



WAC NEWS AND EVENTS

Campus-wide Workshops

Creating Plagiarism-Proof Writing Assignments

WHEN:

12:00-1:15,

Tuesday, October 10

WHERE:

Foothill Suite, University Union

TO RSVP

please contact Dan Melzer at melzer@csus.edu or 278-6925.

Thesis Writing Workshop

Writing Across the Curriculum and Graduate Studies present a thesis-writing workshop for graduate students across disciplines.

WHEN:

4:00-5:15, Friday, October 6

WHERE:

Auburn Room, University Union

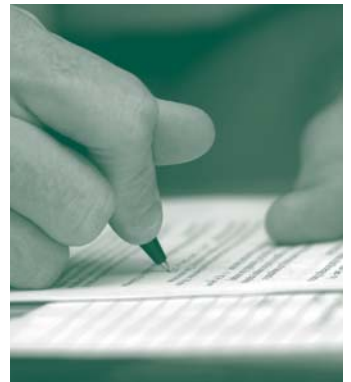
STUDENTS CAN RSVP

by sending an email to wac@csus.edu or contacting Dan Melzer at 278-6925.

Faculty Senate Approves Changes to the Comprehensive Writing Program

In Spring 2006, the Faculty Senate voted for some major changes—and major improvements—in the Comprehensive Writing Program. As a result of a 2005 Faculty Senate Retreat break-out session on writing, the Subcommittee for Writing and Reading was charged with reviewing the Comprehensive Writing Program policies with a special consideration for:

- stricter sequencing of writing requirements
- improvements to the GVAR (Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement)
- infusing writing more broadly across the curriculum



The Subcommittee for Writing and Reading is made up of faculty from across colleges, the University Reading and Writing Coordinator, the GVAR Coordinator, the Learning Skills Coordinator, the English Department Writing Programs Coordinator, and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. An executive summary of the Subcommittee's recommendations can be found on the Senate website at http://www.csus.edu/acse/Comprehensive_Writing_Executive_Summary.pdf.

Some of the recommendations approved by the Senate include:

- Adopting a university-wide, writing across disciplines-focused handbook
- Shifting the focus of English 20 to an introduction to writing and researching across disciplines
- Designating a writing-rich course (the Writing Intensive course) as satisfying the GVAR rather than a single timed test (the WPE).
- Creating more adjunct tutoring for underprepared students at the points of entry into Sacramento State (the freshman and junior years).

The final recommendation by the Subcommittee for Writing and Reading, which is to infuse writing more broadly across the curriculum and create a more logical sequence of writing requirements by shifting the Writing Intensive course to a student's upper-division field of study, will be considered by the Senate this fall.

For an executive summary of the changes to the Comprehensive Writing Program, go to http://www.csus.edu/acse/Comprehensive_Writing_Executive_Summary.pdf.

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SACRAMENTO STATE

Leadership begins here.

To find out more about the WAC program or to schedule a consultation, contact Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at melzer@csus.edu or 278-6925.

Teaching the Research Paper

By Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator

In spring 2006, Writing Across the Curriculum presented the campus-wide workshop “Teaching the Research Paper.” The following advice for assigning research papers is from the workshop.

Teaching the Research Process

Studies of student writers have shown that all too often students will write papers at the last minute and engage in a minimal writing process, and this is even true of research papers. If you want students to engage deeply with primary and secondary sources, and to think through their research in an extended writing process, it’s important to build a research and writing process into your research paper assignments. Following is some advice for teaching the research paper as a process:

Ask for a research proposal or prospectus.

Giving feedback early in the research process will help prevent students from going off the assignment topic or taking on research subjects that are too broad or too narrow. You could give a response to proposals or ask students to present them in class.

Example research proposal questions:

- Why did you choose your topic?
- What do you already know and think about your topic?
- What are some key terms that you might need to define?
- What audiences are interested in this topic?
- What kind of information from research do you think you will need?
- What kind of sources would be credible for these audiences?
- What kinds of research methods would be appropriate?

Ask for an annotated bibliography or a review of the literature.

Asking students to summarize and respond to research as part of the process encourages them to work to understand

and engage with the research, and not just cut and paste quotes in a “collage of sources.”

Use shorter, informal writing as a way for students to explore their research paper topic.

Low-stakes, exploratory writing (like journals or WebCT discussion board posts) are places for students to test ideas and arguments they might use in their research paper.

Respond to a rough draft and/or ask peers to respond to a draft.

Responding to drafts emphasizes to students that writing is a process. Peer response, either inside or outside of class, is a way to intervene in the writing process without burdening the instructor, and it has the added benefit of helping students gain a better understanding of the assignments by seeing and commenting on what others have written.

Encourage students to take a rough draft to the Writing Center.

The Writing Center, in 128 CLV, offers free one-on-one help with coming up with topics, developing and organizing papers, and improving editing skills.



Reza Peigahi discusses research papers and the library at the WAC workshop.



Assign a sequence of smaller assignments rather than one large paper.

For example, you could assign an annotated bibliography, a literature review, a case study, and an editorial based on the case study and literature review.

