

WRITING

ACROSS

THE CURRICULUM

Volume II, Number 2

MAY 1985

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

Letters to the Editor—they have come in abundance; thank you for thinking to write. We would like to hear from other thoughtful readers, so keep the letters coming; and if you are able, send us an essay to consider for publication.

One reason the letters received are so satisfying is that a specific goal of our Newsletter is to be diverse—diverse in appeal, diverse in presentation of ideas, and diverse in publication of sources. A bridge as the Newsletter's frontispiece is no accident. *Writing Across the Curriculum* attempts to build bridges between departments on college campuses, between colleges and local school systems, and between school campuses and the worlds of business and industry.

In its distribution, the Newsletter has added to its audience a wide variety of individuals, including business and industry people, and educators at all levels. It has recently added another group, those members of the National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs, of which Christopher J. Thaiss of George Mason University is the director. By sending our Newsletter to these some 400 members, as well as to other readers, we hope to provide all of you with selected items and articles of useful information, a medium for dialogue and exchange of ideas, and a forum for presenting your own ideas, pedagogical techniques, problems or attitudes as they relate to Writing Across the Curriculum.

Diversity of viewpoint manifests a group's vitality. Diversity stimulates greater interest in its members, the questioning and defense of assumptions, and suggestions for further study or implementation of ideas. It is with pleasure that we publish divergent points of view in this Newsletter. I would particularly call your attention to the polemic article by Simon A. Stricklen, Jr., "A Note of Caution," which appears in this issue. His essay challenges several basic assumptions of the Writing Across the Curriculum movement. Professor Stricklen welcomes responses to his article, and I promise to publish such correspondence, along with Dr. Stricklen's reply.

Diversity of sources has also been obvious in past and current issues of this Newsletter. We have published material received from academia and industry, from nationally known experts on Writing Across the Curriculum and from relatively unknown contributors. Within the Southern Tech campus, we have published essays written by faculty from Basic Studies and essays written by technically trained faculty from degree-granting departments. Such diversity has been a feature of this Newsletter; we hope that future submissions will continue

to come from these and other diverse areas from which we have not yet heard.

Simon and Garfunkel, in their famous album *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (1969), gave the American public a popular classic in the title song, one which millions of people still listen to for enjoyment and inspiration. In the world of education, with all the troubled waters it has weathered over the past three decades, from Sputnik (1957) to "Why Johnny Can't Write" (1975) to the Bennett Report "To Reclaim a Legacy" (1984), we sincerely hope that the Writing Across the Curriculum movement, and in a small way this Newsletter, will offer a bridge for those seeking solutions to the many problems beleaguering contemporary American education.

Robert C. Wess, Editor of Writing Across the Curriculum, teaches composition and literature at Southern Technical Institute.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

Please accept my very best wishes for continued success with your very well-received publication.

Sincerely,
Earl E. Smith
Earl Smith Heating & Air Conditioning
964 Industrial Park Drive
Marietta, GA 30062

Dear Editor:

Good luck on your newsletter and your program. I saw the May 1984 issue—nice work!

Sincerely,
Art Young
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas 78666

Dear Editor:

Please add me to your mailing list! I have just finished reading my first issue of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. I am delighted with your new publication. Because Gwinnett Tech is a new school, we, especially, are looking for uniform ways to improve the quality of our instruction and the capabilities of our students. *Writing Across the Curriculum* offers good suggestions. I look forward to your next issue.

Sincerely,
Randall G. Johnson, Chairman
Department of Related Academics
Gwinnett Area Tech
1250 Atkinson Road
P.O. Box 1505
Lawrenceville, GA 30246

Dear Editor:

Thank you for sending me the WAC newsletter. I read it from beginning to end with interest! I particularly enjoyed the Tulkoff article—I am always looking for information about the importance of writing in the business world. So many of my students are in for a rude awakening! I have listed two people below, my principal and my department chair, both of whom are interested in being on the mailing list. Thank you again for putting my name on the list. I look forward to future newsletters.

Sincerely,
Patti McWhorter
President, Georgia Council of
Teachers of English
160 Valley Road
Athens, GA 30606

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest the "Vol. 1, No. 1" edition of "WAC" — 5/84.

