

# WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Volume II, Number 1

DECEMBER 1984

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM is published twice during the academic year by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee of the Southern Technical Institute. Free subscriptions are available upon request to interested individuals or institutions.

WAC will consider for publication those essays, interviews, reviews, and conference reports which are concerned with the theory or practice of using writing skills as a learning technique in any educational discipline. It will also consider for publication any fictional or non-fictional materials written by either teachers or students which demonstrate the exemplary use of writing skills within any discipline of the curriculum.

Please send submissions, including a brief biographical background, to the editor.

## SOUTHERN TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

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## EDITOR'S CORNER

By Robert C. Wess

This issue marks the second publication of *Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)*. Last June, when submissions to the Newsletter were scarce, I suffered the customary editor's fear: what if nothing comes in? As you can see, however, that fear was unfounded. Material did come in, and good material at that.

So this issue, in a way, continues the hopes of the Editorial Board to reach faculty and students who might use writing creatively and constructively in the local curriculum. The WAC Newsletter, generated on the Southern Tech campus, is geared primarily toward Southern Tech faculty and students. Nevertheless, we also send the Newsletter to many other campuses across the country, such as all ABET-approved technical colleges, all colleges in the Georgia University System, and all members of the Humanities and Technology Association.

Response has been good. Letters to the editor reveal some of the good will and suggest some of the benefits which you have found in the Newsletter. We hope that the present issue builds in a significant way on that good will and leads others, here at Southern Tech and elsewhere, to join us in our exploration and understanding of the benefits to be derived from *Writing Across the Curriculum*.

You will notice several editorial innovations in this issue which will broaden the scope of the Newsletter. One of these is the inclusion of an essay written by someone beyond the Southern Tech campus. This essay by Roger Hines, a teacher at Wheeler High School, reviews the work being done in a local school system in using *Writing Across the Curriculum*. Another innovation for our Newsletter is the interview-essay written by Kristine Anderson, which brings to our readers the ideas of one of the best-known authorities on rhetoric and writing in America.

Two other new features of this Newsletter include Editor's Corner and Letters to the Editor. We hope to keep both of these features in future numbers. The former column will emphasize information about the Newsletter itself: its contents and projected interests. The latter will include letters from you: your comments, suggestions, and any related ideas or information which would be enlightening to our readers. I thank those of you who have already written; I am eager to hear from many others.

Finally, this issue contains excerpts of a talk presented to

Southern Tech faculty and students. We hope that this type of essay, the transcribed talk, will continue to grace the pages of future issues. The purpose of these talks, of course, is primarily to present Southern Tech students with real, live witnesses to the importance of writing in business, technology, and industry. In transcribing this spoken message, we hope that these excerpts will be useful to teachers and significant to students who were unable to hear the speaker.

**Robert C. Wess continues as Editor of Writing Across the Curriculum. He teaches composition and literature at Southern Technical Institute.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

Please enter a free subscription to your publication for the English Department here. I was very impressed by some of the ideas in the first issue.

Sincerely yours,  
Brent Keetch, Acting Head  
English Department  
California Polytechnic State University  
San Luis Obispo, California 93407

Dear Editor:

The Dean has passed your initial publication on to members of our English Department and I would like to make sure I get a personal copy of each edition. I am not sure how the other members will react to your invitation to read and write for your publication, but for myself, I was pleased with the first Number and hope to be enjoying more.

May I wish you the ultimate in success and I hope, in the near future, if at all possible, to contribute some writing to your group.

Sincerely,  
Gerard M. Feeney  
Department Chairman, Humanities  
Thames Valley State Technical College  
Norwich, Connecticut 06360

Dear Editor:

What a nice surprise to receive a copy of the WAC Newsletter; it's a terrific idea, and I wish you well as you develop the newsletter further. Certainly add me to your list. I shall look forward to each issue. Maybe in the future I'll try to send you something about working with local high schools in developing WAC. Those colleagues are very receptive to the tenets of WAC!

Sincerely,  
Thomas E. Dasher  
Head, Department of English  
Valdosta State College  
Valdosta, Georgia 31698

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading the first issue of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. I am really impressed with it; I can see the number of hours and the degree of commitment which have gone into it. Congratulations on a solid beginning.

