sharing information about their curricula, assignments, and pedagogy. Meeting together in small and large groups has enabled us to learn from one another and to come to some consensus about the nature of writing competence and about the ways in which we can help our students improve their writing ability.

CAN WE ASSESS WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES?

Liz Hamp-Lyons, The University of Michigan

This session began with a description of the University of Michigan Writing Across the Curriculum program. I stated that we must draw upon and integrate the subject area specialists if we are to be valuable to disciplinary experts who seek to integrate writing into their courses. Similarly, they need us—their attempts to use writing, as they become increasingly "sold" on the notions of critical thinking and learning through writing, will be more effective if they can draw on the expertise of writing specialists.

In addition, there is a need to evaluate writing in the disciplines. WAC programs particularly need program evaluation to demonstrate their effectiveness and to ensure their continued funding. The assessment of student competency and progress in writing in their disciplines is a key part (although by no means the only part) of that evaluation process.

I noted further that by helping faculty find appropriate methods, criteria, and standards for evaluating the writing in their disciplines, we can make an important contribution to curriculum development within a discipline: we can help faculty emphasize active learning, critical thinking, the creation of knowledge—all those things we have long believed in and which our colleagues increasingly value.

I offered a variety of examples of measures and scales from different contexts, including two examples of specific measures for evaluating writing within individual disciplines. Each of these specific measures was developed for a particular context as a cooperative venture with specialists in the particular discipline. Finally, I stressed that my remarks were meant to apply only to the evaluation of undergraduate writing in the disciplines. I am not ready to make any claims, or even disclaimers, as to how far we can go in evaluating, or participating in the evaluation of writing at the graduate and professional levels.

ASSESSING ASSESSMENT: HISTORY, HOSTILITY, AND HOPE

Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald and Sally Barr Reagan, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Since the Governor of Missouri required state institutions of higher education to implement assessment programs, the University of Missouri-St. Louis has been regularly assessing the writing of freshman and junior English composition students, using a writing sample. To design the writing assessment, the English Department relied on previous experience with a placement exam and a basic writing exit exam. For the freshman/junior writing assessment, students were given a prompt and allowed to discuss it or to prewrite about it on the first day of the exam. Then, on the second day, their papers were returned to them, and they were instructed to complete a final draft. Since that first experience, we have allowed students more time to work on the first draft in order to replicate the writing process we use in our composition classes.

Both the placement/exit exam on which we modeled our assessment and the current assessment resulted in student and teacher hostility. Students resented the time required to participate and felt threatened by a testing environment. Writing instructors who were not directly involved in the original assessment decisions also resented the time taken by the assessment and worried about having their teaching ability evaluated by a procedure they did not design.

However, as we move towards additional changes in assessment, we are discovering hope. First, we are involving writing instructors in planning the assessment and are sharing the results with them. Then, we are using the assessment rubric to train our TAs, who teach most of our freshman writing courses, and will offer additional faculty development opportunities this year to all writing staff. Finally, we are
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