Our faculty at Sinclair Community College share with you the desire to develop in our students "useful writing skills" no matter what their area of specialization, i.e. life science, automotive engineering, photography, etc.

Sincerely,
Harold C. Minor
Professor
Sinclair Community College
444 West Third Street
Dayton, Ohio 45402

Dear Editor:

I recently had occasion to review a copy of your December 1984 WAC Newsletter. I found the publication quite informative and would like to be added to your mailing list. I believe quite strongly that the foundation of our educational activity in the United States should be the use of our common language, and enhanced writing skill certainly is an integral part of one's use of our language.

Would you please add me to your WAC mailing list? I was quite pleased with your publication and hope to use it in my discussions with colleagues in the coming months and years. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dennis C. Rittenmeyer
Executive Dean
Purdue University Calumet
Hammond, Indiana 46323

Dear Editor:

Thank you for putting me on the mailing list to receive copies of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. This publication is very well done and should be a helpful communication link. I am passing it around among colleagues in the English department here.

Sincerely,
Les Thompson
Texas Woman's University
P.O. Box 22479
Denton, Texas 76204

EXPERTISE AND OVERLAP ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS

—By James B. Whitenton

When courses in different disciplines overlap or build upon each other, some students become confused and others are enlightened. It cannot be said that reinforcing skills across the curriculum is necessarily a good philosophy, but given that at least some overlap must exist in our system, then it should be extended rather than pared back even further. A small amount of overlap probably causes more students to be confused than would a large amount. If across-the-curriculum education would become a familiar pattern, it would lend legitimacy to the various disciplines instead of a challenge to their sovereignty.

When we teach, we must "overteach" — exposing students to more than we can hope they will thoroughly absorb. But the fraction of the material that will stay with a student depends largely on the reinforcement that material receives in his or her other courses. Thus, we do an injustice to students when we deliberately avoid asking them to solve a quadratic equation or simultaneous equation in our physics

classes, when the math professors have spent a great deal of time preparing students for that type of manipulation. We do a further injustice when we look past the poor writing in a lab report and grade on what the student is “trying to say,” even though the English professors have spent an enormous amount of time teaching communication skills. Are we telling our students that they really only need to learn 5 percent of the material from their math and English? One hundred percent might be an unreasonable expectation, but 80 or 90 percent is not.

One topic at Southern Tech which warrants special attention in several courses is the addition of vectors. Students are taught this skill in their math, physics, and (some) engineering classes. This is a skill that is not fully assimilated by most students during their first (or even second) exposure to the techniques; thus, it is not merely reinforced but is fully re-taught twice (typically) to Southern Tech students. Vector addition, then, provides a good example with which to consider confusion versus the appreciation afforded students by overlap in coursework. That the students indeed gain from the repeated exposure would probably not be difficult to document, but it is quite evident that many suffer a significant amount of confusion in the process. Sometimes this confusion is a step toward deeper appreciation; often, however, it is not. This is a problem we must confront when we contemplate across-the-curriculum approaches.

The students do not become so “lost” if the teacher is aware of the approaches previously seen by the students. The teacher, of course, does not need to confine him- or herself to the previous approaches, but acknowledging their existence to the class in the form of a brief review is helpful. Before launching into a slightly different approach to vector addition, the physics teacher could say, “In your math classes you found the components using angles measured counter-clockwise from the $+x$ axis.” Then the students would be more open to the new information since they would feel that what they have already learned is equally legitimate. Frequently, students will then see the unity behind the two approaches, which is certainly our hope. Still, finding out what the students have been taught before, and particularly how they have been taught, can be difficult. It would be helpful to have a room set aside in the library for faculty use, in which up-to-date materials from all the courses on campus could be kept. In this way, the MET professor preparing his Statics course could see how the students were probably taught vector addition in Physics 201 and Math 112. And the ECET professor contemplating how rigorously to grade a set of lab reports could discover the penalties for grammar mistakes given in English 101. Our focus could thus turn toward teamwork without seriously threatening our individual teaching styles. Nurtured with a great deal of care, the across-the-curriculum philosophy should add solidarity to our already fine reputation as a teaching institution.

James B. Whitenton teaches physics at Southern Tech and is a member of the editorial staff of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. He holds a doctorate in physics from the University of Wisconsin.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

By Simon A. Stricklen, Jr.

