

# WRITING

# ACROSS

# THE CURRICULUM

Volume IV, Number 1

December, 1986

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM is published twice during the academic year by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee of Southern College of Technology, Marietta, Georgia. Subscriptions are available upon request to interested individuals or institutions; a donation of \$5.00 is requested. Copies of back issues are available for \$2.00 per issue.

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 teaching/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 submission, including brief biographical background and recent photo, to the Editor.

## SOUTHERN COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

<b>EDITOR:</b>	Robert C. Wess English and History
<b>ASSOCIATE EDITOR:</b>	Kristine F. Anderson Developmental Studies
<b>EDITORIAL STAFF:</b>	
David E. Hornbeck	Civil Engineering Technology
Dorothy S. Ingram	Library
James "Doc" McKay	Architectural Engineering Technology
Susan R. Morrow	English and History
James B. Whitenton	Chemistry and Physics

## CONTENTS

Volume IV, Number 1      December, 1986

	PAGE
<b>EDITOR'S CORNER</b>	
Robert C. Wess .....	2
<b>LETTERS TO THE EDITOR</b> .....	2
<b>ARTICLES</b>	
Planning: The First P of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs Jo-Ann M. Sipple .....	3
The Buck Stops Here Harold C. Minor .....	6
Writing and Thinking Sociologically Barbara Karcher and Barbara Stevenson .....	8
<b>CONFERENCE REPORT</b>	
Writing Across the Curriculum and the Learning Disabled Student in College Rex Recouley .....	8
<b>CASE STUDY</b>	
Cross-Disciplinary Faculty Attitudes Toward Student Writing: A Case Study Report David J. Davis .....	9
<b>WAVES ACROSS WAC</b>	
Workshop Suggestions Robert C. Wess .....	11

## EDITOR'S CORNER



By Robert C. Wess

This issue marks the beginning of our fourth year of publication. Thanks to all of you who have responded so favorably to the Newsletter, we have committed ourselves to its continued publication. Thanks also to our academic Vice-President, Dr. Harris Travis, we have widely distributed the Newsletter to a national audience of over 2000 free of charge.

We will continue to send the Newsletter to all who request it. Now, however, we are asking each of you to send an annual donation of five dollars (\$5.00) to help us cover printing and postal costs. Since many of you have already suggested that we should ask for Newsletter support, we are confident you will help defray publication costs. Please make out check to SOUTHERN COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY and send to the Editor.

This issue features Part One of a two-part essay by Jo-Ann Sipple. Part One focuses on planning a writing across the curriculum program. It should provide valuable information for campuses just getting a program started and useful charts for schools already involved in such a program. Part Two of her article will appear in the next issue of *WAC*.

Two short essays focus on classroom use of writing in a specific discipline. Professor Harold Minor suggests some practical ways for inserting writing activities in the sociology syllabus and for using specific writing activities related to essay and research writing. The essay by Barbara Karcher and Barbara Stevenson discusses their use of journal writing in sociology classes as an effective tool to promote student learning and communication skills.

A conference report by Rex Recoulley summarizes a session presented at the 1986 Conference on College Composition and Communication in New Orleans. We hope others will submit their own conference reports for future publication.

The next essay of this issue focuses on another key facet of writing across the curriculum programs--faculty attitudes. David J. Davis presents survey results of eight faculty members from eight different departments at a large midwestern university. His purpose was to discover cross-disciplinary faculty attitudes toward student writing. His findings should prove useful to all faculty concerned about writing throughout the disciplines.

A new feature of the Newsletter, one which we hope to continue, concludes the issue. This addition, *Waves Across WAC*, is designed to offer helpful suggestions, current comments, or innovative practice for the WAC practitioner. Anyone wishing to contribute to this column (1-3 pages) is encouraged to do so.

*Robert C. Wess teaches composition and literature at Southern College of Technology.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I'd very much like to subscribe to your *WAC Newsletter*. My dean has recommended it to me.

Cordially,  
Lisa Ede  
Coordinator of Composition  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, Oregon 97331-5302

Dear Editor:

Our dean passed your newsletter on to those of us in the English department who are interested in *WAC*. I was delighted by the depth and variety of the articles. Please put me on the mailing list.

Yours,  
David R. Russell  
Indiana Univ./Purdue Univ.  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46805

Dear Editor:

I recently received a copy of your *Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter*. City College of San Francisco faculty members and administrators are exploring the possibility of starting a college-wide writing program. I would appreciate being placed on your subscription list.

Sincerely,  
Shirley Kelly  
Dean of Instruction  
City College of San Francisco  
San Francisco, CA 94112

Dear Editor:

Our Dean of Allied Health introduced me to your excellent Newsletter. Please add me to your mailing list.

Sincerely,  
Nancy M. Posselt, Chair  
English and Fine Arts Department  
Midlands Technical College  
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Dear Editor:

Thank you for sending me the December 1985 issue of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. It's a fine newsletter, and I found a number of articles and much information that were helpful and interesting. Please keep me on the mailing list. I'm already looking forward to the next issue.

I wish you continued success!

Thanks,  
Victoria Longino  
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy  
and Allied Health Sciences  
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Editor:

Please put me on the *WAC Newsletter* mailing list. I found the articles in the December '85 issue informative and helpful.

Sincerely,  
Robert W. Jones, Director  
Center for Teaching Excellence  
Michigan Technological University  
Houghton, Michigan 49931

Dear Editor:

Tom Dasher, who recently led a workshop on the campus of Tallahassee Community College, highly recommended the *WAC Newsletter* with which you are associated. I would appreciate receiving copies of several issues. In fact, could you add my name to your mailing list? Thank you.

Cordially,  
Elizabeth A. Novinger, Coordinator  
Writing Across the Curriculum  
Tallahassee Community College  
Tallahassee, FL 32301-8170

Dear Editor:

Thank you for sending a copy of the *WAC Newsletter* to me. I found your articles interesting and also your request for creative as well as theoretical submissions for publication. This certainly helps to cover the broad range of writing across the curriculum.

