

ESSAY TEST TOPIC DEVELOPMENT

- Speakers: Sandra Murphy, *University of California, Berkeley*
Jo Keroes, *San Francisco State University*
- Introducer/Recorder: Micah Sabraw, *University of California, Berkeley*

Jo Keroes and Sandra Murphy discussed the importance and difficulty of preparing questions for essay tests that provide the writer with an accessible topic which would allow the examinee to present a reasonably well-organized, adequately developed, and syntactically mature expository essay in one hour.

Both speakers gave examples of types of questions that do and do not work. They pointed out that we must be cautious about questions that yield narrative when we are looking for expository writing or questions that tend to lead one toward over-generalization or serious personal distraction (which might hinder the test-taker's goal of exhibiting proficiency in the skill of writing). It has been noted that quite often the writer might not be aware of the audience that he/she is addressing, therefore creating another obstacle to correct performance, one that might well be alleviated with a stronger realization on the test-taker's part of the audience and purpose of the essay exam.