

WRITING

ACROSS

THE CURRICULUM

Volume IV, Number 2

MAY 1987

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM is published twice during the academic year by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee of the Southern College of Technology. Subscriptions are available upon request to interested individuals or institutions; a donation of \$5.00 is requested. Copies of back issues are available for \$2.50 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.

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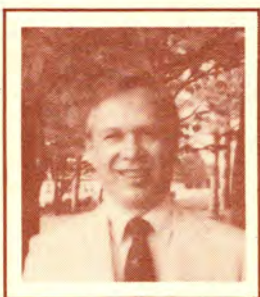
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EDITOR'S CORNER



By Robert C. Wess

Once again, thanks for your letters. They are most welcome. We will continue to publish selected letters of general interest or representative value.

Your response to our plea for financial support has been very gratifying. So far, a number of you have already sent in \$5.00 for this year's subscription, which we have been very happy to receive. Some have sent checks for \$20.00, requesting back issues from Volume 1, Number 1, which appeared in May 1984, through the current number. It's still not too late, by the way, to send in *your* 1986-87 subscription money.

In this issue Part Two of Jo-Ann M. Sipple's article on "The Four P's of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs That Last" discusses features of successful WAC programs. A second piece in this issue relating to the longevity of WAC programs is Kristine F. Anderson's "WAC Interview with Robert Jones, Michigan Tech." In the essay "Eleven Reasons Why Engineering Technology Students Should Improve Their Writing Skills," Jack J. Phillips, a graduate of Southern Tech, offers the practical voice of his twenty-years' industrial and business experience in emphasizing the role of written communication skills for the marketplace. Finally, Randall Popken presents a voice from the academy critiquing a new writing across the curriculum textbook.

We hope you find this issue stimulating to read; if possible, we encourage you to submit an essay of your own. One area which will be treated further in forthcoming issues concerns guidelines and practical, field-tested plans for using writing in specific courses across the curriculum. We have already received a number of such essays and hope to receive many more.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

Please place me on the WAC mailing list. I spent 5 years as a college English instructor and Writing Lab Coordinator. I am now working in another capacity—coordinating an Access Grant for handicapped students going on after high school, and I am still very much interested in "The Cause." (WAC, that is.)

Keep me informed!

Sincerely,
Cheryl Hofstetter Towns
Fort Hays State University
Hays, KS 67601

Dear Editor:

While visiting the Southern Tech campus, I noticed your brochures which are on display.

Please put me on the mailing list for both your "Interface" and "Writing Across the Curriculum" information.

Thanks,
Carolyn P. McCoy
Savannah Tech
5717 White Bluff Rd.
Savannah, GA 31499

Dear Editor:

I have been in higher education now for some fourteen years and have read innumerable publications, pamphlets, articles, digests, newsletters, etc., about many aspects of education and academia.

I must say, however, that your *WAC* Newsletter captures my interest and stimulation more than any other has. You have and continue to offer outstanding articles which are very informative and challenging for us in higher education who place great stock in developing and improving student communication skills, especially writing.

Given the national statistics about the poor to mediocre writing skills of today's youth in America, your newsletters are both timely and much needed. You provide a very useful service and a valuable resource for all of us.

I hope you continue your splendid work.

Sincerely,
Harold C. Minor
Department of Sociology
Sinclair Community College
Dayton, OH 45402

Dear Editor:

In case I haven't already done so, I want to be sure that you know my new mailing address for the newsletter.

Avon Murphy
Associate Professor Communications Department
Oregon Institute of Technology
Klamath Falls, OR 97601-8801

OIT is primarily a technological school, as its name suggests. And like so many technology people today, most of the faculty and administrators recognize the critical need for strong communication skills. Engineering students, for example, must take eight courses within our department. Although I've been on campus only a week now, I see full signs here that writing teachers and technology teachers often work together toward mutual communication goals.

Meanwhile, I find your publication most useful. Please let me know if you'd like us to write an article for you.

Yours,
Avon Murphy

Dear Editor:

I enjoy your *WAC* Newsletter so much that I would like to add my name to your mailing list; in fact, if at all possible send at least one extra copy and I will see that a new person gets a copy each time.

Sincerely,
Leo Scott Arnold
Language Arts Supervisor
Boone County Schools
69 Avenue B
Madison, WV 25130

Dear Editor:

Please add my name to the mailing list for *Writing Across the Curriculum* Newsletter. Since writing across the curriculum is high on our list of priorities, I was quite interested to find current useful information available on this topic.