Yours truly,  
David L. Cole  
Assistant Professor, English  
Quinnipiac College  
Hamden, Connecticut 06518

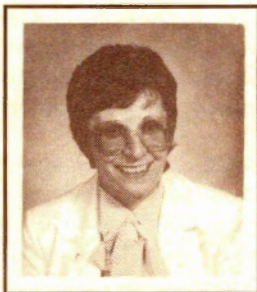
Dear Editor:

I'm glad to know of your publication. John Bean, who was here recently to conduct a WAC Workshop for us, told me about it. How could I have missed such a good thing right here in my own region? I'll appreciate being on your mailing list.

Dorothy Grimes  
English Dept. Station 151  
University of Montevallo  
Montevallo, AL 35115

The following is Part One of a two-part essay. It deals with planning a successful WAC program. Part Two, which will appear in our next issue, discusses proposing, preparing, and prototyping such a program.

## PLANNING: THE FIRST P OF WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAMS THAT LAST



By Joann M. Sipple

### Prologue

About five years ago, some of us at my institution, an undergraduate and graduate school of business administration, began to investigate ways which would help establish Robert Morris College as an institution of higher learning responsive to concerns of literacy, intellectual growth, and academic excellence. Our concerns, coupled with the available research in language and rhetorical

studies as well as in cognitive theory and program evaluation, prompted us to look further. Writing across the curriculum programs began to emerge as a solution to some of those problems we were grappling with on our campus, so we began to investigate the assumptions and research which were at the root of these programs.

It soon became evident that writing across the curriculum was an intelligent way for us to go. However, to do writing across the curriculum well required us to imitate exemplary aspects of successful programs and avoid the mistakes that led others to their lack-lustre presence or eventual demise. Most importantly, we needed to tie into the renowned research in writing that was the driving force behind successful writing across the curriculum programs.

Given our proximity to Carnegie-Mellon University and the University's well-known research in rhetoric, psychology, and writing education, I approached Richard E. Young, then Chair of the Department of English, to see if we could establish a collaborative arrangement between our two institutions. This arrangement would allow Robert Morris College, a predominantly teaching institution, to provide the laboratory environment—the practical program that would feed into the continuing research of our consulting institutional partner, Carnegie-Mellon University.

Richard Young and other faculty at Carnegie-Mellon worked with us from the inception of the proposal for funding to continuing the program evaluation and other program activities still going on today. Our partnership has become one in which, as Young had predicted, "the benefits are likely to flow both ways." The Buhl Foundation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, judged our program worthy of both initial and supplementary assistance grants; the Foundation's purpose was "to establish a writing across the business disciplines program at Robert Morris College (WABD)."

Today, since the grant has expired (December 31, 1985), we are preparing our second cycle of program implementation and evaluation funded internally by Robert Morris College. We are also planning more ways to give strength and growth to an enterprise that has managed to please students, faculty, and administrators at both institutions; and to a program that has already begun to help us provide intelligent solutions to problems of literacy, cognitive growth, and linguistic maturity for our students.

And we have managed one other unanticipated benefit in the process: twenty of our faculty across all our academic departments have focused on a common pedagogical issue—putting their best educated efforts into improving the curriculum, developing sets of write-to-learn techniques, and making contributions to the teaching of their respective disciplines. A recent team of four evaluators from the National Council of Writing Program Administrators said in their progress report:

In concept and execution, we find WABD to be an excellent program. . . . Particularly noteworthy in the WABD design is the decision to introduce write-to-learn strategies as part of a larger review of course goals and structure by teachers in different disciplines. This approach greatly increases the chance that write-to-learn approaches will be fully integrated into improved courses rather than used as isolated teaching techniques. The result seems to be not only one of the few successful writing across the curriculum programs we know but also one of the best faculty development programs we have seen. . . . (K. Davis, H. Crosby, R. Gebhardt, M. Arkin, December 1985).

On the heels of this generous evaluation and after five years of doing writing across the curriculum, I have drawn some conclusions which are indeed worth sharing with those who might also be thinking about, doing, or extending programs of their own.

## Introduction

Effective writing across the curriculum programs that last more than a few years are relatively sparse. Yet, right now, almost ten years after this educational movement has at one time or another been harbored in over 500 American parts of higher education, there are many tales about the enthusiasm, if not evangelism, connected with writing in all disciplines in our schools as well as in our colleges and universities (Griffin, 1982). My purpose here, however, is not to describe the psychological state of writing across the curriculum programs but rather to describe the substantive features that give some programs prominence as well as permanence in their institutions, in their communities, in the nation, and even across nations.

Those of us interested in establishing our own lasting and effective writing across the curriculum programs need to examine healthy programs that have not only survived the storms of American higher education but have indeed continued to thrive. The anchor of these successful programs is an organized nucleus of features which I call the Four P's of writing across the curriculum: planning, proposing, preparing, and prototyping. This essay, focusing on the first feature only, includes some strategies helpful to those brave pioneers who accept the responsibility of planning a writing across the curriculum program that lasts.

## Theoretical Roots

Planning requires organization and connections among the mechanisms of designing and implementing both program activities and evaluation designs. In real time planning begins at least two years before any signs of the program's life begin on campus. Planning then continues not only throughout the beginning of the program but keeps recurring for the duration. Planning itself is driven by the substance of writing across the curriculum programs: activities for teachers, students, administrators. It requires evaluation designs that are internal as well as external, formative as well as summative.

The program activities usually derive from theories of writing that have been well documented in writing education research. Some theoretical models repeatedly used and worth mentioning are James Britton's concepts of writing and learning (1970, 1975, 1980), Richard Young's concepts of heuristic procedures for invention (Young, Becker, & Pike, 1970), Jerome Bruner's system of information processing (1964), Flower & Hayes' investigations of writing as a problem-solving activity (1980), and Janet Emig's idea of writing as a mode of learning (1977)—to name a few. All these theorists in one way or another advance a common principle: writing is an indispensable aid to more precise and complex thinking required in all disciplines. Moreover, each discipline can provide its professionals with defined sets of strategies to arrive at more

precise thinking about the subject matter of that discipline (Young, Becker, & Pike, 1970).