And now we are presented with another academic panacea, ambiguously called *Writing Across the Curriculum*. The objective of this program, as I understand it, is to alter the content of every course taught in every college so as to require every student to write essays—or at least paragraphs—which will be examined, and presumably criticized, by the instructor.

The fundamental theses of the program (nowhere explicitly stated) seem to be that writing is *the* paramount skill and, more importantly, that the ability to write improves, in some grand fashion, the ability to think.

No one doubts that writing is important, but before we embark on a program as serious and ambitious as this, we ought to be sure of the validity of the underlying basis of the program and convinced of its potential effectiveness. After all, teaching writing is the job of the writing teachers and this program seems to ask other, untrained teachers to do the writing teachers’ work for them. One may be permitted to doubt the transcendent nature of writing: is writing really that much more important than everything else?

It has been argued that skill in writing helps one to think. This is a plausible conjecture, but that’s all it is—a plausible conjecture. So far as I know, there is no actual evidence at all. The world is full of plausible conjectures, even completely convincing conjectures, which turn out to be false. Indeed, when one reflects on the vast diversity in skill, natural ability, and subject matter in our colleges, the conjecture seems less plausible. Will writing skill really help a graduate student think about quantum mechanics? What about cuneiform? What about sheet metal work?

Would this approach work? It seems to be a platitude that constant practice will improve the students’ writing. Will it really? Where is the evidence? Even if it would, I could say the same thing about mathematics (my field): if all the students had to do mathematics in all their classes, then the general level of skill would surely rise. What about Personal Finance? What about Aerobics? Is writing really that much more important than everything else?

The practical difficulties are severe. The average student spends only so much time on a course. Time spent on writing is not spent on the subject matter. Grading also presents problems. If the writing is not graded, why will the students do it? On the other hand, if it *is* graded, this means changing the student’s grade for something outside the subject area. Shall I be forced to tell a student that she will receive a D in calculus instead of a B because her grammar isn’t good enough?

Let’s deliberately state the case as negatively as possible: this is a program to change the method and content of almost every college course so that untrained teachers have to do somebody else’s job. The program assumes without evidence that all sorts of good things will happen.

A weakness in the negative case can be seen by replacing “writing” with “reading.” We assume that college students can read, and so we give them reading assignments—and their grades are lower if they can’t read the assignments.

College students should be able to write; of course they should. We ought to assign writing where it fits naturally. We shouldn’t avoid it, but we certainly don’t need a special program to push it in artificially.

Simon A. Stricklen, Jr., is Professor of Mathematics and Head of the Mathematics Department at Southern Technical Institute. He holds the doctorate in mathematics and has been teaching college mathematics since 1967.



CAREER AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

By Earl Smith

The following material is an edited transcript of a talk given by Earl Smith on November 16, 1984. Introduced by Bob Hays, Professor of English at Southern Tech and Earl's former mentor at that college, Mr. Smith spoke convincingly from his own experience on the importance of communication skills—written and spoken—to the 125 students and faculty in attendance.

To me, there are two ways to communicate. One is face-to-face by the spoken word. Of course, for me over the years, that's been easier. With the second way—the written word—I've had difficulties. But we pause to ask, "Who should be concerned about oral and written communication?" I think this concern gets back to discipline and commitment. I shall make remarks about these attitudes all the way through my address today.

You are concerned about communication, I believe, or you would not be here. You understand its importance, I think, or you would not be here. From my reading of this *Writing Across the Curriculum* publication [*Writing Across the Curriculum*], this is not something that we're just talking about for Southern Tech. We're talking about grade school on up to the value of learning to communicate. What I want to do is discuss my personal experience as it relates to my educational background. Some people call it a career, but first you've got to make a living, and only then can you call it a career.

Throughout my formal education I always thought English was a bore. English was the most unnecessary thing in the world. How could it affect Earl Smith? I could accept the fact that we needed math because we've got to be able to count, add, subtract, multiply. I even enjoyed what we used to call history and geography. I recognized the need for spelling and this [feeling] even carried on into college. But I wanted to cut through the basics, I wanted to get into the major subject, I wanted to learn drafting, and I wanted to be able to pick up the circulation and design of heating and air conditioning. But as far as writing was concerned, I couldn't understand the need for writing. And as for public speaking, why in the world would I need to stand before people and give a talk? I wasn't going to be a salesman. All I wanted to do was to sit behind a drafting board and do design and engineering work. As a first career start, that's pretty good. But I think after you sit behind that drafting board four or five years, you are going to start looking for something else, something different. So this is the learning process I had to go through.