Sincerely,
Lulie E. Felder
Department Head
Transitional English
Sumter Area Technological College
Sumter, SC 29150

Dear Editor:

After reviewing a copy of *Writing Across the Curriculum* which was received by my colleague, Dr. Walter Minot, I would like to receive future issues myself. You may address them to:

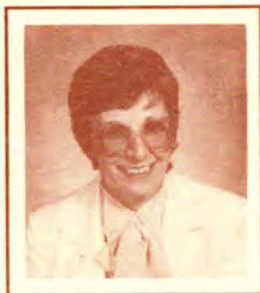
Dr. Virginia Polanski
English Department
Gannon University
Erie, PA 16541

Dear Editor:

I am writing in reference to the Newsletter *Writing Across the Curriculum*. I would like to request that we be placed on your mailing list for this publication if we may. I feel our students would benefit from this Newsletter. We do have Vol. 3, No. 2. Please forward any others when able.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Holly Hughes
Serials Section
Augusta College
Augusta, GA 30910

PROPOSING, PREPARING, AND PROTOTYPING: THREE P'S OF WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAMS THAT LAST



By Jo-Ann M. Sipple

What follows is Part Two of a two-part essay. Part One, which appeared in the December 1986 issue, dealt with "Planning: The First P of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs that Last." This essay deals with three other phases of successful programs.

Proposing

The next cycle of the 4 P's is proposing. It, too, like planning, is recursive because after the initial proposal by the institution's director or grant writer is submitted

to internal and external sources of funding, every institution finds itself proposing still more ways to extend, expand, or continue what was begun.

The most permanent way to begin a program from this perspective of proposing is to find external funding. The reality of an externally funded program, particularly if the monies are allocated for the support of the faculty who are front-line implementers, can drive the program to the point of institutionalization. External funding not only makes the administration of the institution happy but fortuitously encourages that administration to commit their own dollars when they see outside agencies willing to invest in their institution's intellectual life.

Again, if we look to those healthy writing across the curriculum programs that have not only survived but continue to expand and grow, we see that the successful ones found initial funding from external sources and returned with more external funds to expand the activities and research of the start-up programs. I am thinking here particularly of Elaine Maimon's program at Beaver College and Art Young's program at Michigan Technological University—the former initially funded by The National Endowment for the Humanities and the latter by General Motors Corporation.

Proposing is far more complex than my brief treatment suggests. However, successful proposing bears some recognizable earmarks. For example, an institution that makes intelligent proposals for funding, particularly external funding, has defined a distinguishing feature of its program. The process of discovering this feature takes place within the institution's context of its purpose for existence and through its invention of a particular writing across the curriculum program that satisfies its institutional needs. What the program administrator or grant writer needs to do is capitalize on the distinguishing trait to attract funds.

While proposing refers primarily to budgetary matters, affectionately known as funding the program, another aspect of proposing is politicking. And I mean that in a wholesome sense, if politics can be wholesome. That is, those committed to seeing a program come alive and continue to grow are committed to continuously propose new ways to make it happen as well as to be willing to adjust what already has transpired. Proposing, therefore, exists in a larger context than in external grant competition. Proposing refers to all the substantive suggestions in the spirit of public relations and good will that participants and support people associated with the program can muster.

Preparing

Preparing, the third of the recursive cycles in the 4 P's, requires orienting all people at the institution to the program before, during, and after implementation. Preparing is crucial to the program's effectiveness. After initial outside speakers visit a campus in the process of planning their writing across the curriculum programs (a practice used by most fledgling programs), the internal preparation must begin most comprehensively and intensively with the faculty. The nature of that preparation for faculty is largely dependent on the project administration's ability to look to and beyond English faculty in making writing across the curriculum happen.

Here it is necessary to look at several models of faculty seminars as well as the alternative of having no faculty seminars at all. The range of models moves from one end of the spectrum in which the typical seminars are

for English faculty who go about as crusaders, encouraging teachers in other disciplines to share their burden of teaching writing. This model of faculty seminars undermines not only the work of teachers in other disciplines but also the work of the English department, for it trivializes the teaching of writing and encourages "correctness" as the guiding principle of writing across the curriculum. This principle of correctness rather than one of write-to-learn becomes the driving force. This model also, by the way, gradually builds resentment among non-English faculty who interpret this as having to do the English department's job as well as their own (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1983).

An enlightened step away from this model on the spectrum is Elaine Maimon's at Beaver College. While this program clearly maintains English faculty as resources, her English faculty serve as "tag-team" partners of non-English faculty in all the arts and sciences of Beaver College, a liberal arts college. There, all faculty work toward better writing through both expressive and transactional writing assignments (Britton, 1970), even though the English department predominantly bears the burden of teaching the freshman writing courses designed to insist on writing in and about other disciplines in the arts and sciences.

At the other end of the spectrum is Art Young's model of faculty seminars at Michigan Technological University. There faculty in all disciplines perform genuinely collaborative work to maintain a now ten-year-old program whose purpose is to use writing to learn. As Art Young says in *Language Connections*,

Writing to learn is different. We write to ourselves as well as talk with others to objectify our perceptions of reality; the primary function of this "expressive" language is not to communicate, but to order and represent experience to our own understanding. In this sense language provides us with a unique way of knowing and becomes a tool for discovering, for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding. For many writers this kind of speculative writing takes place in notebooks and journals; often it is first-draft writing, necessary before more formal, finished writing can be done.... Language skills deserve more conscious attention from teachers in all academic disciplines,...and teachers who recognize the powerful role of these skills can help students increase their learning ability, improve their communication skills, and enhance their cognitive and emotional growth (Fulwiler & Young, 82)...

No matter which model of faculty seminars is embraced by any institution, the key to successful seminars is that they are extended over a period of time, offer intensive work to the participating faculty, and address the specific disciplinary goals of each participating faculty in every discipline.