Thus, writing to learn, distinguished from writing to communicate, is an effective student learning aid as well as a powerful pedagogical principle. Teachers in every discipline can, from the perspective of research in writing, determine and develop appropriate write-to-learn strategies to help their students achieve particular course goals of their subject areas more effectively (R.E. Young, 1985). English teachers, even teachers of composition, do not have a corner on writing to learn in all disciplines. Nor do they by themselves have the necessary knowledge and skills to determine which write-to-learn strategies are useful for disciplines beyond their own.

Only when administrators and teachers of writing across the curriculum programs determine and discover their theoretical roots will the activities necessary to conduct a college-wide program begin to emerge. And perhaps it is best to mention here that seminars for faculty in all disciplines are primary activities in successful programs. These seminars are best when researchers in writing and teachers in other disciplines come together to exchange their expertise and determine student needs in defined areas of study. Only then can those faculty in particular disciplines reconceive of their courses from a multi-perspective base and make write-to-learn aids an integral part of their course designs. There are other models of these seminars, which I will turn to later, and there are even programs with no faculty training at all. However, those programs that neglect faculty seminars have not lasted (Griffin, 1985).

## Practical Implications

At Robert Morris College, we urge our faculty to take advantage of the multiple functions of writing for more than its social, communicative one. Our program objectives are 1) to engage faculty across our academic departments, as they re-envision their courses, to integrate fully write-to-learn activities; 2) to facilitate our faculty's collaboration with research faculty at Carnegie-Mellon University in their course designs and in their program evaluation; 3) to insist that our faculty provide courses in every discipline through which students use writing in multiple and various ways—especially to improve efficiency and accuracy in thinking in their respective disciplines.

In permanent writing-across-the-curriculum programs, where the main goal is to help students become more substantive, precise thinkers and learners in a particular discipline, the work must begin with a self-conscious faculty who has the pedagogy to help their students make that happen. Teaching faculty who can work cooperatively with researchers are in an optimum position to establish appropriate write-to-learn activities as an integral part of their courses before they begin to implement writing-across-the-curriculum techniques in their classes. Just as program activities must be planned before their implementation into the curriculum, so must evaluation designs be part of the initial planning process. Just as planning the goals of the program activities is a must, so it goes for planning the goals of the evaluation.

## Evaluation Measures

If there is an analogy for Achilles' Heel in writing across the curriculum programs, it is in evaluation, or more fundamentally, in evaluation design. Even the most successful writing across the curriculum administrators have discovered this to be a shortcoming in their own programs. Art Young, for example, who has the longest running if not the most successful writing across the curriculum program in the country, maintains that if he were starting Michigan Tech's program now, he would spend more time planning the evaluation at the outset (A. Young, 1985). There are assumptions to be considered for evaluation just as there are assumptions for program activities. As Richard Young would say it, there are paradigms which underlie our disciplines, and these paradigms govern our conduct in evaluation as well as in teaching our disciplines (R.E. Young, 1978).

No one measure in an evaluation design can yield sufficient evidence on which to base the success or failure of a writing program. If the goal of the writing program administration is to prove the program's worth and the need for its continued existence, then the means of measurement must satisfy all participants intrinsic to the program (namely teachers and students) as well as all administrators, advisory boards, funding agencies, and others extrinsic to the program. In short, multiple measures of a single, complex phenomenon such as a writing program are likely to yield the kind of substantive conclusions and verification which are worthy of the program.

Planning evaluation designs is a complex activity, one which requires verifiable and reliable results. There are powerful strategies which we can call on for creating such evaluation designs: First, we can satisfy the various "need-to-know" questions posed by teachers, students, administrators, advisory boards, funding agencies, and others interested in the impact of the program by consulting sources like Witte and Faigley (1983) for determining contexts for evaluation and by conducting structured investigation procedures to insure comprehensive evaluation like those posed by Davis, Scriven and Thomas (1981). These can help us identify multiple kinds of evaluation and a number of relevant measures.

We can help ourselves further by providing a calendar and matrix of evaluation activities. In this way the evaluation plan can be put into operation at the appropriate times during implementation of the program (See Appendix 1: Calendar of Evaluation, and Appendix 2: Evaluation Matrix). The multiple and varied indicators of success or failure exhibited in the matrix are far more powerful and persuasive than single measures. The preponderance of evidence derived from such a comprehensive evaluation established the need to continue the program beyond an initial implementation phase.

The second set of strategies we can call upon after using these questioning procedures and designing an evaluation matrix is the establishment of relationships among and between the various components of evaluation and assessment. Witte and Faigley argue that developing a context for the various measures helps us see important connections among them for both qualitative and quantitative analyses (1983). For exam-

ple, what kinds of connections exist between various surveys, protocol research, student writing, and so on—all of which must be analyzed in qualitative and quantitative terms. My remarks about planning both evaluation designs and program activities are derived from one and the same premise: the way to insure comprehensive evaluation and effective activities yielding reliable and persuasive results is to plan for them. Besides forcing us to re-examine our theoretical assumptions about our writing programs, planning helps us account for the reasons why we use experimental and other design models in the act of evaluation rhetoric. Once we decide whom else besides ourselves we must convince, the choices we make about the kinds of program activities and evaluation measures are dependent on our intended audiences.

