TRAINING READERS
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Participants at this session represented a geographic range from Utah to Paris. Most of the participants came from institutions where placement or competency testing programs had been recently instituted and where they, as directors of those programs or as chief readers, were faced with the task of training and/or recruiting faculty to score the tests. Chief among the topics of discussion was the problem of training new readers to differentiate between placement and competency measurement. Several of the participants admitted that in their own minds, the two criteria often tend to blend together. The trend of the discussion suggested that before testing programs get underway, reading time ought to be devoted to developing rangelinders that accurately reflect the tests being used. Several participants also remarked about the importance of punctuating reading sessions with frequent reference to rangelinders, especially in cases where experienced faculty are readers and where placement is not the only goal. It was thought that experienced faculty would have, as readers, a natural bias toward position for placement.

Some of the participants new to testing inquired about procedures for training sessions. Some experienced test administrators provided information about the day-by-day tasks involved in training readers to work effectively in a testing program. Above all, readers need motivation, not only in the form of money or released time, but in the knowledge that they are valued. They are viewed by their colleagues as competent professionals involved in a very serious process. To this end, training sessions ought to be held in an atmosphere fostering mutual respect. Getting college faculty to put their own judgments to the test in range-finding sessions can be difficult. It is very easy for someone who has made a judgment out of line with the consensus to feel humiliated, even when no one intended that result. Therefore, leaders of training sessions ought to be very sensitive to their colleagues’ sense of professional pride.

Training sessions should take place on the same day as a test. Morning classes, preferably in the morning when readers are alert. Amenities such as coffee and snacks should be provided to keep readers alert and to foster a spirit of group cooperation. In addition to learning how to follow their institution’s technical procedures, readers need to learn to subordinate their personal standards to those determined by the rangelinders. The aim of the person in charge of the training should not be to get an individual to forever abandon his or her personal view of how writing ought to be evaluated, but to temporarily set aside that view in favor of larger common aims. This end, it seemed generally agreed, ought to be the central aim of training sessions.

The role of readers in the generation of rangelinders was also a topic of discussion. Some participants thought that rangelinders should be continually modified over the course of the academic year, both to set better standards and to give the readers a sense of involvement in the direction of the testing program. Other participants pointed to the “floating” standards likely to result from such a practice. Everyone seemed to agree, however, that readers should have a role in determining future topics.

A theme for the session, as for most testing programs, was the question of resolving pass/fail splits. Most testing programs represented at the session use the CUNY model where each essay receives two readings. Where there is a pass/fail difference, a third

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