Of course, there is always the alternative of no faculty seminars at all. But even in these situations, there is a need to enlist others, such as students or other staff members across disciplines. Tori Haring-Smith at Brown University, for example, has developed a Writing Fellows Program comprised of selected student peer readers across disciplines. While Haring-Smith does not conduct seminars for the faculty at Brown, she asks the faculty to suggest writing fellows whom she then trains to do the work of writing across the curriculum.

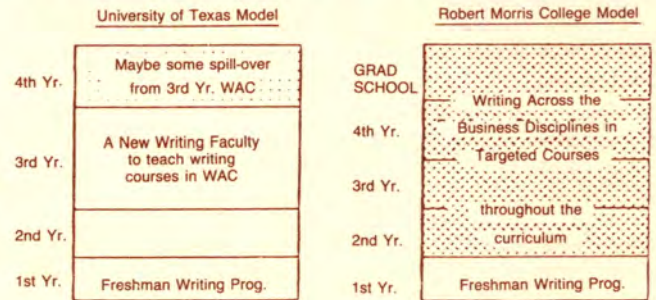
The question of faculty seminars, whether they are to be or not to be, determines the degree of penetration that writing-to-learn will have in the curriculum, as does the

nature of the seminars for the front-line implementers. Do faculty or students receive a set of possible write-to-learn techniques to determine which they will use and which they will not? Or do faculty look at the structures of their course designs to determine if and what write-to-learn activities will help students better achieve their course goals? The answer to the question of faculty seminars can make or break a program because these answers publicly avow the depth, responsibility, and authority of writing across the curriculum.

Prototyping

Prototyping, the fourth cycle in the 4 P's, sets a program apart from others. It is what constitutes model programs and insures their long-term maintenance. If any aspect of writing across the curriculum is replicable, the value of such a program has far-reaching effects beyond the interest of its home institution. The institution, in turn, has a vested interest in seeing the program's continuation and development, not only for its own sake but also for its contribution to the state of the art. There are representative prototypes of parts, if not of whole programs, that have influenced program development elsewhere.

By way of contrast, if one examines the Robert Morris College model in relation to, say, the University of Texas model, it is easy to see the distinctions between the two:



Instead of hiring and trying to maintain a writing faculty whose sole purpose is to *add on* a writing dimension to the curriculum, we have required faculty in all disciplines to *integrate fully* the write-to-learn strategies that will help their students become more proficient thinkers in their respective courses. Thus, the attack on student literacy problems is launched by every academic department by each faculty in discipline-specific ways. In practical terms, our model not only saves the institution the initial start-up cost of hiring a separate writing faculty, but the model is more likely to insure long-term continuation of the program. And, perhaps most importantly, the model requires faculty across the curriculum to insert in their courses appropriate write-to-learn strategies as indispensable thinking tools.

It is no accident that in the Robert Morris College program we have initially focused on faculty by working through a semester-long series of faculty seminars (those in the first cycle were conducted by Dr. Richard E. Young and me in Spring, 1985). There the first cycle of faculty learned the basic research principles of writing offered through educational research; they applied those principles to the design of their exemplary courses in our version of a college-wide writing program, "Writing Across the Business Disciplines." Specifically, faculty restated their courses and then developed numerous and varied writing activities that helped students achieve these goals.

If we examine the outcomes of our program, based on the data from our multiple-measure evaluation procedures, there is noticeable emphasis on student learning, faculty development, and evaluation designs:

1. Participating faculty change their conception, design, and use of writing in specific sources to help students achieve course goals.
2. Student writing and learning improve when students use fully integrated write-to-learn assignments.
3. Both student and faculty attitudes toward writing accommodate the multiple and various purposes of writing.
4. Faculty are developing new writing assignments that answer their discipline-specific goals and serve as useful interveners in the student learning process (one product already developed is a taxonomy of over 180 write-to-learn assignments).
5. The multiple-measure evaluation design is a model we can both extend for ourselves and offer to other institutions to emulate as they establish their versions of writing across the curriculum programs and seek an evaluation mechanism to verify their results.

One multiple-measure evaluation provides convincing evidence to faculty, many of whom are still strongly wedded to traditional methods of writing instruction, that our model of writing across the curriculum is authoritative and credible. Moreover, this evaluation evidence gives administrators the incentive and rationale to continue their programs. At Robert Morris College this multiple-measure evaluation procedure helped us strengthen the program itself and gave our administration the incentive to fund the continuation of the project.

Finally, we believe we have two distinctive features in our evaluation research: first, we are applying a method of data collection and analysis through protocol research (the subject for another essay). And second, while we are including well-known methods of experimental designs in evaluation (i.e., split samples of control and experimental groups of faculty and students), we are using this in context of a multiple-measure approach. In other words, we have a wealth of evaluation results to offer the skeptics. While the extent of our contributions to evaluation research of writing across the curriculum programs must undergo still more scrutiny, we welcome such activity as our contribution to a long-term effort in evaluation research.