Sincerely yours,  
Katharine Stone  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Editor:

Thanks for sending the first issue of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. Please keep me on your mailing list. I was a presenter and enthusiastic conferee in Interface '82 in Marietta. The fine interdisciplinary communication I

experienced there is consistent with the establishment of WAC at Southern Technical Institute.

Yours truly,  
Charles Suhor, Director  
ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and  
Communication Skills  
National Council of Teachers of English  
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Dear Editor:

We are excited about your new publication, *Writing Across the Curriculum*, Vol. 1, Number 1. Most especially are we more than just interested, as Southern Tech is our counterpart institution in the South, and because of the long standing relationships between our faculty and yours.

Sincerely,  
Alan R. Cleeton  
Chairman, Humanities and Social  
Sciences  
President, Humanities and Technology  
Association  
Wentworth Institute of Technology  
Boston, Massachusetts 02115

## WAC IN THE COBB COUNTY SCHOOLS

By Roger N. Hines

In January of 1984 the Cobb County school system began to lay groundwork for a Writing Across the Curriculum emphasis. Under the direction of language arts supervisor, Stella Ross, the kindergarten through twelfth grade emphasis had for its first year only three goals: (1) to inform teachers and administrators of the meaning and purpose of Writing Across the Curriculum, (2) to form a systemwide committee on composition, members of which would serve as contacts for Mrs. Ross in the local schools, and (3) to write a WAC handbook that would explain further the Writing Across the Curriculum movement and provide teachers with specific suggestions for using content area writing. These three goals were achieved by the end of the school year.

The first step toward getting the emphasis underway was to meet simultaneously with all principals to discuss plans with them and to secure their support. Principals were very receptive to the idea and agreed to survey their faculties to determine their attitudes toward, as well as their current use of, writing as a tool for learning.

With these surveys collected, the next step was to call a meeting of the committee on composition for a WAC workshop. At this meeting the committee discussed both the meaning and the intent of curriculum-wide writing and exchanged ideas about what should go into the handbook and how curriculum-wide writing could be implemented in the schools.

The third step and, as it turned out, the method for getting the WAC concept before teachers, was the handbook itself. As well as being an idea book, the handbook, among other things, gives the background for the WAC movement, discusses the "nature of writing" (writing as a process), suggests ways to evaluate writing, and states the threefold purpose of Cobb County's approach: (1) to stimulate thinking about what writing is and what happens when one writes, (2) to provide teachers with ideas and suggestions for the use of writing in their particular disciplines, and (3) to improve students' abilities to think, reason, and express clearly what they know. The handbook is entitled *Writing Across the Curriculum: An Approach to Learning Through Writing*. Each teacher has received a copy.

Upon completion of the handbook the final step of the first year was to present it to local faculties, using the occasion to suggest ways to put Writing Across the Curriculum into

action.

At the beginning of the 1984-85 school year, in addition to each middle and high school having a member on the committee on composition, each school also has at least one content area teacher using a specific writing activity in his or her classes (regular weekly sessions, use of journals, homework that requires written discussion, use of essay exams, etc.). These teachers will observe closely to see whether or not the consistent use of writing about content increases learning or requires students to think more about what they are learning.

The plan of the Cobb County schools is not to require teachers to demand writing. What content area teachers are being shown is that their use of writing to teach their subjects is a sure method of getting students to think and consequently to learn more. So far this plan has been effective.

**Roger N. Hines is a 9th and 12th grade teacher at Wheeler High School, Marietta, Ga. He is currently working with the WAC program sponsored by the Cobb County school system under the supervision of Stella Ross, Coordinator of Language Arts.**

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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IS A NATION-WIDE RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF STUDENT ILLITERACY.

