

# Annotated Bibliography of Research on Writing in the Disciplines

## National Research

### *Longitudinal Studies of College Writing*

- Caroll, L. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Herrington, A., & Curtis, M. (2000) *Persons in process: Four stories of writing and personal development in college*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Sternglass, Marilyn. (1997). *Time to know them: a longitudinal study of writing and learning at the college level*. Mahwah, N.J. : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

The authors of these three longitudinal studies of college student writing from freshman to senior year came to similar conclusion regarding writing in the disciplines based on their research: writing and thinking is discipline-specific, even good writers regress when they are initiated into ways of thinking and writing of their discipline, and writing skills atrophy if students do not get writing-rich instruction in the upper division.

### *Case Studies of Writing across Disciplines*

- McCarthy, L. (1987). A stranger in strange lands: A college student writing across the curriculum. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 21.3, 233-264.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walvoord, B., & McCarthy, L. (1991). *Thinking and writing in college: a naturalistic study of students in four disciplines*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Results of case study research show that writing purposes and conventions vary dramatically from discipline to discipline, and that students benefit from instructor response that is discipline-specific. The case study research also shows that learning disciplinary genres is especially difficult for students as they enter their major, and requires significant practice and feedback during the writing process.

### *Research on Workplace Writing*

- Odell, L (Ed). (1985). *Writing in nonacademic settings*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Spilka, R. (Ed.). (1993). *Writing in the workplace: New research perspectives*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press.

Collections of workplace writing research, including surveys and ethnographic studies. Studies of workplace writing reveal a number of patterns: employees spend a significant amount of their time at work writing, writing is critical to advancement, and there are a variety of workplace genres. Employees report that they felt the college curriculum did not do enough to prepare them for these discipline-specific genres and conventions.

## *Research on Writing and Class Size*

Astin, A.W. (1993). *What matters in college?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McKeachie, W.J. (1980). Class size, large classes, and multiple sections. *Academe*, 66, 24-27.

Pascarella, E.T., & Terenzini, P.T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Studies of student learning which show that increasing class size has a negative effect on student writing and learning and decreases the amount of writing students do and the amount of feedback they receive on their writing.

## **Campus Research**

### *2002 Faculty Writing Survey*

Survey of 252 CSUS faculty from across disciplines. 78% of faculty surveyed report that student writing is an “extremely important” outcome and 69% say quality of student writing was an item of programmatic concern for their department, but 58% say large class enrollment is a challenge for incorporating writing assignments in their classes.

### *1997 WASC Self-Study Survey of CSUS Alumni*

A survey of 291 alumni reports that “although the performance of most majors in ‘providing a broad knowledge of theories and principles’ was superior (84% positive), its performance in providing ‘preparation for a future occupation’ was much less satisfactory (46% positive).” Most respondents were employed in jobs highly related to their degree (59%); only 14 percent reported that their degrees and jobs were unrelated.

### *2004/2005 Writing Across the Curriculum Survey of Alumni Writing*

Pilot survey of 40 alumni from across disciplines who are now working in Sacramento. Alumni reported that writing ability was critical for job retention and promotion, and that more practice in writing in their major would have been helpful, especially in “technical” fields.

### *2003 OIR Student Achievement Study*

Survey of faculty and students in 40 sections of upper-division capstone courses across disciplines. The survey asked questions about writing, reading, technology, and amount of study time in upper-division courses. The survey found “students are only occasionally given writing assignments that might challenge them to use a range of learning strategies. The most frequently assigned writing tasks are the writing of short answer questions on exams and quizzes and the writing of essays in response to test questions.” Students reported spending little study time on drafting and revising essays for upper-division courses, and the data “paints a portrait of a student body that is routinely asked to demonstrate their knowledge through writing responses on tests rather than developing reports, essays, or articles to synthesize and integrate information in the service of an argument.”