Conclusion

The four cycles of planning, proposing, preparing, and prototyping (the 4 P's) are essential features of writing across the curriculum programs that last. From my own experience, I can only say that these cycles cannot occur too often. In fact, I have heard directors as well as evaluators of successful programs say that too often they do not occur at all. Art Young reports that only 10% of the scarcely 250 programs operating in the country today are predicted to survive because most programs ignore the 4 P's. Those of us eager to see writing across the curriculum programs last must address the real problem of survival: How can we prevent more shipwrecks?

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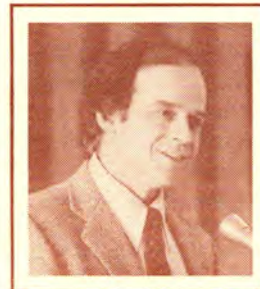
Jo-Ann M. Sipple has her Doctor of Arts Degree in English from Carnegie-Mellon University. The author of several textbooks, Dr. Sipple is Chair of the Department of Communications and Director of Writing Across the Business Disciplines at Robert Morris College.

WAC INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT JONES, MICHIGAN TECH



By Kristine F. Anderson

Robert Jones, Associate Professor of English, is on the faculty of Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan, where he teaches composition and technical writing. He has written numerous publications on writing across the curriculum and has worked as a consultant. He also serves as director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Michigan Tech.



Robert Jones

Q. Recent research indicates that many WAC programs only last a few years. What are the characteristics of a writing across the curriculum program that is effective and long lasting?

A. A long lasting writing across the curriculum program must have commitments from the English department as well as the administration and financial support, either from grants or from the institution. Money is especially

important because it buys release time for faculty to conduct regular faculty workshops and to hold follow-up activities which are necessary for any successful WAC program. You must also have an active group on campus who are willing to work over a long period of time. You can't have someone just sail in to do a campus workshop for four hours or a few days and then expect to put a WAC program into place.

Q. What makes the WAC program at Michigan Tech unique?

A. We have a group of faculty who are interested in writing as a professional activity. We are interested in working together in inter-disciplinary projects, and we are involved in a variety of collaborative activities. For example, I just finished a study with a professor in marketing to redesign a graduate course to emphasize reading and writing. Some of our other faculty have collaborated on writing in mathematics, civil engineering, biology, and the social sciences. At the same time, we are also committed to exploring the theoretical tenets of language.

Q. How did the curriculum program and environment at Michigan Tech influence the development of the WAC program?

A. The people who were first interested in starting a WAC program back in 1976 looked at the campus and faculty and students very carefully. We knew that the students' communication skills were not equal to their technical skills. We then looked for some kind of opening to determine how we could best enhance students' communication skills. Since we did not want to imply that the Humanities Department should, or even could, be responsible for the communication skills of our students, we believed that making student writing the responsibility of the entire university community was essential. Otherwise, students would continue to regard writing as something that was important only in composition classes. Finally, national publicity about the lack of communication skills among technical professionals convinced some people that the communication skills of all students had to be improved. In short, we were able to bring together the right combination of people and events to develop our program.

Q. How was your program first funded?

A. We received a five-year grant from General Motors for \$235,000. At the end of the five years, the Institution began funding our annual workshop with hard money.

Q. How can a campus maintain an effective WAC program?

A. Simply because you get a program established does not mean that the program will continue. There are, however, a number of ways to keep the program going. First, follow-up activities designed for previous workshop participants can be very helpful. People have a tendency

to come away from a WAC workshop with a lot of good ideas which then get lost in the shuffle. The leaders of a WAC program must look for ways to encourage their colleagues to use in the classroom what they have learned at the workshops.

Second, schedule follow-up workshops for experienced people. We have a follow-up workshop every fall.

Third, schedule workshops for new faculty. Our fall workshops generally attract between 50-75% of the new faculty each year. Less formal activities—having lunch with former workshop participants, sending an article to a colleague—can also be helpful.

Q. How can a campus evaluate the effectiveness of a WAC program?

A. It is difficult to evaluate WAC programs with quantitative measures or something clean that can be put on a form. The real test of an effective program is in the anecdotal information we get from faculty which focuses on how students' writing has improved and the feedback we get from students. Coordinators need to ask questions that lead to reflection, such as, "How did the writing you do help you in understanding concepts or material in the course?" And, "What kind of impact will writing have on your career?"

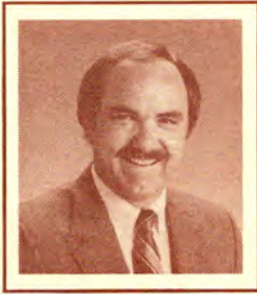
In part, the success of your program is determined by the message that faculty send to students. If students perceive that faculty regard writing as a critical component in the learning process, then students will respond positively. Really, then, the attitude of faculty is one important measure of your program's success.

Q. What direction do you see WAC programs taking in the future?

A. Virtually everything we read tells us that communication skills are becoming increasingly important for tomorrow's professionals, whether they are engineers, scientists, business people, or teachers. Additionally, the movement toward enhancing the general education of college graduates is becoming an increasingly strong one across the country. I would hope the impetus behind these two phenomena would help direct WAC programs in the future. As we learn more about the role of writing in learning, we can integrate that knowledge with what will be the writing requirements placed on professionals. We should, I think, continue to stress that kind of relationship.