I believe there are two things that cause success. One is discipline. The other is commitment. These two factors really contribute more toward our writing and learning skills than anything else. And to continue to make my point, I want again

to return to my background. I graduated from high school. It was a small rural school in a farm community. I was raised on a farm, and about the only thing that I wanted to do was to get away from the farm. But I will brag a little bit and say that I graduated in the top 10 of my high school class. But there were only 11 students, and the 11th was somewhat dumb. But seriously, the thought in my mind at that time was to get through school, leave home, and get into something else. So the only way I could leave home was to enter the military. This was quite a few years ago. Now to show you what fate and mistakes can sometimes do in your life, I had worked outside so many years that the only thing I wanted to do was get a nice quiet job somewhere indoors. That was the only thought I had. Well, as my first priority I wanted to be a stenographer. My second priority was to be a heavy equipment operator. Let me tell you that's really a combination. Fortunately for me, I was selected as a stenographer.

CAREER DIRECTION

Let me tell you why it was fortunate for me. The small rural school I attended did not have an English department when I graduated; whereas, during that first year in the military, by fate or mistake or luck or whatever you want to call it, I was able to go to school for 12 months, 5 hours a day. Basically it was a course in writing, spelling, letter writing and typing. To me, this course was a commitment. I was committed to learn to write and spell. I wanted to see it through because it afforded me something that I did not receive in high school and could not secure in any other way. I do attribute this [education] to luck or to fate.

When I said discipline and commitment were important, I should add that fate had a lot to do with where I am today. I also think one of the problems we all face is underestimating our own ability. And if we do underestimate our abilities, we can go through life doing that—never really correcting it. We never give ourselves an opportunity to excel. And I think this is what happened to Earl Smith—by accident, by fate, or by luck. I was fortunate to be given an opportunity to grow and to learn and to build confidence. I think that such opportunities come from being involved or committed, such as involvement in the community [as Bob Hays mentioned in his introduction], in our church, in our service organization, in our service club. For example, a friend of mine called and asked me if I would be a member of the Cobb County Lions Club. I didn't know anything about civic clubs, really, except a little bit about what they would be doing, and I said, "Sure, I would like to participate." He said, "Well, Earl, would you be third vice-president?" I certainly didn't want to do anything up front; I didn't feel confident that I was capable. And I even thought that in being third vice-president I probably wouldn't have anything to do, you know, so I would really be safe. So I committed to becoming third vice-president. The next year I was second, the next first, and then I was finally president. I would have *never* agreed to be president of that club at the outset. So I think this is where being involved is important.

You grow with your commitment, and it was one of the greatest joys of life. It certainly did not make me an expert so I would be able to stand before you today and not feel somewhat uncomfortable and nervous. But it gave me the exposure and the growth that I needed in order to go forward with my career. Being involved in a service club, such as a boys club, for example, was also valuable. Initially, it was just something in which I wanted to help as a business person or as a member of the community. Well, going forward in that program and taking the situation in which I found a building that was destroyed and I had to go out into the community to raise funds—that meant I had to be involved with the community. This [involvement] also allowed me again to grow. And I don't think I would have ever been there had I not volunteered and then said: "Hey, I've got to go with it and

be part of it.” The point I’m making here is: don’t pass up the opportunity to grow. You may not have the opportunity again.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

So if you’re asked to do something, no matter how small it is at the time, accept it because it allows you the opportunity to grow.

I also became involved in state affairs while trying to recommend and encourage state legislation that would affect our association. Such activity is growth; it is the essence of commitment. It was not something I had to do. I could have made a living without it. We could operate a heating and air conditioning firm with legislation the way it was. We could have had Cobb County continue the way it was without a code, without regulation. But I saw this as an opportunity to be a leader. I saw myself getting involved in it, and just starting with it, and then surfacing to the leadership role in these endeavors. In the government, I had an opportunity to serve as a volunteer in a couple of areas and was also appointed to serve as well.