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## THE LIBRARY AS CLASSROOM: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

By Dory Stamps

What do the academic library and the Writing Across the Curriculum program have in common? Each creates a potential learning laboratory situation in which self-directed instruction and discovery can take place. In his book *The Administration of the College Library*, Guy Lyle points out that "... independent library use is the product of the kind of teaching which goes on in the laboratory where the biology or chemistry student learns to work out his own problem, observing the processes of growth and reaction from the plants and animals and chemicals used in the experiment. Instead of listening passively to the classroom lecture, the student is lured into becoming an active participant in his own education, with the teacher simply serving as guide and counselor."<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to focus on the college or university library as a source of WAC methodologies by which the following goals may be served: the student will receive a personalized, in-depth library-use education which will go beyond the hurried freshman orientation tour and the freshman composition paper and train him in library skills for life; a method will evolve in which students will see writing and research as allied means of discovery and accept the relevance of both of these skills in every field of interest; and finally, the library will emerge as an extension of the classroom—an expression of faculty-library cooperation in which the educational experience is clearly unified.

Traditionally, the English composition class is the setting for the student's first research paper assignment. But what happens when this is not the *only* setting in which library research and writing are combined? Here are some possibilities:

1. All of the humanities and social sciences are abundant and familiar sources for creative library investigation. The laboratory sciences, however, also offer

opportunities in which students may be assigned to read current literature on a phenomenon they have been studying and to write about their findings.

2. In any area of engineering or technology, research papers might be assigned on the history of a particular process or discipline; similarly, a research and writing assignment on the current state of the art is both a valid use of study time and an opportunity for the student to express his growing interest in his chosen field.
3. Biographical sources are in abundance in the typical academic library, and a brief written report on some key figure or innovator gives depth to the study of any discipline.
4. Whether or not a student is assigned to write a research paper as such, the compilation of an annotated bibliography on books in his area of interest can be both a valuable use of writing and an important contribution to him in future course work, in graduate school, or in a career.
5. And at the very least, a student might be asked to follow up a basic library orientation lecture with a written report on what he has seen. As Southern Tech professor Bob Hays has put it, students are "absolutely amazed at what is available" in a library. Having them share some of that amazement on paper is one more opportunity for Writing Across the Curriculum.

At the beginning of this article we spoke of the potential learning laboratory situation created by the academic library and the WAC program. Even though we used such terms as "self-directed" and "independent library use," however, these ideals rarely exist in a pure state on the undergraduate college campus. As Dr. John Lolley, Director of Library Services at Central State University in Edmond, Oklahoma, comments, "... numerous studies show that it is the influence of teachers, not librarians, who determine to a large degree, the use of the library by students."<sup>2</sup> In other words, it's up to you. If one or more of the preceding library-related writing suggestions hold possibilities in your curriculum, then we as academic librarians have a great deal to offer to you. However, you must tell us what you want! Ask for specialized orientation tours or library-use lectures for your students in connection with any major assignments relating to library use. This is an efficient and effective way to answer many of the most basic questions all at once. Inform the librarians of special library assignments so that they are prepared with reference assistance by the time students arrive. Participate actively in book selection and collection-building in order to support your students and yourself in writing and research. Know which faculty members are on the library committee at your school and let them represent you. And finally, ask questions. Lay a groundwork for your students' use of the library to make sure materials that you assign are available. Make use of the reserve section to hold assigned reading and be aware of interlibrary-use privileges for your students and yourself.

Just as Writing Across the Curriculum underscores the partnership that exists among the disciplines, so encouraging greater library use as part of that program reinforces the partnership that exists between the faculty and the library. One hundred years ago, the President of Columbia University wrote in his annual report: "A little systematic instruction would so start our students in the right methods, that for the rest of their lives all their work in

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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IS A LEARNING ACTIVITY WITH A PLACE IN EVERY CLASSROOM.

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libraries would be more expeditiously accomplished."<sup>3</sup> And why is this goal important? Because the academic library is a broad-based learning laboratory, infinitely adaptable to the energy and the imagination of its users. With today's electronic information systems and globe-spanning cooperative programs, there is little knowledge that is inaccessible to the academic community through its library. It operates on all levels and in all fields across the curriculum. And unlimited as it is to any one field or discipline, what better classroom setting than the academic library for a Writing Across the Curriculum program?

1. Guy R. Lyle, *The Administration of the College Library*, 3rd ed. (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1961), 146.

2. John Lolley, "Faculty Attitudes Toward Library Instruction: The Real Key to Success," *Oklahoman Librarian*, 32 (November/December, 1982), 7.

