The discussion that followed brought out many positive features of this kind of evaluation; with so much emphasis on assessment on so many campuses, it is obviously useful to be able to draw upon highly-qualified national figures in composition, functioning as part of an institution like WPA, for an informed report on a campus writing program.

Information about the WPA Consultant/Evaluator Program may be obtained from Ed White, English Department, California State University, San Bernardino, CA 92407 (714-880-5845).

COMPARING PATTERNS OF WRITING PERFORMANCE ACROSS COUNTRIES

Alan C. Purcell, State University of New York, Albany
Pietro Lucisano, University of Rome, Italy
R. Elaine Degenhart, State University of New York, Albany
Ruth Schick, State University of New York, Albany

Discussant: Ulla Conner, Purdue University

This session compared patterns of student performance across twelve countries using the results of the recent IEA Study of Written Composition. The session opened with a brief explanation of the rating system on which student performance measures were based. The International Study Committee attempted to create a reliable scoring scheme that would allow comparisons across countries. Although direct comparability of achievement is not possible, reliabilities within countries were generally high and a series of national profiles can be produced. The profiles look at student performance within a country in relation to reported background variables to provide insights into factors related to writing achievement.

Teachers examined multiple samples of student writing covering different categories in the defined domain of school writing. Both teachers and students completed questionnaires in which they reported (among other things) whether or not the task types had been assigned
WPA SESSION ON THE
CONSULTANT/EVALUATOR PROGRAM

Edward M. White, California State University,
San Bernardino
Harvey S. Wiener, Office of Academic Affairs,
The City University of New York
Michael Flanigan, University of Oklahoma

Harvey Wiener began the session by recounting the founding and development of the National Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA). Supported in part by an Exxon grant, the WPA has developed into an important organization in the field of writing, with its own journal, newsletter, summer conference, and consultant/evaluator (C/E) service. The presenters then distributed a brochure describing the C/E program and the "Guide to Self-Study Preceding a WPA Visit."

Ed White, director of the C/E program for WPA, reviewed the documents and described the way the program works: a campus requests a consultant/evaluation visit, two C/E's are assigned to the campus (in consultation with the campus), the campus contact sends the self-study report to the two C/E's and makes arrangements for the two-day visit, a report is sent to the campus within six weeks of the visit, the campus provides WPA with a follow-up report six months after receiving the report. Cost is minimal: $1,000 honorarium for each C/E plus expenses. Some support is available from the Exxon grant for campuses that are unable to meet all expenses. The C/E's are well-known faculty and administrators in the field of rhetoric and composition, selected for their ability to bring a national perspective to program evaluation and required to attend a retraining session every other year. They are thus able to combine the advantages of being both "insiders" and "outsiders."

Michael Flanigan described several of his experiences as a consultant/evaluator. He stressed that the visitors are consultants as well as evaluators, ready to assist the campus in meeting its own goals. A visit can serve as an impetus for change, but only if the campus is ready to take action.

The discussion that followed brought out many positive features of this kind of evaluation: with so much emphasis on assessment on so many campuses, it is obviously useful to be able to draw upon highly-qualified national figures in composition, functioning as part of an institution like WPA, for an informed report on a campus writing program.

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