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

ELEVEN REASONS WHY ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS SHOULD IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS



By Jack J. Phillips

The following article was originally presented as a talk to students of the Southern College of Technology on behalf of the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, May 23, 1985. Mr. Phillips drew on twenty years of managerial expertise in making his observations.

It is good to be back on campus after almost 20 years. The improvements you have made and the success of this institution are impressive. With an enrollment of almost 4,000 students, Southern Tech has become a prominent institution in Georgia and the South.

I applaud the efforts of the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee. It is an activity needed at every technical school and should help students improve writing skills and highlight the importance of writing in engineering and technical professions.

First, a commercial plug for my employer, Vulcan Materials Company, based in Birmingham, Alabama. It is the larger of the two Fortune 500 companies based in Alabama. We have three major product lines, and we are the world's largest producer of construction aggregates with some 140 facilities located in 12 states. Principal among those are 110 stone plants. Through our Chemicals Division we produce a diversified line of chemicals for industrial and agricultural uses. And through our Metals Division we recycle aluminum and detin steel scrap. I am in the Southern Division where I am responsible for Human Resources and Administration, which represents the Division's activities not logically fitted into operations, sales or finance, and accounting. I report to the Division President.

When I attended Southern Tech, I did not realize the importance of developing effective writing skills. I wish I had, for it would have made life a little easier for me in the early stages of my career. If I were to recommend two skills which you should develop and improve to the most effective level, they would be writing and speaking. All that technical ability you have developed on campus will be inhibited unless you learn to express yourself effectively. Writing is probably the best way to accomplish this objective, although speaking is almost as important. Throughout your career you will be required to let others know what you have done and report the results of your efforts. If you have a difficult time with this, it will reflect on your career advancement.

The reasons presented here are based primarily on my experiences, although there is some input from others who have conducted research and studies in this important area. In the last ten years I have taken writing more seriously than most executives. (I have written two books, over 60 articles, and other miscellaneous publications.) Although other executives do not actively write on a professional basis, they evaluate their subordinates' writing carefully, and it usually reflects on the advancement of those subordinates.

The main point I want to emphasize is that *now* is the time to develop and improve skills. It will become more difficult to develop these skills later, although many organizations offer writing improvement training programs and seminars for their employees. Once you are on the job, there are so many activities competing for your time that you will find it difficult to learn how to write more effectively.

I will use the term effective writing throughout this presentation. This refers to writing that is clear, concise, gets to the point quickly, flows well, holds the attention of the reader, and is free of jargon and unnecessarily long words. Effective writing is developed and is written for the reader to understand rather than for the writer to show his or her importance or intelligence.

Among the eleven reasons, the first two are principally related to your work in school. I will not spend much time on these since I prefer to concentrate on what it will mean to you later, as you enter your full-time professional work.

Reason No. 1: Effective Writing Improves Grades While in School. This is obvious. You know it and your professors know it. Your writing on exams, reports, and projects enhances your grade. Conversely, poorly written papers will reflect unfavorably on your grade for the paper and the course. I have had the opportunity to teach at several universities; and in each course I teach, I evaluate students, at least partially, on their writing ability: their ability to express themselves clearly, succinctly, and effectively. I am sure each of you can remember a grade on a project or report which was based partially on how it was presented. This is an important aspect that makes your writing improvement worthwhile...now.

Reason No. 2: Effective Writing Aids Learning and Thinking on Subjects, Concepts, and Issues. Although most educators, professionals, and executives seem to know this, there has been little research to support it. The December issue of *Writing Across the Curriculum* contained an interesting article by JoAnn Kurfiss entitled, "Do Students Really Learn From Writing?" This article presented evidence which supports the proposition that writing does indeed enhance learning and thinking.

Writing forces you to develop thoughts and ideas and to connect them in a logical process. Writing for wide scale distribution, particularly for professional publications, further enhances the learning process. An engineer, technician, or scientist who writes for a professional journal must research the subject or issue thoroughly and know more about it than most professionals. Otherwise,

your writing will be subjected to the scrutiny of peers and colleagues and will be criticized or ridiculed for lack of thoroughness and expertise.

Reason No. 3: Effective Writing Improves Your Chances of Landing the Best Job Opportunity. I have been involved in college recruiting programs for four major companies, three of them on the Fortune 500 list. I have seen applicants rejected because of their writing ability, and I have seen applicants accepted because of their writing ability. Newly recruited technicians, engineers, and other professionals must know how to write memos, reports, specifications, standards, and other essential on-the-job communications.

For those of you heading to management training positions, written communication skills are important criteria for selecting individuals. The assessment center process, which is used to select candidates for first level supervision, has written communication skills as one of the dimensions critical to job success.

Many recruiters are now asking for samples of senior projects which not only demonstrate a grasp of the technical knowledge but also show the ability of students to express themselves in an effective manner. We recently recruited a civil engineering technology graduate and required a copy of his senior project as supporting evidence of his ability to express himself clearly and to manage a responsible engineering project.