## REFERENCES

- Britton, J. "Language and Learning Across the Curriculum." *Forum* 1 (Winter 1980): 55-56: 93-94.
- Britton, J. and others. *The Development of Writing Abilities* (11-18). London: Mac-Millan Education, 1975.
- Bruner, J.S. "The Course of Cognitive Growth." *American Psychologist* 19 (1964): 1-15.
- Davis, B.G., Scriven, M., Thomas, S. *The Evaluation of Composition Instruction*. Inverness, California: Edgepress, 1981.
- Davis, K., Arkin, M., Crosby, H., Gebhardt, R. Council of Writing Program Administrators, "Robert Morris College's Writing Across the Business Disciplines Program: A Progress Report." December 1985.
- Emig, J., "Writing as a Mode of Learning." *College Composition and Communication* 28 (May 1977): 122-28.
- Flower, L. & Hayes, J., "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem." *College Composition and Communication* 31 (February 1980): 21-32.
- Fulwiler, T. & Young, A., Eds. *Language Connections: Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982.
- Griffin, C.W. Ed. *Teaching Writing in all Disciplines*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.
- Knoblauch, C.H. and Brannon, L. "Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum." *College English* 56 (September 1983): 465-74.
- Witte, S. and Faigley, L. *Evaluating College Writing Programs*. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.
- Young, A. "Lecture at Robert Morris College." October 1985.
- Young, R. "Paradigms and Problems." In C. Cooper and L. Odel (Eds). *Research on Composing*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.
- Young, R., Becker, A., Pike, K. *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970.
- Young, R. "Robert Morris College Faculty Seminars." Spring 1985.

**Jo-Ann M. Sipple has her Doctor of Arts Degree in English from Carnegie-Mellon University. The author of several textbooks, Dr. Sipple is Chair of the Department of Communications and Director of Writing Across the Business Disciplines at Robert Morris College.**

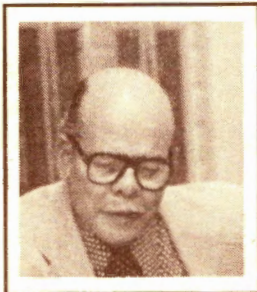
## APPENDIX 1 WABD EVALUATION ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

	84	85	86
	to	De	86
	to	De	86
WHOLE PROGRAM			
Formative			
Summative			
Internal			
External			
Longitudinal Study			
Metaevaluation			
COMPONENT PARTS			
Planning Seminars			
Targeted Courses			
Winter Res. Sem.			
Course Designs			
Course Implemen.			
Onsite Team			

## APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION DESIGN

WHAT IS TO BE EVALUATED	KINDS OF EVALUATION		EXTERNAL	META-EVALUATION
	FORMATIVE [-----INTERNAL-----]	SUMMATIVE		
EFFECTIVENESS OF PLANNING SEMINARS	—writing responses by faculty participants —faculty participant surveys	—faculty participant survey	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
EFFECTIVENESS OF TARGETED COURSES	—contribution to taxonomy of writing —evaluation by ind. faculty —participant writing activities throughout pre & post course design	—pre & post course designs —evaluation by individual faculty —course plans	—on-site WPA evaluation visit	—evaluation designs by individual faculty participants —evaluation designs of whole program
INTEGRATION OF WRITE TO LEARN ACTIVITIES IN TARGETED COURSES	—taxonomy of small genres —faculty participant surveys —student participant surveys	—final copy of taxonomy —faculty participant surveys —student participant surveys	—on-site WPA evaluation team visit —protocol interviews —protocol analysis	—protocol analysis—experimental design
EFFECTIVENESS OF WINTER RESEARCH SEMINARS	—participants' written responses to weekly agendas and writing materials	—faculty participant surveys —course plans	—on-site WPA evaluation team visit (analysis of data by external team)	—analysis & conclusions drawn from pre & post faculty surveys —designs by faculty
IMPACT OF WRITE-TO-LEARN ACTIVITIES IN TARGETED COURSES	—pre-implementation information faculty surveys —administrative surveys —student surveys	—post course design info: faculty surveys —student surveys —administrative surveys	—design of sets of writing activities performed by students pre & post implementation of targeted courses	—coding schemes & analysis of pre & post implementation protocols
IMPLEMENTATION OF TARGETED COURSES	—class visits —protocols —interviews	—analysis of class visits, protocols & interviews —WP progress report	—on-site WPA team —protocol analysis	—designs of protocol analysis —protocol analysis of faculty/students
PROBABILITY OF LONG-TERM ESTABLISHMENT OF WABD	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	—analysis of: administrative surveys —faculty surveys —student surveys	—on-site WPA team recommendations	—longitudinal case studies —research design

## THE BUCK STOPS HERE



By Harold C. Minor

According to national surveys and studies, millions of high school graduates across the country are matriculating at our two-year and four-year colleges, and that is good. But what is not good at all is the fact that a very high percentage of these entering freshmen are woefully lacking in the basic communication skills, especially reading, writing, and articulation. Consider the following quotations:

So many students in California were being graduated from high school without rudimentary knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic that in 1976 the state made it mandatory to pass minimum-competency tests in these subjects before receiving a diploma. (*Parade Magazine* 14)

Now that we college faculty have many of these students in our current classes—sociology, psychology, history, biology, etc.—are we to be party to perpetuating such academic deficiencies? There are many rationales and apparent justifications from which we can draw for legitimizing our failure to intervene: “They should have caught and corrected said deficiency in the public schools before allowing him/her to graduate”; “I was not

hired to teach English or penmanship”; “I can only grade the student on his/her demonstrated understanding and grasp of sociology, biology or whatever (non-English) discipline is involved”; “This one class experience can not possibly make up for the years of academic neglect he/she has experienced at the primary/secondary level(s)”; etc., etc., etc.

As comforting as such justifications might seem to be, are we not all educators? Can we really continue not to hold our students accountable for reasonably acceptable writing, grammar, spelling, articulation, and critical thinking in whatever discipline we teach?

I suspect that collectively, with due respect to the relatively few exceptions, we rely much too heavily on objective testing as the basis for student evaluation and course grade assignment. Multiple choice questions, true-false questions, fill-in-the-blank(s) questions, etc., are *easy* and *quick* to grade, but do they test the students' basic communication skills?

Our past president of the Faculty Senate, Professor Benjamin McKeever, brought this concern to the attention of Sinclair Community College's faculty in 1983. He described a remedy for this concern as “Writing Across the Curriculum.”

I fully share his and others' concern about this matter; accordingly, I have implemented some major revisions in my student-performance expectations for the 1984 Winter Quarter and thereafter! Appearing below are some actual excerpts which are part of all my syllabi for each of the courses I shall teach effective January, 1984.