You know, I have never in my life thought I would run for public office. That was something I felt was just beyond me. I believe I owe my success to the fact that every success step that I made since the beginning of my career was more than I ever expected. So in government I began on the Planning Board because in my neighborhood we had a zoning problem. Somebody had to take the leadership role. I could have backed off and said, “Hey, I don’t want to do it.” It gave me the opportunity and opened the door. I was appointed to serve four years to the Planning Board, and I gained experience in the planning department, in the community, and in the zoning of Cobb County.

Later on, my involvement with the government was on the Citizens Task Force that was appointed in Cobb County about three years ago to determine and study cost and to improve efficiency in county government. I was one of eighteen members. It was a difficult job. It was very political. We had five different political persuasions on that Board in that each commissioner appointed three members and The Chamber of Commerce appointed three. Well, we had to have a chairperson. I could have backed off and said, “Hey I don’t want to do that because that’s going to take a lot of my time and I don’t have the time.” But this was an opportunity. I stepped forward and grasped that opportunity. I’m not so sure I had the capabilities. In my mind I didn’t, and I was a little bit worried about it. But once I was committed, the discipline caused me to move forward, and it caused that committee to be successful. Another step in a career, another opportunity for Earl Smith!

IMPORTANCE OF WRITING

This is why I say writing is important as a means of learning, as a means of starting a career, and as a means of being successful in politics or earning a living. Now maybe I’m not tying the subject totally together with my background. But whatever your future or your major—whether it’s in civil engineering, architectural, electrical, mechanical, business administration or whatever—you are going to be challenged either with your ability or your skills of communication. I don’t care what you do, and I don’t care what your profession is. Communication is going to be the most important thing of your entire career. And it comes from the English department.

Now it took me a long time to admit that. But the longer I’m in it, the longer I’m involved in the community, the more I know it to be a fact. For a commission to be successful we have to pull our ideas together, and we have to have someone on the staff who really can explain it and explain it clearly in a few words. That’s why communication skills are important. In my field of technical work, there are specifications.

Specifications can cost you your livelihood if you do not know how to interpret them or if you do not know how to write them. If you are a professional engineer, the specifications require your name and signature on the line. These are just slight examples, and these are things that you encounter every day in your career. The interpretation of specifications or a change of one word can change the whole legal ramification of the content.

Communicating is not only important, it is absolutely necessary. It involves being able to convince a customer to buy something. You know, there’s a lot of conversation about the art of selling. But the one that I often think of is the one we hear but don’t quite understand. It is how we can sell an item or how we can *unsell* it. A salesman may have a customer sold on a product and continue to talk and *unsell* it. He can do the same thing with the written word. We don’t always sell our products face-to-face. We’ve got to know how to put it together; we’ve got to know what we’re talking about, get the points across, close, and make the sale. Period!

Now this process has taught me quite a bit as far as the media are concerned because it relates to the proper utilization of as few words as possible. I think this is also part of the writing process or the discipline process that we’re talking about. I was somewhat amazed this year in my experience on television by how much time and how much film or footage [or whatever you want to call it] go into a ten-second slot. On election night I was being interviewed by Don McClellan of Channel 2. He said, “Earl, I want to do that same kind of interview that took about 10 minutes, but I want it in about 10 seconds.” So this is one of the skills we’re talking about—how to say what you have to say and shut up. Get your points across immediately and stop. If you’re spending the amount of money we were spending this year, you want to get your message across. You want to hit them in the face; you don’t want to get all this verbiage that is not going to be read. This is what communication is about. These are the skills that we’re talking about. You know that and I know that. But you *can* do it; you have the opportunity to do these things. For me, it’s been somewhat of a hardship.

I’ve been successful and I am very pleased, up to this point. On second thought, I’m not so sure I have been successful. My definition of success is this: if the day I’m buried I can lay the last dollar across me, then I will have been successful. I will have led a good life.

I will have made some money, spent it, had a good time, and left none behind. But to me, you know, I must go back to the beginning of my remarks and to what I said about the English department: how difficult it is to convince people of the necessity for learning to write, to communicate, and to comprehend. I see it in my business and with people coming into my business. I’m involved here at Southern Tech. I’m involved at the Vocational School. The teacher has got to be the leader in stressing communication. We cannot continue to be unconcerned about communication because it’s going to take effort. We’re not going to push a button and have it happen. It’s not going to happen tomorrow; it’s something that we’ve got to work on *from now on*.