Reason No. 4: Effective Writing Helps You Advance on Your Job and in Your Company. I have seen this too many times. Exceptional writing ability has enhanced career advancement, while poor or ineffective writing skills have kept individuals from being promoted. Written communication skills are highly visible, just as are oral presentation skills. Effective writing can truly be an asset in advancement, particularly in jobs where writing is a significant part of the job duties. Recently, an office manager at one of our locations was interested in advancement in the sales and marketing area. He was being seriously considered for possible promotion until he sent a memo to me and other members of the executive staff inviting us to a social function at his plant. The memo was poorly written, with several grammatical and spelling errors. That memo caused us to remove this individual from possible consideration for advancement, at least in the near term.

Reason No. 5: Effective Writing Allows you to Make a Contribution to Your Professional Field. It is important to let others, either in your own organization or in your professional field, know about your work and the progress you have made. Your writing in reports, professional papers, and professional evaluations reflects your knowledge, skills, ability, and to a certain extent, your personality. Writing is a principal way to let others know about your research and progress.

Reason No. 6: Effective Writing Increases the Likelihood of Acceptance Into Your Choice of Graduate School. Many of you will continue your education and pursue a graduate degree. An MBA is a likely choice for most of you, since a combination of a

technical undergraduate degree and an MBA degree is still an unbeatable combination. This may come as a surprise to you, but graduate schools are placing increased emphasis on written skills in their admission criteria. Last year, for example, Harvard University dropped the requirement for the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) as part of its admissions' criteria. It substituted three essays on the application form, along with additional interviews. In essence, Harvard, as well as other prestigious business schools, is shifting to soft data in its admissions' criteria, instead of relying merely on exam scores.

Reason No. 7: Effective Writing Enhances Your Professional Growth and Development. As you move to full-time professional employment, you will continue to grow and develop in your job and in your field. You will learn much about your employer, increase your knowledge of your technical specialty, and develop interpersonal skills. Effective writing skills can enhance your professional growth by allowing others to know the extent of what you have learned in your profession. They may be the primary vehicle for letting others know what you have accomplished. Effective writing is recognizable by your superiors and other professionals in the field. Unfortunately, ineffective writing is just as recognizable. Ask any executive the names of subordinates who are considered to be excellent writers, and the names will be readily furnished. Ask the same question about the ineffective writers, and you get an equally quick response.

For other important skills, it may be more difficult for an executive to respond to this question. For example, if asked which employees are the best decision makers, executives may have difficulty separating the best from the worst. Making decisions, although it may be just as important as effective writing, is less tangible and noticeable than writing style. The Safety and Health Manager for one of our divisions has established an excellent reputation among professionals and executives in our company. Although he may not be any more effective than other safety managers, his expertise is recognized because he writes a monthly safety column for a trade magazine in our industry, *Pit and Quarry*. This additional exposure enhances his professional growth and development.

Reason No. 8: Effective Writing Lets Others Know How You Stand on Issues. Frequently, you will be asked to provide your opinion on items connected with your work. Your opinions are needed, and when you respond in notes, memos, letters or reports, these responses provide you an opportunity to let others know your position. Your writing, when it is effective, will remove any doubt about where you stand on an issue.

Reason No. 9: Effective Writing Fulfills Self-Esteem Needs. According to Maslow and others, we have a hierarchy of needs, with self esteem being near the top. We need to have our egos stroked, and occasionally we need to have our self esteem raised. Seeing our thoughts, ideas, and findings in print builds the ego and is the best way that I know to raise self esteem. I have seen engineers complimented on how they have

prepared and presented information almost to the extreme of disregarding the content. Effective, clear presentation can even overshadow content areas that may otherwise be questionable. On the other hand, the greatest ideas, concepts, and subjects will be misunderstood or underestimated if they are presented in an ineffective manner.

Reason No. 10: Effective Writing Gains Acceptance of Peers. When a new technician, engineer, or other professional person enters a group, he or she will be evaluated by the peer group in that area. They will observe work habits, attitudes, and work output. One important way in which these new recruits are evaluated is on how they express themselves in their work. Effective writing builds credibility and respect while ineffective writing destroys credibility and respect. Good, clear writing lets others know of your skills, knowledge, and attitude. It is the best way to gain acceptance of peers, and their support may be necessary for you to become a contributing member of the work group.

Reason No. 11: Effective Writing Minimizes Problems and Confusion. Last, but not least, are the problems resulting from poor communication. Few things are as embarrassing or inefficient as misunderstood communication. Whether it is a misunderstanding of your idea, a misstatement of your results, an incorrect instruction, or a confused conclusion, they all create problems for both the sender and the receiver. Clear, concise writing can help minimize these problems and ensure that the message is received properly.

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REVIEW OF ACADEMIC WRITING: WORKING WITH SOURCES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Mary Lynch Kennedy and Hadley Smith. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1986.



By Randall Popken

The following essay provides critical background for and critique of the text under review.