## SYLLABI

One paragraph in all my syllabi states:

“Class participation occurs through active involvement in class discussions, both voluntary and when called upon. This opportunity will be *uniformly* available to each of you: two (2) bonus points.”

**Rationale:**

Class participation is designed to encourage students to express their thoughts verbally and to give students maximum opportunity to practice communication skills while at the same time earning additional course grade points, i.e. positive reinforcement. This practice is also designed to give the more withdrawn student (who seldom if ever volunteers verbal comments in class discussions) equal opportunity, along with the more outgoing student, to earn these bonus points and to get practice.

Another paragraph in my syllabi states:

As you are now college students, I shall expect from each of you reasonably good communication skills, both verbal and written, including correct grammar and spelling.

**Rationale:**

This procedure has to do with teacher expectations of students. Studies have repeatedly shown that when teacher expectations of student performances are unclear, fuzzy or non-existent, student performance will often be less than perhaps it could be.<sup>1</sup> The lead paragraph on each of the five (5) tests given in each of my courses states:

**TESTS**

DO NOT MARK ON TEST PAGE(S).

Read each question *carefully*, and answer *fully*. Poor spelling, grammar, and/or writing will result in the loss of one or more points.

**Rationale:**

This practice also has to do with teacher expectations and students' accountability for performance.

In our discussion about the institution of religion in Sociology 112, Karl Marx's view of religion is examined. His view is reflected in his statement, "Religion is the opiate of the masses." In the past, the test question appearing in my test would be as follows: "Which of the following once observed that 'Religion is the opiate of the masses?'"

- A. C. Wright Mills
- B. Emile Durkheim
- C. David Poponol, or
- D. Karl Marx

My current question is the following one: has the student demonstrated a real grasp of the dynamics of what Marx meant by his statement by merely circling D? I submit that the student has not!

I am now asking such a question about whatever the issue, concept, relationship, etc. might be in the following format: "Explain what Karl Marx meant by his statement: 'Religion is the opiate of the masses.'"

**RESEARCH PAPER**

Finally, the chart below provides my newly revised instruction for the student research paper in sociology.

**SINCLAIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE****TERM PAPER****for SOCIOLOGY 205**

VALUE: 10 COURSE POINTS

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Select one (1) of the Social Problems contained in the textbook we are using.

On this one (1) Social Problem *only*, develop a scrap book using articles, etc., from the printed media. Cut them out and paste them on the pages. Following *each* article will be your comments, thoughts, agreements, disagreements, etc. In other words, I want your written reactions to the articles.

Grading will be based upon the following:

1. Your comments *typed*.
  2. A \_\_\_\_\_ cover.
  3. Your name, course, and section number on *front* of cover.
  4. Relevancy of the articles.
  5. Relevancy of your commentary.
  6. Correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
  7. Overall neatness and appearance.
  8. Three (3) points deducted for *late* submission.
- DEADLINE: \_\_\_\_\_

Hopefully, some of these specific guidelines for syllabus, quizzes, and research essays will help other teachers outside the domain of English to get started in using Writing Across the Curriculum on a practical, day-to-day level.

**NOTE**

<sup>1</sup>Students often get low grades because they are misled into thinking they are doing well when they are not; and they therefore do not work hard enough to get good grades. This hypothesis was demonstrated by Sanford Dornbusch and his research team. See *The Black Scholar*, 7 (November 1975): 1-11.

**WORK CITED**

"High School Graduates." *Parade Magazine, Dayton Sunday News*, 14 Dec. 1984: 14.

*Harold C. Minor is Professor of Sociology at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio, where he has taught since 1972. Prior to teaching, he had worked in Public Welfare, Child Welfare, the Urban League, and the Great Society programs of the 1960's.*

"Fortunately, the act of composition, or creation, disciplines the mind: Writing is one way to go about thinking."

E.B. White. *Elements of Style*

## WRITING AND THINKING SOCIOLOGICALLY



By Barbara Karcher and Barbara Stevenson

Barbara Stevenson collaborated in writing this condensation of a paper originally presented by Barbara Karcher at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Humanist Sociology, November 1985, in Atlanta, Georgia. A copy of the complete paper may be obtained from Barbara Karcher, Department of Political Science and Sociology, Kennesaw College, Marietta, GA 30061.

In a "traditional" introduction to sociology course, the professor lectures to students who passively take notes and who later re-collect the material on a test. By incorporating a sociological journal into courses, the professor can encourage students to learn sociology actively while at the same time they improve their writing and critical thinking.

The sociological journal, as devised by Dr. Theodore Wagenaar, has two parts: a description and an analysis. In the description students summarize an event and give their reactions, and in the analysis they interpret the event sociologically. For example, newspapers have been following the story of a Japanese woman in California who, after being rejected by her husband, attempted parent-child suicide but only succeeded in killing her children. If students were to write a description of this story, they would condense a newspaper account and would include their reactions. A typical reaction is one of horror; students are shocked that a mother would murder her children and that Japanese society condones such behavior. In the analysis portion of the journal, students could comment upon cultural relativity — what Japanese accept as honorable, Americans reject as evil. Like a sociologist, the students' analysis must be objective; any subject comments belong in the description.

Dr. Barbara Karcher has developed a method of adapting Wagenaar's journal into her introduction to sociology courses. Karcher makes a distinction between "formal" and "informal" entries, with the formal entries following Wagenaar's division of the journal into description and analysis. Requiring about eight formal entries on topics of the students' own choosing, Karcher grades them on their sociological insight and writing style. Before students submit their papers, Karcher encourages her students to write numerous drafts, and she has them read each other's drafts for suggestions.

The informal entries consist of about 25 exercises, some following Wagenaar's approach, while others are hypotheses, summaries of films, and other such

assignments. Even though students must write these informal exercises to receive class credit, Karcher does not read them as she does the formal entries. Instead, by skimming through the journals, she ensures that students have completed the exercises.

Since the teacher need only skim the informal entries and since an average formal entry is merely a page long, grading consumes little of the teacher's time. Therefore, with this distinction between the formal and informal entries, the teacher is not inundated with grading, but students receive abundant practice in writing and thinking sociologically.