3. Thomas G. Kirk, "Problems in Library Instruction in Four Year Colleges," in John Lubans, ed., *Educating the Library User* (New York: Bowker, 1974), 83.

**Dory Stamps is the Reference Librarian at Southern Technical Institute. She has made several presentations around the state of Georgia on the subject of faculty-library cooperation on the academic campus.**

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES KINNEAVY ON WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAMS

By Kristine F. Anderson

*James Kinneavy, Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, is the author of A Theory of Discourse (1971) and numerous other publications. He also serves as a consultant for Writing Across the Curriculum programs across the country.*

**Q.** Writing Across the Curriculum programs are being implemented at various types of colleges and institutions across the country. How do you account for the widespread interest in Writing Across the Curriculum programs at this time?

**R.** Writing Across the Curriculum programs are a response to the literacy crisis. After almost twenty years of declining SAT, ECT, ACT, and GRE scores, concerned reactions of thousands of teachers, and complaints from business and industry, people have come to the conclusion that the English Department cannot improve students' writing skills by itself. Other programs adopted—more required English composition at the high school level, higher entrance requirements, competency tests for students in the junior year of college, and in-house courses and workshops—have been Band-Aid provisions which affect only some aspects of the literacy crisis. The Writing Across the Curriculum programs, however, can affect all college departments and all levels of a student's high school and college program.

**Q.** What are the major assumptions underlying the Writing Across the Curriculum movement?

**R.** The main assumption behind Writing Across the Curriculum seems to embody a resurrected sense of the responsibility of entire faculties and administrative bodies for the literacy competence of the graduate of our high schools and colleges. Literacy is the concern of all faculty members since it is the cornerstone of education. Another assumption is that some rhetorical principles—careful description, explanation and proof, problems of definition and classification, and consideration of style and audience—transcend departments. Everyone can teach writing in a way. All faculty members can learn some general writing-teaching skills.

**Q.** You've been involved with many different aspects of writing theory and are currently involved with the Writing Across the Curriculum program at the University of Texas. What suggestions do you have for implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum program at a college or university?

**R.** One of the most important things to consider early on is faculty communication. Faculty members must talk with one another and share their ideas and concerns about writing. The most effective writing programs come out of a grassroots movement on the part of the faculty rather than the administration. Additionally, there are two things a college should look at separately and then together. The first is the institution and the area. The needs of the students and locale must be considered. Some prestige institutions with elite entrance requirements may not need the large beginning freshman composition courses that state institutions like Maryland, Texas, and even Michigan feel are necessary. Second, it is important to look at as many different Writing Across the Curriculum programs as possible to consider their advantages and disadvantages. It's a mistake to adopt any one program wholesale.

**Q.** What role does the administration play in implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum program?

**R.** The administration must provide support and funding. There is no magic way to avoid funding needs in implementing any kind of Writing Across the Curriculum program.

**Q.** What do you see as the major obstacle in implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum program at a college or university?

**R.** One of the most difficult problems is overcoming faculty inertia and resistance. At my university, it was clear that many departments did not want to take on the responsibilities of teaching writing because it takes time to correct, grade, and assess compositions. Busy assistant professors do not feel that such a commitment of their time would be rewarded by the university's promotion and merit system. Some faculty also resist changing their courses or teaching methods. Another problem involves territorial concerns; people protect their respective turfs or curricula. They are often afraid that their courses may be eliminated or displaced, which is one reason why it is so important to graft a writing component onto existing courses rather than creating new courses. A third obstacle is cost. All Writing Across the Curriculum programs require some funding.

**Q.** You've stressed the importance of the involvement of the faculty as well as communication between faculty members in different departments. How can you encourage faculty involvement and communication?

**R.** Some campuses have conducted faculty surveys to stimulate faculty interest and collect some data. We conducted a large survey of both students and faculty in 1976. The University of Michigan also conducted a survey which included both students and faculty members about nine years ago. Other campuses have offered involved faculty members credit toward promotion and tenure. Some campuses which have received federal grants have provided a small stipend to faculty.

**Q.** Can you briefly describe the Writing Across the Curriculum program currently in place at the University of Texas? What are the disadvantages or advantages of your program?