Many of the new introductory rhetoric textbooks I get in the mail are both unoriginal and uninformed. Although their language, arrangement, and packaging may differ somewhat, many of them share one basic (incorrect) assumption: that by teaching students rhetorical principles centering on the so-called "college essay" or "college theme," we can teach students to write well for any time, any place. The writers of these books seem to be completely unaware that these basic assumptions are called into question by contemporary writing theory; that is, as a number of theorists have pointed out, writing (as all language) is tied to social contexts: what is "good writing" in one situation may not be so in another. Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami (1982, p. 213), for instance, found some notable difference for acceptable syntax and cohesion in two different memo-types written by administrators in a social services agency. It follows, then, that learning how to "write well" in one context does not necessarily mean that one can write well in others, as work by James Rushton and George Young (1974, p. 186) has shown.

Critics have recently been pointing to problems with "college theme-" based courses and the textbooks used for them, particularly if the goal of the course is to teach students to write across the disciplines. For instance, Elaine Maimon (1983, p. 117) suggests that "the theme as it is usually taught is a genre that exists nowhere outside the composition classroom, though we often claim that writing themes will help students in all their assignments across the disciplines." Alan Purves (1986, p. 44) is concerned that (in the hands of many English teachers) the college theme is more often than not a personal essay, a form that has no transfer to contexts outside composition class: "I can think of no other university subject in which the form would be appropriate as a scholarly exercise."

Course Design

As an outgrowth of such dissatisfaction, writing courses are now being designed that focus more narrowly on teaching students rhetorical principles applicable to a "target context." The most popular target for freshman level writing classes, of course, is "academic writing"--the ideal, in other words, is to recreate situations and expectations resembling those in courses through the curriculum. In much of *Errors and Expectations*, Mina Shaughnessy argued eloquently that this approach be taken in developmental writing courses. More recently, among several others, Pat Bizzell (1982, p. 191) argues that academic writing is what the beginning composition course should be about as well.

As Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (1985, p. 203) have shown, two main approaches can be taken to such a freshman level writing across the curriculum (academic writing) course. The first approach divides the whole of academic writing into the writing of different discourse communities: writing for the humanities, writing for the social sciences, writing for the natural sciences, and so on. The second approach unifies rather than divides: it is a generic academic writing course in which students learn a rhetoric not specific to any one academic area but applicable to them all, especially at the introductory

course level. Often such generic courses are followed by discipline-specific writing courses for students to take when they are upperclassmen. This second main approach is more controversial among theorists than the first because generic academic writing courses are very hard to design. As has been pointed out repeatedly (e.g., see Rose, 1979; Long, 1984), there are great differences among disciplines over what good writing is. Blending these differences into one composition course is quite a task.

Designing such a course—and a textbook for it—is made difficult, too, by the fact that not much is really known about academic writing. Although scientific writing has been the object of study for years, it was only recently that scholars began to examine writing in other areas as well. Both Nancy Arapoff-Cramer (1971) and Brent Bridgman and Sybil Carlson (1984) have studied variations in writing assignments in various academic disciplines. Anne Herrington (1985) has studied how written acceptability criteria can differ even between different sections of the same class taught by different professors. Other academic writing scholars have investigated still other aspects of academic writing, following Shaughnessy's (1980, p. 102) call for a taxonomy of academic discourse: syntactic patterns (Broadhead *et al.*, 1982); rhetorical "ethos" (Bizzell, 1978), problem-definition (MacDonald, 1985), explicitness (MacDonald, 1986), conceptual patterns (Peterson, 1984), and paragraph form and function (Popken, 1984). But conclusions that can be made from this research are limited: after all, the research has not followed a comprehensive program for mapping the universe of academic discourse, and it has only scratched the surface anyway.

Cross-Curricular Literacy

It is not surprising, then, that textbooks written specifically for this sort of writing across the curriculum course have been few in number. The two most noteworthy until now have been Charles Bazerman's *The Informed Writer* (1981) and Irvin Hashimoto, Barry Kroll, and John Shafer's *Strategies for Academic Writing* (1982). The latest—and best—of the books designed for this sort of course is the recently-published *Academic Writing: Working with Sources Across the Curriculum*, by Mary Lynch Kennedy and Hadley Smith. To cope with the problem of writing a book that can cover writing for all disciplines, Kennedy and Smith largely avoid formal and stylistic matters, such as where to put a title or whether to double or single space; these are left for individual disciplines and teachers. Instead, Kennedy and Smith base their book on three more general common denominators which they see as being inherent in academic writing tasks their students are likely to encounter.

The first of these common denominators is the nearly universal academic activity of writing in response to texts. A major emphasis of *Academic Writing* is to teach students how to read academic texts, and, then, how to turn reading responses into writing. As Kennedy and Smith see it, in order to write a summary (for instance),

a student must be able to read for main ideas; accordingly, Kennedy and Smith teach students how to pull apart sentences into their kernels, how to read for certain scripts (contrast, etc.), how to search out cohesive links, and so on. Further, they teach more advanced reading skills as the book progresses; in doing analytical papers, for instance, students are taught how to read texts for authors' assumptions.

