation and sharing that motivated Richard Young to create this document in the mid-1980s is similar to the spirit that brought about the WAC Clearinghouse. I hope you’ll share your “small genre” activities with us.

– Mike Palmquist, October 2003