**R.** Our program was developed from our existing curricula in many different departments. We did not create any new courses, which is very desirable when first introducing a Writing Across the Curriculum program at a college or university. We were also very careful to avoid displacing any existing courses because we did not want to

alienate any faculty members. In essence, we shifted existing courses and changed our course sequence.

Our program incorporates both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The horizontal dimension refers to the fact that the program extends across the various subjects and disciplines of a college, particularly in the upper-class years, to help students meet their career requirements. The vertical dimension focuses on the developmental sequence of a student's program. We look at students' writing efforts at every year of their college career to prevent the deterioration of their writing abilities.

Our program now includes five courses; three of the courses are taught in the English Department. The other two courses are writing intensive courses taught within the student's discipline. At the freshman level most students take a first course in composition that emphasizes the basic rhetorical principles. The second course in our sequence is a required course that serves primarily as an introduction to either British, American, or world literature and includes a writing component. The third course, offered in the junior year, is a course that is generally taught by a member of the English department but with subject matter drawn from the student's own discipline. The writing is mostly informative and persuasive and directed toward a general reader. The fourth course is a writing intensive course which is taught in a specific discipline outside of the English Department. The writing is mostly demonstrative and exploratory prose which is addressed to an expert in the field and written in the career genres of the student's major. The fifth course, which will become a requirement for all students enrolling under the 1986 catalog, is another writing intensive course.

**Q.** What direction will Writing Across the Curriculum programs take in the future?

**R.** Writing Across the Curriculum programs will continue to spread to many different colleges and universities as well as high schools and elementary schools. We will see a re-emergence of the humanities tradition with rhetoric as its center. The fragmented "pluriversity" of the twentieth century will once again become a linguistic university. The college will become a collegium, a unified intellectual community.

*Kristine F. Anderson is an Associate Professor of English and Reading in the Developmental Studies Department at Southern Technical Institute. She also serves as the Associate Editor of The Georgia Journal of Reading and as a consultant for Houghton Mifflin's College Division.*

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## "Interdisciplinary Writing"

### Review of

### *Writing in the Arts and Sciences*

Elaine P. Maimon, Gerald L. Belcher, Gail W. Hearn, Barbara F. Nodine, and Finbarr W. O'Connor. Cambridge, Mass: Winthrop Publishers, 1981.

By Joan D. McCoy

This introduction to writing and reading in the arts and sciences deserves attention. Designed for use in the freshman composition course and informed by current research in composition, it is an intelligent, valuable approach to Writing Across the Curriculum.

The authors, professors at Beaver College, represent five academic disciplines—English, history, biology, psychology, and philosophy. In their preface they affirm their belief that a freshman composition course should be an introduction to "the traditions of liberal learning." On this basis, they collaborated to give us *Writing in the Arts and Sciences*.

Like most contemporary writers on composition, the

authors focus on the writing process and on audience awareness—as the larger structure of their book indicates. They divide the book into two main sections: "Writing to Learn," which deals with writing as a mode of discovery, and "Learning to Write," which deals with the traditions, conventions, procedures, and terminology that shape writing in various academic disciplines.

"Writing to Learn" consists of five chapters in which the authors discuss (1) the special perspectives of different disciplines and writing as problem-solving; (2) private writing, including journal writing, freewriting, and strategies for problem-solving; (3) classroom writing, strategies for taking notes from lectures, class discussion or readings, and strategies for writing essay examinations; and (4) library research, to which they devote two chapters, one on library resources in the arts and sciences and one on procedures for recording and documenting information. Their chapter on private writing is particularly interesting, as they offer a number of creative strategies for generating a problem out of a topic, strategies designed not only for verbal thinkers but also for people who need to see graphically or numerically before they can translate an experience into coherent discourse.

In "Writing to Learn" the authors concentrate on writing in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences, devoting three chapters to each of these areas of study. Their chapters on the humanities deal with research papers in history, literature, and philosophy; analyses of literary works, performances, paintings and other works of art; book reviews; and what they call "contemplative writing"—criticism, comparison and contrast of opposing views, and speculative or "puzzle" writing. Their chapters on the social sciences deal with research papers, case study papers, and reports in such fields as psychology, sociology, political science, and education. And their chapters on the natural sciences deal with laboratory and research notebooks, laboratory reports, and scientific papers. Throughout this section, they maintain their focus on the writing process—as indicated by their subheadings, "Getting started," "Writing the first draft," and "Revising"—and on strategies for making choices, with regard to audience and purpose, at each stage in the process.