The second cross-disciplinary common denominator used by Kennedy and Smith in *Academic Writing* is something that might best be called "discourse function" (my term, not theirs). That is, the book is structured around six basic functions which Kennedy and Smith find in college writing. Four of these academic discourse functions are fairly common, even in some theme-rhetorics: paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, researching. However, Kennedy and Smith treat these four in greater detail and give them much greater significance than one finds anywhere else. For instance, although a paraphrase involves repeating (in one's own words) the content of another text, Kennedy and Smith also see it operating more broadly in writing tasks such as required in the following writing task from a psychology class: "Compare and contrast the theories of Freud, Jung, and Horney. Summarize the theories and explain how psychotherapists use them today" (p. 15).

In addition to these four common functions are two especially unique ones that make up the center section of *Academic Writing*: "reacting" and "reviewing." According to Kennedy and Smith, when writers react to a text, they make connections between "the author's ideas about a given topic and [their own] preexisting knowledge about that topic" (p. 89). That is, a suitable academic reaction involves connecting a text (or an idea) to a writer's personal experiences, to the experiences of someone the writer knows, or to details from what the writer has read or heard. But reacting is not, at least in academic settings, mere opinion since the focus is always on the text. The reacting function is inherent in an essay exam question given me recently by a history colleague: "Comment on this statement by Randolph Bourne: 'War is essentially the health of the state.'" Reviewing, according to Kennedy and Smith's definition, is a much different function than reacting. Rather than using a text or ideas as a springboard, when writers review they analyze a text or idea in some way—to examine assumptions it makes, to apply a set of heuristics to it (as one might do with a research model), to interpret it, and so on. Reviewing is inherent in an exam question shared with me by a friend in philosophy: "Using as your basis Creel's general definition of religion, evaluate the adequacy of Martin Buber's analysis of the 'moment of revelation.'"

Some of these six functions can, of course, be genres themselves; for instance, a writing assignment might be entirely a summary. But more important for the carryover value that Kennedy and Smith are trying to achieve is the fact that the six functions are usually combined and mapped onto genres such as essays and reports of various types. Thus, in doing a lab report, a biology student might summarize the results of an experiment and then analyze (review) the data; in introducing the report, the student may well have quoted and paraphrased as well.

Writing Process

The third academic common denominator Kennedy and Smith teach students is the process of writing in academic settings. They use a Flower and Hayes-influenced planning/writing/revising model throughout the book. It is important, however, that Kennedy and Smith do not say that learning a single process—mastering a certain set of process strategies—can apply to all six functions. Instead, they build on different strategies for each function; therefore, when students learn to paraphrase, they learn to plan, write, and revise with somewhat different concerns than when they learn to react and review. Kennedy and Smith's decision to write the book this way is noteworthy, especially in light of increasing suspicions (see Witte, 1985) over the task-specific nature of the writing process.

To me, the most impressive feature of *Academic Writing* is how *original* it is. In contrast to many prescriptive theme-rhetorics, Kennedy and Smith are extremely honest with students as to the facts of college writing situations—even to the point of making frequent disclaimers to help students assess the shifting nature of academic contexts. For instance, in the course of teaching students to react, Kennedy and Smith admit that “reactions are not always appropriate in academic assignments. Some professors may structure assignments specifically to avoid student reactions. Other professors may impose constraints on what is appropriate in a reaction” (p. 91). *Academic Writing* is also different from almost any rhetoric I have seen in that it doesn't cram the thesis-essay down students' throats as the be-all-and-end-all of academic writing. Kennedy and Smith know that, while the thesis paper may be valuable to write, thesis statements are not necessary (or even possible) in all writing tasks. Another aspect of the originality of *Academic Writing* is that throughout it includes exercises, questions, and assignments that are taken from actual academic tasks—in other words, in contrast to the situation in many rhetorics, students are not given personal writing tasks (e.g., “my first date”) in an attempt to teach them to write academically. Further, the handling of quoted material in *Academic Writing* goes beyond any I have ever seen in a writing textbook; while so often the emphasis is on where to place quotation marks, Kennedy and Smith focus on what Mina Shaughnessy called the “carpentry” of fitting quotations into one's own text and on the rationale for using quoted material.

Flaws

Naturally, a book as experimental as is this one is not without some flaws. For instance, Kennedy and Smith overlook entirely the essay examination, which in the academic careers of most students constitutes a major writing experience—a distinct context which demands its own processes and writing strategies. Further, the research section of *Academic Writing* is a little disappointing too, especially given the original quality of the rest of the book. Despite what Arapoff-Cramer (1971) found years ago about the abundance of non-thesis research papers being assigned in writing courses, Kennedy and Smith use a thesis paper as their only model

(pp. 229-33). Also, Kennedy and Smith's taxonomy of discourse functions in *Academic Writing* isn't as all-inclusive as it might be: for instance, it doesn't seem to cover describing a process, a very common function for students in the early phases of engineering programs.

But many of these are only flaws because we know so little about writing in academia. The more that research uncovers about writing across the disciplines, the better our academic rhetoric textbooks will be. As it is, Kennedy and Smith's little book may well stand as a very important contribution to writing across the curriculum instruction.

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WAC NEWSLETTER
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If you would like more information about attending the conference, write or call Professor Marie J. Secor, Conference Director, Department of English, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802. Phone: (814) 865-9155.