To me, ladies and gentlemen, they’re the most important aspects of your career: to be able to understand and to communicate the written word.

Earl Smith is a long-time resident of Cobb County, home of Southern Technical Institute. He holds an Associate Degree from that college and is the owner of Smith Heating & Air Conditioning Company. A civic leader in the community, Mr. Smith was recently elected Chairman of the Cobb County Commission.

**WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IS A
TECHNIQUE WHICH ENCOURAGES
TEACHER AND STUDENT CREATIVITY.**



**AN INTERVIEW WITH
DR. HARRIS T. TRAVIS
ON**

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

By Susan R. Morrow and James "Doc" McKay

The following is an edited interview with Dr. Harris T. Travis, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Southern Technical Institute in Marietta, Georgia, given on January 31, 1985.

Dr. Travis came to Southern Tech in 1982 from Purdue University where he was head of the Mechanical Engineering Technology Department. He had also worked in industry for twelve years at the U.S. Naval Avionics Facility in Indianapolis. Currently, he is a member of several professional and technical societies and is active nationally and internationally. Dr. Travis, author of numerous papers and articles, also developed and edited the first international publication on careers in engineering technology.

Q. When did you first hear the term—Writing Across the Curriculum?

R. I was acting department chairman at Purdue University in the 1978-79 academic year when something came across my desk which referred to Writing Across the Curriculum. This was the first time I had heard the term.

Q. What advantages do you see for technology students, who mainly deal with math and science, in developing writing skills?

R. First of all, it generally appears that students seeking to do well in math and science concentrate so much in those areas that they let go of the writing ingredient, which is just as necessary. Second, most engineering programs include a minimal amount of writing. You can know ever so much, but you must be able to communicate your ideas intelligently.

Q. Do you get feedback from graduates or suggestions from industry that would affect the way we use our WAC program at STI?

R. From time to time I get feedback, especially from industry. The academic departments and our placement office send out surveys, and I often talk to people in industry. I have found that these people *always* emphasize the need for improved writing abilities. They often point out to me that they are bringing in people with good technical skills, but with very, very poor writing skills.

From the student's standpoint, it is difficult for him to recognize that he doesn't have this tool which he really needs. Our surveys at Purdue indicated that graduates felt they did not get enough writing. Now, here's a little bias. Most engineering technology programs that turn out B.S. graduates provide more preparation in the area of writing and communication than engineering schools. I have a feeling that sometimes industry is a bit confused because of this. Our advisory committees, made up of people from industry as well as our graduates, offer this consensus—there needs to be even more emphasis on writing.

This is the reason WAC is so important. First, everyone is saying the same thing—not just the English department, which would be expected to support it. But people in industry are also using *themselves* as examples, saying that they needed more preparation in this area.

The reason I am so interested in WAC is that it is an area in which I was crippled when I came out of school and started to work. One supervisor was a professional writer, and my job included writing instructions for operating the equipment I was designing. That's when I realized how important it was to be able to write well. The people in the field couldn't come to ask me what I intended.

Q. What is the primary role the administration can play in WAC?

R. I see the administration doing several things: *First*, being very, very supportive. We can state that support for WAC is our philosophy. Everyone on campus knows I support this, and anything I can do to push it, I will.

Second, "Talk is cheap." So I am also committed to getting the resources to back it up.

Third, communicating to the students the importance of WAC, in putting programs together, and in sending out information. Deans, department heads, and faculty all emphasize to the students the importance of writing.

Fourth, publishing the WAC Newsletter. We are telling the whole country that we are emphasizing WAC. And

Fifth, setting up a center of excellence. People can see this in operation as a model for the whole country.

Q. The four year engineering technology graduate of STI has a required total of 10 hours composition, 5 hours of business communication, and 3 hours of technical writing. In your opinion, is this sufficient preparation in written communication or do you have any other recommendations?

R. We have an advanced course in technical writing. I wish it were a required course. If it were, I think we would be close to the number of hours we need. I do feel we just can't give a person too much writing.