Three features of the book add much to its value. In each chapter the authors provide a wealth of interesting illustrations, including attractive graphics to exemplify the writing process, and a number of innovative end-questions and exercises to give students practice in the areas under discussion. A second feature lies in the many examples of good student writing that the authors provide throughout the book to illustrate their points. They also provide an appendix with student papers from history, sociology, psychology, and biology to illustrate the types of writing expected by instructors in these disciplines. The other special feature is a glossary of specialized terms used in various disciplines—a nice final "note" on the shifting perspectives that students encounter as they write, read, and study in different disciplines.

We find throughout this book a text that students can read with ease and appreciation. The authors themselves are good writers; their writing exemplifies academic prose at its best—gracefully formal in style, polite in tone.

One point to be emphasized—a point the authors, too, emphasize in their preface—is that the book is intended for teaching composition, "not introductory courses in the disciplines." As the authors indicate, the book is designed to help the writing instructor "exemplify principles of good writing from a broader range of material" than is offered in many composition courses. It is also designed to help the student "write effectively for more diverse audiences" (p. xii).

The question now arises: how suitable is this book as a basic rhetoric in a freshman writing course? Instructors almost certainly would have to supplement it with additional readings. The authors suggest a “cross-disciplinary anthology” (their companion volume, *Readings in the Arts and Sciences*, perhaps?) or “one or two additional readings,” such as a novel or a biography of a historical figure. The authors obviously wanted their book to be a manageable size, but many instructors may prefer a book that is both a rhetoric and a reader. In addition, the authors indicate that they designed the book so instructors, after covering the first five chapters, could concentrate on chapters that are appropriate for their particular writing courses. Many instructors, though, may prefer to teach with a rhetoric that can be followed in a more orderly fashion. Finally, though the authors discuss and illustrate the various rhetorical modes of development as they function in the writing of different disciplines, it is not their purpose to focus on these modes in and of themselves. Many instructors may feel more comfortable with a book that progresses from one mode of development to another, chapter by chapter. *Writing in the Arts and Sciences* is designed for a specific writing course; for other writing courses it is probably most useful as a reference.

Still, the authors’ interdisciplinary approach to freshman composition is intelligent and valuable. It deals directly with the needs of incoming students in their encounters with different areas of college study. It provides more substance to freshman writing than a course based on the familiar anthology of journalistic essays. And it encourages teachers in all disciplines to foster—and expect—good writing. It may also encourage instructors of freshman writing to look beyond their familiar lesson plans. The authors have made an excellent contribution to the Writing Across the Curriculum movement. Their book deserves examination.

**Joan D. McCoy, Assistant Professor of English, teaches composition, technical writing, and business communication at Southern Tech. She is also a freelance technical writer and a consultant to industry.**

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## COMMUNICATION IN INDUSTRY

By Joseph Tulkoff

*The following material is an edited transcription of a talk presented to Southern Tech faculty and students on Tuesday, February 21, in the Student Center. The lunchtime presentation was a significant contribution to 250 students and faculty who heard Mr. Tulkoff speak.*

There’s a story about the young man who was going out on a job interview, as were many others. This person had such a fantastic resume that the personnel department decided this interview should be left up to the president of the company. The president was sitting there with the young man. “Bachelor of Engineering, Masters in Mechanical Engineering, Ph.D. in Computer Science; I see you’ve worked for several companies, created major systems to save millions of dollars. This is just perfect, so please tell me, do you have any faults at all?” The young man says, “Well, Sir, I do have one fault.” “What is it?” “I lie a lot.”

I’ll try not to lie too much when I tell you a little bit about my background as it relates to the importance of writing.