### Works Cited

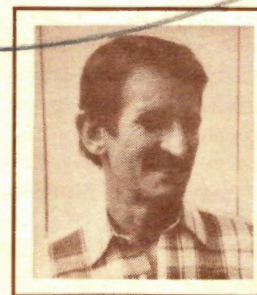
Wagenaar, Theodore. "Technique 3." *Eighty-one Techniques for Teaching Sociological Concepts*. Ed. Reed Geertsen. Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association, 1979: 5-6.

—. "Using Student Journals in Sociology Courses." *Teaching Sociology* 11 (1984): 419-37.

*Dr. Barbara Karcher is an Associate Professor of Sociology. Her colleague, Dr. Barbara Stevenson, is an Assistant Professor of English. Both teach at Kennesaw College.*

This session-report summarizes the panel, "Teaching Writing Skills to the Learning Disabled Student," a session held Friday, March 14, at the 1986 Conference on College Composition and Communication.

## WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AND THE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT IN COLLEGE



By Rex Recoulley

While the two most visible areas addressed by writing across the curriculum advocates are the improvement of student writing and thinking and faculty development, there are several other areas with which WAC can and should concern itself. One of these very concrete areas is that of the learning disabled student who encounters writing problems in all of his or her course work; and because of its cross-curricular influence, WAC seems a very logical vehicle for addressing the pressing needs of the learning disabled student.



Dr. Leonore Ganschow, Dr. Vernon Grumbling, and Dr. Leone Scanlon, participants in the 1986 Conference on College Composition and Communication in New Orleans, offered the following remarks concerning the recognition of and assistance to the learning disabled in the classroom. Their remarks seem of immediate importance to any instructor in any discipline and of particular value to anyone interested in the practical and humane applications of the goals of WAC.

Dr. Ganschow's presentation dealt with an overview involving the legal and operational definitions of the learning disabled, learning disabled subtypes, a profile of the learning disabled college student, current research, and sample case studies. Of most immediately practical help was her delineation of learning disabled characteristics; the learning disabled college student generally manifests several of the following characteristics in combination: 1) average to above average intellectual ability; 2) a marked discrepancy between potential intellectual ability and potential in mathematical reasoning and computation, oral communication, reading comprehension, and written language; 3) persistent information-processing deficits; 4) uneven abilities in the same individual (fluency in oral expression but difficulty in writing out the same ideas); 5) organizational difficulties, such as time budgeting, sustained effort, notetaking and outlining, and memorization; and 6) a high level of persistence and motivation. While these characteristics, singly or in combination, could be manifested for many reasons and should be clinically verified, they are typical of the learning disabled student.

Dr. Grumbling's presentation dealt with affective and metacognitive strategies for assisting the learning disabled student. His suggestions for affective strategies centered on addressing individual student needs and included the following: disarming anxiety through conferences, and locating the student's knowledge base by assisting in the discovery of crucial focuses in and response to assignments. His suggestions for metacognitive strategies focused on familiarizing the student with distinctions between analytical and Gestalt perception and between sequential and clustered thinking. More specifically, he suggested an emphasis on *structured* process in composing by presenting varied techniques of approach to an assignment; the breakdown of processes into discrete, clear phases; and the supervision of such composing steps as listing, outlining, and clustering of materials. Further, Dr. Grumbling advocated an emphasis on systematic approaches to composing assignments; his advocacy here involved articulation of planning stages for the completion of the assignment, the use of systematic checks for predictable problems, and a combination of aural, oral, and visual checks for coherence, unity, and logic, as well as grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.

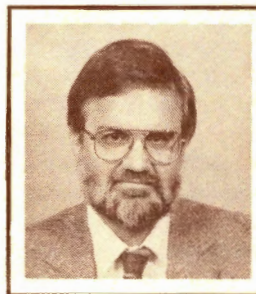
The third presenter, Dr. Leone Scanlon, spoke on the role of the Writing Center (open to all students of all disciplines) in assisting the learning disabled college student. Crucial to the role which can be played by a Writing Center is the available time the student has to use in the Writing Center. Dr. Scanlon called particular attention to the use of word processors for writing revisions,

tutorial assistance (someone with whom the learning disabled student can verbally invent and organize), and sequenced assignments or exercises as highly effective modes of assistance. The learning disabled student's time allotment, as previously noted, is obviously of great importance if he or she is to take advantage of the Writing Center opportunities; unfortunately, planning and scheduling of time is a distinctive problem for the learning disabled—thus his or her need is compounded.

What these presentations point to is the necessity of the instructor to be willing to address the individual needs of particular students. Indeed, the presenters seemed genuinely reluctant to espouse guidelines for *all* learning disabled students because learning disabilities are qualitatively distinct and different for each in terms of needs and strategies for meeting those needs. In short, each student must learn his own uniquely effective strategies.

Because more and more learning disabled students are appearing in college courses, their recognition and the schools' assistance to them have become imperative. As advocates of WAC (which stresses writing as a learning process) gain interdisciplinary followers, the problems of the learning disabled will perhaps become more easily recognized through increased awareness and, quite possibly, more readily addressed across the campus disciplines instead of being thought of and treated as the diagnostic responsibility solely of a counseling service. Assisting students who have been clinically certified as learning disabled is one matter; being able to recognize and assist students who may very well have a learning disability and not know it is quite another. Diagnosing and helping the learning disabled student remains a very worthwhile area which WAC and its resources can call attention to and assist in overcoming.

*Rex Recoulley, Assistant Professor of English at Southern College of Technology, is Director of the Composition Program and college representative on the University System Academic Committee on English.*



## CROSS-DISCIPLINARY FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD STUDENT WRITING: A CASE STUDY REPORT

By David J. Davis

A number of recent studies have measured faculty attitudes and practices toward student writing (Donlan 1974, Klinger 1977, Zemelman 1977, Behrens 1978, Maimon and Nodine 1978, Rose 1979.) Taken together, these studies suggest that English department faculty are not as alone as they frequently suspect in their concerns about students' writing abilities and the importance of these abilities to the educational process. They also suggest that few faculty, regardless of discipline, believe that responsibility for promoting literacy skills lies solely with the English department. Perhaps more than half of all

faculty attempt to promote student writing in some significant way in their classes. Nevertheless, these studies also suggest that the apparent broad interest in student writing is accompanied by a pervasive fragmentation of faculty attitudes, expectations, and practices.