Q. What are the most positive aspects of WAC on the STI campus?

R. *First*, there is a growing desire among faculty members from the various departments to get involved. What excites me most is when one of the faculty comes in and says, "I want to be a part of this; what can I do?"

Second, visitors comment positively about the program and the Newsletter.

Third, I haven't received one negative comment about the program or the resources we have allocated to it. I think this speaks very well for our faculty, staff, and students who are involved. And

Fourth, I believe we have something here we can run with that will pay off for Engineering Technology, and I think I can go a step further and say for Engineering Education.

Q. Do you see any obstacles or difficulties in getting support for WAC at STI?

R. No. I think this goes back to the last question. This program has really come from the faculty. My only thing has been to allocate some funds. They have done an exceptional job of selling the program.

Q. Since the WAC committee formation in October of 1983, do you see any attitude change towards writing in the various departments here at STI?

R. From what I have gathered, some of the faculty have been advocating this in their classes. If I used some measurement, I might note that our computer word processor lab was in constant use during Fall Quarter, and students were upset when the equipment was temporarily down. This shows an interest we did not have earlier.

The key point is that the seed has been planted, and I think the committee has done an excellent job in this. Sometimes it takes a little while—some are waiting to see how it goes—but if it continues as it has, I would say in 2 or 3 years, everyone will be on board. If 51% of technical people support it, that's quite an accomplishment because we were trained on the old concept that technical details were enough.

Q. Do you feel the outside speakers (Joseph Tulkoff and Earl Smith) have had an impact on the students and faculty at Southern Tech?

R. Sure. People from industry are singing the same tune—that more emphasis must be placed on writing. And I would add this: if a person really has any desire to move up in industry, that person is going to have to be very good at writing.

Q. What role do you see the Writing Center playing in the WAC movement on the campus?

R. The two go hand in hand. If we emphasize WAC but don't have a writing center, it is like preaching one thing and doing another.

I see the expansion of the Writing Center coming as WAC catches on. Perhaps there could be a program in the Center for faculty and staff on writing skills. A summer workshop, or one between quarters, could be based on one or two days, or one hour each for five days, and be done on a volunteer basis, inviting faculty from all departments.

Q. The Southern Technical Institute Writing Center has been designated a Center of Excellence. Do you foresee WAC being designated as a Center of Excellence as a model for other University System institutions to follow?

R. Yes. The two can be tied together. A space could be provided for the WAC Center as well, near the Writing Center, and the two could enhance each other. Each should be headed up by a qualified person.

Q. How do you think students and faculty can best work together in developing good results from a WAC program at STI: classrooms, seminars, extracurricular meetings, competitions, festivals, and workshops?

R. One possibility that really strikes me as desirable is the festival. This is a good idea. Once a center of excellence is going, some kind of festival could be organized. High school seniors could be invited to participate. Such

things as displays, judging, and trophies would be a way of reaching out and planting the idea all around.

Speakers from outside are a good stimulus or motivating force. Competitions for people on our campus are good. This could be a part of the festival or a separate thing. The greatest contribution by a faculty member to WAC could be recognized at the annual faculty awards.

Q. What cooperation do you see with other institutions involving WAC?

R. We have been called on by the Chancellor's office to act as a consultant and advise other schools about WAC. It was informally suggested that a full time person work on this project. I am excited about the idea of a technical college taking the lead in this area. We may even be able to assist the traditional liberal arts colleges, who sometimes take this area for granted.

To summarize, there is nothing more important in education than being recognized by one's peers for excellence. Here at Southern Tech we have gone "above and beyond" in the area of WAC, not for the purpose of praise, but for the benefit of our students.

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Teaching Technical Writing: A Seminar

The Continuing Education Department of Southern Technical Institute and the American Society for Engineering Education are co-sponsoring a two-day seminar on June 20-21, 1985, at the Atlanta downtown Hilton. The seminar, focusing on the planning and development of a technical writing program, will also feature Writing Across the Curriculum.

For information and registration form, contact Department of Continuing Education, Southern Technical Institute, 1112 Clay Street, Marietta, Georgia 30060.

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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.

For further information, write to Virginia Hein or Robert Wess, Department of English & History, Southern Technical Institute, Marietta, Georgia 30060.