I saw on television, not long ago, something that illustrates “back to basics.” In a high school in Alabama—I don’t remember which city, but it was big news on television—this very acceptable school was emphasizing the three Rs: reading, writing and arithmetic. And in the emphasis of these basics, about half the students were ready when they got to

the next grade. And they were stressing the three Rs, which of course are fundamental and “back to basics.” But the thing that relates to our day and time is that *it made news*. That was ten minutes on television! But it illustrates the significance and importance of writing and the basic skills that are important to our everyday work.

We must be really motivated to take maximum advantage of what is being made available. You want to take every opportunity that you can to do the opposite of avoiding writing. You want to go with speech writing. And why do I say that? Well, a favorite author of mine had some sayings that I recall that pertain to this. And one of them was dealing with you and your speech and development of your writing skills. This saying is that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American essayist, “Do, and you will have the power to do.” That’s a very powerful saying and has a very powerful message behind it.

Even though you’re a weak writer today, one way you become a stronger writer is by actually writing. I’d like to use the analogy of swimming. How many here can swim? Can I see a show of hands? Okay. Quite a bunch of you in here can swim, so think back when you first took on that big challenge of jumping into that water, being turned loose and having to swim on your own. Trying to watch someone else swim is just one kind of learning, a theoretical kind of learning. But only when you got into the water and swallowed some water and splashed around, you found out you came out alive and you really knew you could learn to swim.

Thus, there are only three kinds of learning experiences: the learning you get from listening to lectures and reading books, the learning you get from reflecting on these lectures, and a third kind of learning which is very, very important, the learning you get from living the experience—learning by doing. As long as you stay aloof from actually taking pen-in-hand and writing, no matter how difficult it might be, all you’re doing is the first two kinds of learning which would be a comparison to what you would be doing if you watch people swim who never got farther than the edge of the water.

The tremendous advantage that you have now which I did not appreciate when I was in college is that you’re freer and in a forgiving environment. Academia here is a forgiving environment. That is, you can write a term paper or write an essay, and the professor lets you know your level of performance; and so you know where you are and you can also get some help. Now it’s a lot better for you to make those mistakes in this friendly environment of Southern Tech. I realize you do not think it’s so friendly. It’s really friendly because when you come out into industry, it’s a lot less friendly.

Just to show you what I mean by that: I was talking to the Chief of Industrial Engineering at Lockheed Georgia just yesterday. In fact, he called me because he saw this Southern Tech news bulletin that said I was to speak. He said, “Hey, Joe, I saw your speech title and I wanted to pass on a message to you: I really support what you’re doing and I’d like for you to communicate my view.” And I just wrote it on this piece of paper and will read it. What he said was just to me; and quite frankly, I enjoyed it. He said, “The basic writing skill is the Number One most lacking skill in the college graduates that we hire.” Now this is the Chief Industrial Engineer at Lockheed Georgia, who hires no one but college graduates. He doesn’t see anybody but college graduates. This is fresh from the Chief Engineer. He said, “Most anybody in that field with proper training can do a time study or work with numbers.” I’ve fooled with numbers, adding machines, and I thought that’s all there was. There’s more. Most anybody can do a time study or work with numbers; the inability to write about our systems is the failure that we see most of the time. He says he may see a guy

or gal and they've got a 3.8 average. But they can't write or speak well.

Writing means to get the experience that it takes to pass a test. And that is what Dr. Travis meant in his introduction: you need to seize every opportunity, even in algebra, to figure out something that you can write that gives you the experience to write daily. The chief industrial engineer at Lockheed is trying to come up with some kind of test or some kind of way that they can find out if they should hire this person, whether he, in fact, can write half-way decently. Someday they may put you in a room, and somehow you're going to do a writing test that's going to decide whether you get the job or not.

I recall when I came to Lockheed in my early career; to be honest with you, I did not write well. That's *not* why I went to Georgia Tech. If I had wanted to write, I would have gone to some English school. But I'm an engineer, and I deal with numbers and slide rules, and writing was extraneous. But when I got into my real job, in my early career, I think I could half-way write, and somebody saw it. I was one of 25 engineers in my group. And somewhere out of the blue I was called up to my boss's office, and he said, "Hey, another department would like to give you a promotion." "What kind of promotion?" I said. "Oh, you're going to write the procedures that govern the work of the planning engineering division." I thought about that, and my first inclination was to turn it down because I really enjoyed my work. I really enjoyed working with numbers. I was out on the assembly line and I was ordering equipment; I was in and out of the airplane; I was planning work for the line. And here I was going to sit at a desk and write procedures. The thought that went through my mind was, well, you know there are 25 engineers in my group and the boss finds me to write procedures. But there's only two Job Instruction writers; I'd be the second. I said, "Well, this gives me the opportunity to see what I can do, and if I've got anything on the ball, I can say it; the other thing it does is force me to write, and I really don't like to write. A move to help my career!"