These finds are thus not altogether reassuring. Nor are they altogether convincing. Despite their diversity, most of the studies relied entirely on questionnaire surveys for their data (only Zemelman and Williamson used interviews). To counteract the limitations of that approach, I have recently completed a series of case studies designed to generate a more in-depth understanding of individual faculty members' attitudes and practices toward student writing.

The study was conducted at a large Midwestern state university. I initially distributed brief questionnaires to faculty and students within departments of the College of Liberal Arts, asking for the names of possible participants for the project. In addition, I personally solicited suggestions and comments on the project from all fourteen chairpersons and forty-two other faculty from these departments.

I received the names of teachers throughout the campus, from among whom I selected eight, representing the departments of anthropology, sociology, geography, political science, English, linguistics, philosophy, and psychology. All perceived themselves as seriously attempting to integrate writing into their undergraduate courses.

In gathering my information, I used three sources: (1) a series of open-ended interviews with each teacher; (2) classroom observations of these teachers; and (3) course documents--syllabi, handouts, examinations, and graded student papers. What follows is a summary of my findings.

## FINDINGS

Most, if not all, of these teachers shared the following attitudes:

*\* Writing instruction is the responsibility of teachers in all disciplines.* Few, however, felt themselves to be typical in holding this attitude. Some cited negative or indifferent reactions to their efforts by their colleagues. They also saw the pressure to "publish or perish" as an obstacle to good teaching and to the encouragement of student writing.

*\* Writing can help students to become lifelong learners.* Knowing how to think critically is equal, if not greater, in importance than mastering specific subject matter.

*\* There is a direct connection between writing and thinking.*

*\* Writing can promote self-understanding and personal growth.* It also can help students understand themselves from an expanded social and cultural context.

*\* One has not mastered course material if one cannot write about it.*

*\* Good writing skill should be a minimum expectation of any college graduate.*

*\* Classroom writing can help prepare students for life beyond the classroom.* While writing itself is a skill necessary for success in life, it also can lead to new understandings and abilities that go beyond literacy.

*\* Writing is a way of personalizing the educational pro-*

*cess.* Almost all of these teachers expressed some degree of frustration over the poor writing abilities of their students. The three most commonly mentioned problems were (a) *the inability to organize ideas or develop an argument coherently*; (b) *poor mechanical skills* -- grammar, usage, spelling, and the like; and (c) *a tendency to ramble or overwrite*. The first was clearly the greatest concern.

As expected, these teachers preferred essay-type exams. Some, like the geographer, were quite adamant in their rejection of multiple-choice tests as useless or even harmful.

Only four devoted a significant amount of classroom time to activities directly related to student writing. Given the importance all of them attributed to writing in the educational process, it was rather surprising to find the obvious reluctance several expressed to devoting instructional time to it.

These faculty members did not feel that their efforts were appreciated or rewarded by their departments. In addition, they often felt overworked and their work unrecognized by their colleagues. Their reward and motivation came from a personal commitment to the growth of their students.

The group as a whole felt that there needs to be more cooperation between writing teachers and content-area teachers. They said that students need to learn to write the kinds of papers they will be assigned in other courses--term papers, reports, summaries and abstracts, critiques, and so forth. Several suggested the initiation of specialized courses like "Writing in the Social Sciences," "Writing in the Physical Sciences," "Writing for History," or "Writing for Geographers." Such courses, they suggested, would require the application of subtly different skills, conventions, and perspectives.

Finally, there was general agreement that administrators should play a much more active role than they are currently doing in promoting student writing.

## CHANGING PRACTICES

Most of these teachers stated that participating in the study had been a positive experience for them. Generally they felt they had become more conscious of the ideas and assumptions behind their activities, and that those ideas had become more concrete and fully developed through talking about them and reviewing the resulting transcripts of these conversations. Three individuals made substantive changes in their practices which they attributed directly to their discussions with me. For the sociologist, the change involved giving greater attention to how she responds to student papers. The linguist said that the interviews led her to a series of small changes in her general studies class. They also made her think about how to incorporate writing more fully into her other courses: she made the writing project in one course count for 75% of the total grade instead of the previous 25%, and she began requiring rough drafts to be turned in for critiquing well before the final due date for the paper. The political scientist reported the most dramatic changes. He completely revised the syllabus for his senior level course to integrate writing more fully into classroom work and to provide students with peer and instructor feedback on their research projects as they write them.

## CONCLUSIONS

These eight teachers were not typical faculty members. On the contrary, several felt alone and unsupported in their efforts. Despite their atypicality, however, they probably represent the thinking of those faculty members most likely to actively support the development of writing across the curriculum programs.

What are they saying to those of us charged with initiating such programs? To begin with, they are telling us that they share our belief that writing instruction is the responsibility of teachers in all disciplines, and that they recognize writing's powerful role in thinking and learning. They are telling us that our own writing courses must recognize and prepare students to write within the wide diversity of conventions and forms that characterize writing assignments across the campus. They are also telling us that a central concept of "writing and learning," that of personal or expressive writing, will be difficult for faculty outside language-centered disciplines such as English and linguistics to understand. And they are telling us that for them the conflict between covering content and encouraging writing is still a real one, even though they recognize that learning accompanies the act of writing. Habit and tradition are powerful inhibitors of change. They are also telling us that writing across the curriculum is unlikely to meet with much success at large, research-oriented institutions if we cannot persuade administrators to support such programs actively and to back up that support with funding and changes in faculty-reward processes. These teachers were exceptional in their willingness to sacrifice their time, and occasionally even endure negative pressure from their colleagues, to promote student writing without any expectation of departmental or institutional recognition. For writing across the curriculum to have a widespread impact, we will have to work with administrators to

create a campus environment in which good teaching is nurtured and rewarded rather than ignored or even penalized.

The most suggestive finding of this study may be that several of the teachers involved subsequently made major changes in a least one of their courses to make their use of student writing more effective. Talking through their ideas with an interested colleague helped them clarify their thinking and identify problems they then developed strategies to overcome. This finding suggests that initiating extensive cross-disciplinary dialogue about student writing may in itself lead to improved teaching practices by many faculty members.

## REFERENCES

- Behrens, Laurence. "Writing and the Rest of the Faculty." *English Journal* 67 (1978): 54-66.
- Donlay, Dan. "Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Hypotheses from a Teacher Survey." *Research in the Teaching of English* 8 (1974): 250-262.
- Eblan, Charlene. "Writing across the Curriculum: A Survey of a University Faculty's Views and Classroom Practices." *Research in the Teaching of English* 17 (1983): 343-348.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles, Brian F. Scheussler, and Robert D. Abbott. "Measuring Teacher Attitudes toward Instruction in Writing" (1980). ERIC Document Reproduction Services (ED 199 717).
- Klinger, George. "A Campus View of College Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 28 (1977): 343-347.
- Maimon, Elaine, and Barbara F. Nodine. "Measuring Behavior and Attitudes in the Teaching of Writing among Faculties in Various Disciplines." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, New York City, December 28, 1978. ERIC Document Reproduction Services (ED 167 999).
- Rose, Mike. "When Faculty Talk about Writing." *College English* 41 (1979): 272-279.
- Scharton, Maurice. "Composition at Illinois State University: A Preliminary Assessment." *Illinois English Bulletin* 71 (1983): 11-12.
- Williamson, Michael M. "The Function of Writing in the Sciences." *The English Record* 34 (1984): 22-25.
- Zemelman, Steven. "How College Teachers Encourage Students' Writing." *Research in the Teaching of English* 11 (1977): 227-234.

**David J. Davis taught in the University Writing Program at the University of Utah during 1985-86. He is presently working as a writer/editor for Shipley Associates, a consulting firm in Salt Lake City.**

## WAVES ACROSS WAC Workshop Suggestions

By Robert C. Wess

Last spring our Writing Across the Curriculum Committee planned a workshop for Southern Tech faculty to increase awareness of our program and to stimulate cross-fertilization of ideas from one discipline to another. So what is so special about such a workshop? Several features—time, place, workshop leaders, and budget—involved different procedures from those we had previously used.

**TIME.** In the past we relied on full-day faculty workshops. Many faculty, however, were simply unable or unwilling to get away for a whole day. Southern Tech faculty, like most faculties, I suspect, are busy with a myriad of tasks—teaching, committees, lab duties, consulting—both on and off campus. Accordingly, this time we decided to hold just a half-day workshop. This format proved very workable, allowing a number of interested faculty the opportunity to attend.

**PLACE.** We had been advised by a national authority that the best place to hold such a workshop was off cam-

pus, a place at which faculty would not be bothered by telephone calls, routine work, or other on-campus distractions. At the urging of several faculty, however, we decided to hold the meeting on campus. This change proved beneficial for a number of people: faculty who could attend only a session or two, faculty who could only attend the luncheon, and even one presenter who otherwise, because of his schedule, would not have been able to make his presentation.

**WORKSHOP LEADERS.** In 1984 and 1985 we invited nationally recognized writing across the curriculum experts to lead our workshops. Although these workshops were successful, they turned out to be "one-shot" efforts. Because the invited speakers came from so far away, they could not provide follow-up, either short- or long-term. Thus, even though initial enthusiasm was high immediately after these workshops, the long-term effects were limited. For the 1986 workshop we provided our own presenters from across campus to lead individual sessions. Such a provision, of course, allowed for greater short-term and long-term follow-up; it also identified teachers who may serve as on-campus models for our writing across the curriculum program.

(continued on page 12)

**WAC NEWSLETTER**  
 Robert C. Wess, Editor  
 Southern College of Technology  
 Marietta, Georgia 30060



NON-PROFIT ORG.

U. S. POSTAGE

PAID

MARIETTA, GA.  
 PERMIT NO. 318

### MAILING LIST APPLICATION WAC Newsletter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ : I enclose a \$5.00 donation to cover publication costs.

(continued from page 11)

**BUDGET.** In previous years we budgeted well over a thousand dollars per year just for one off-campus workshop led by a national figure. This year, however, the total budget for the on-campus, locally presented workshop, including luncheon, amounted to less than \$500.

All this information is not meant to disparage the off-campus workshop led by a national figure. Such a strategy obviously has an important role, especially in generating broad faculty awareness of WAC. What I am suggesting, however, is that the on-campus, half-day workshop led by one's own faculty offers an important alternative to the kind most used around the country. For those wishing to imitate this alternate model, the schedule we followed is given below.

#### ON-CAMPUS WORKSHOP: MAY 27, 1986

The Writing Across the Curriculum Committee cordially invites you to attend the Writing Across the Curriculum Workshop on Tuesday, May 27, from 8:45 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. in Room 119 of the Student Center.

#### AGENDA

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 8:45- 9:00 A.M.  | Coffee and Doughnuts   |
| 9:00- 9:30 A.M.  | Orren Williams (MET): "Methodologies for an Engineer to Assign and Grade Technical Writing in an Engineering Curriculum" |
| 9:30-10:00 A.M.  | Preston White (ECET): "Preparing NSF Proposals: A Productive Strategy"   |
| 10:00-10:30 A.M. | Bob Harbort (CIST): "A Take-Home Final as a Framework for a Computer Science Journal"                                    |
| 10:30-10:45 A.M. | Coffee and Doughnut Break  |
| 10:45-11:15 A.M. | Carol Barnum (E & H) and Brad Young (IET): "IET Senior Project: Team Teaching Across the Curriculum"                     |
| 11:15-11:45 A.M. | Richard McGuire (IET): "Writing Applications in 'Methods' "  |
| 11:45-12:00 P.M. | Open Discussion: Closing comments  |

For those who signed up, lunch will follow from 12:00 - 1:00 P.M. in Ballroom A.