I think it did because when I got there, and I started writing, I thought, well, hey, I wish I had paid a lot more attention back in school. Then I had to learn under pressure. I learned to write, and so forth. So I learned a lot, and it became easier; and then another experience happened.

There was a chief planning engineer who was one of these very hard, tough, high-standard performers, a no-nonsense practitioner of management. He was formerly, I learned, in the training department at Lockheed, at their California plant. So out of training he brought a discipline that said you need to know the 3 R's. And he was asked by the Corporate Chairman of the Board to chair a meeting dealing with major problems on one of our programs dealing with aircraft modification.

In that meeting were superintendents, production managers, chief engineers, and it met once a week. And the minutes of that meeting went to the Chairman of the Board. Well, this guy, this Chief of Engineering, had a thing. He had a black crayon that he used. You bring him his letter to read over for his signature, and when you come to pick it up, it's been crayoned all over. "Do this again!" And people went in there trembling. Very few passed his test. Now all of a sudden he's chairman of this very important meeting. I've only been with this company a few years now and I am in the J.I. writing job—taking all the minutes for this very important meeting. I was scared but I was the one to do it.

I had to take down everything, and I did not know shorthand. Everything I wrote would be scrutinized by the Chairman of the Board. Let me tell you: when they start talking in there, they're not laying it out slowly. But I learned from experience. I learned how to be structured, and these are all things that serve you well; and you can still learn without being under the fire of Samuel Henry White, that chief planning engineer I mentioned earlier. Being committed to this job, I learned that I could sit there and develop the power of listening.

So let me say: you take every opportunity to write, and it will serve you well in your career.

*Joseph Tulkoff, Director of Manufacturing Technology at Lockheed-Georgia Company, is a well-known author and speaker in the fields of computer-aided planning, group technology, automated manufacturing systems, industrial modernization, and factory-of-the-future planning. Mr. Tulkoff is the recipient of a number of honors, including the 1982 IIE Aerospace Division Award.*

## FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

The 10th annual conference of the Southern Regional Council on Black American Affairs will be held February 8-10, 1985, at the Colony Square Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. Contact Deloris Scott, DeKalb Community College, Decatur, GA 30089.

The 1985 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) will be held from March 21-23, 1985, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The theme of this conference will be: Making Connections.

The American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) will hold its national conference from June 16-20, 1985, at the Atlanta Hilton Towers in downtown Atlanta. Contact Dr. William Lnenicka at Georgia Tech for further information.

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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IS NOT REQUIRING TERM PAPERS OR LONG REPORTS IN ALL CLASSES.

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## WRITING: A TOOL FOR LEARNING

### Writing is a tool to help students

- express ideas clearly, accurately, and forcefully,
  - channel thoughts into precise statements,
  - grasp central terminology of courses,
  - reinforce classroom activities, and
  - communicate ideas more effectively.
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**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Interface '85**  
**Ninth Annual Humanities and Technology Conference**  
**October 17-18, 1985**

The Department of English and History of Southern Technical Institute, a four-year college of engineering technology, is sponsoring, in conjunction with the Humanities and Technology Association, the ninth annual conference on the interface of the humanities and technology, in Marietta, Georgia (metro Atlanta), October 17-18, 1985.

Papers that examine the integration of humanistic concerns and technological growth are invited. Prospective participants should submit one-page, single-spaced abstracts that are typed and ready for reproduction. At the top center of the page, type the paper's title, author's name, and author's affiliation. The deadline for submitting abstracts is April 30, 1985.

To request further information or to send abstracts, write to:

Virginia Hein or Bob Wess  
Department of English and History  
Southern Technical Institute  
Marietta, Georgia 30060  
(404-424-7204 or 7422)

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