Alternatives to the Traditional “Term Paper”

Students come to us with a lot of baggage when it comes to research papers. Many students associate the research paper with a basic report that requires mere regurgitation of information. To get students to engage in true academic inquiry and critical thinking, consider one of the following options for an alternative to the old-fashioned term paper:

Service learning projects.

Service learning projects help motivate students to write by presenting them with a purpose, audience, and genre for writing. Visit the website of the Office of Community Collaboration for more information about service learning (<http://www.csus.edu/occ/>).

Rhetorical situations.

Presenting students with a rhetorical situation can discourage plagiarism and avoid the lack of motivation inherent in the typical term paper scenario, where the student is writing merely to inform the teacher, who is already an expert on the topic. Try designing research projects that present students with a recognizable genre, a role to play as writers beyond just “student,” and an audience beyond just the instructor. Here are some example prompts for a research paper about Wal-Mart:

- A proposal is going to get a hearing before the Sacramento City Council to bring a new Wal-Mart to Westfield Plaza. You’re a member of a business consulting firm that’s been hired by the City Council to write a 10-12 page report for City Council members outlining the pros and cons of a new Wal-Mart and your recommendations.

- Wal-Mart is currently being sued for discriminatory hiring practices. Research the case and write a written argument for the prosecution or for the defense. You will need to rebut opposing arguments. I will role-play the judge in the case when I read your arguments.
- We will have a class debate on whether or not Wal-Mart is positive for the Sacramento community. In preparation for the debate, you will need to write a five-page argument that includes research from articles in the *Sacramento Bee*, movies and books about Wal-Mart, and at least one interview with a Wal-Mart employee.

Disciplinary and professional research genres.

Using the research genres of your discipline can help introduce students to the ways of writing and thinking of your field and also provide more motivation to write, especially if these genres connect to future workplace writing. Research genres from across disciplines include:

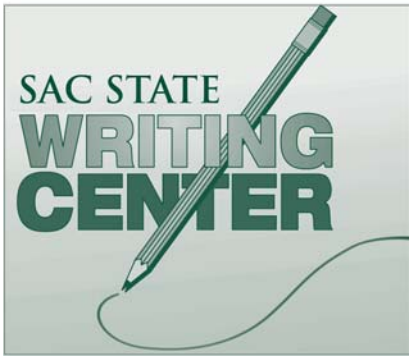
- ethnographies, case studies, experimental reports, literature reviews, field journals, feasibility reports, business plans, biographies, usability reports, progress reports, speeches, blogs, editorials, feature news articles, press releases, proposals, conference papers, magazine articles, exhibition catalogs, commonplace books, conference posters, journal articles

Class or group research projects.

Research projects that ask the entire class to work together or for students to work in small groups can create a better sense of the classroom as a community of writers and researchers as well as prepare students for workplace writing, which is often collaborative.

Examples of class research projects:

- A class website about a content-area issue
- A class magazine, journal, or book on a content-area theme
- A class blog focused on a content-area debate
- An in-class debate with students role-playing different stakeholders or theorists



A PAGE FROM THE WRITING CENTER

Carrot on a Stick — Getting Students to Visit the Writing Center

By Jason Schilling, Writing Center tutor

The fall 2006 semester is in full gear, and many students are tackling important writing assignments that are coming due. As an instructor at Sacramento State, you should be aware of what a valuable resource the Writing Center is, and that its services are available to all students on campus. Located in Calaveras Hall room 128, the Writing Center provides free tutoring for your students who may need some help with their papers.

Of course, telling your students that this resource is available is a great thing to do. However, many students may feel a little intimidated or unsure about actually coming into the Center, especially if they are not sure what it can do for them. Here are some tips for getting your students to venture into the Writing Center and see for themselves exactly how useful tutoring can be.

• **Put it in your syllabus**

Students understand that their syllabus is important. When you add information in your syllabus about how the Writing Center may be a necessary tool that they should take advantage of BEFORE they turn in important writing assignments, they will be more prone to doing so.

• **Give your students extra credit.**

Nothing motivates students more than extra credit, and giving them extra credit for coming into the Writing Center will introduce them to how tutoring works while at the same time providing them with valuable tools that they can use to improve their writing skills.

• **Arrange a brief tutor visit**

You don't have to do all the work. Arrange with the Writing Center coordinator, Dr. Cheryl Smith, to have a knowledgeable tutor visit your classroom for a brief 5 minute presentation explaining what the Writing Center can do for your students. Students' questions can be answered and a flyer can

be distributed detailing how the center works, hours, location, etc. Call the Writing Center at 278-6356 to arrange a visit.

• **Attach a form to the assignment**

If you encourage a student to come to the Writing Center, it might be useful for you to attach a form with your comments on exactly what you want the student to work on. Organization? Idea development? Sentence structure? The student may not be sure where they need the most help with their writing, but you know. Let us know.

• **Constantly reinforce the value of the Writing Center!**

Every time that you hand out a writing assignment, remind students to seek assistance from the Writing Center. Put it, in bold type, on the bottom of the page of the prompt. This will reinforce how much YOU value the Center and will instill in your students the importance of using this resource.

These are just some tips on how to encourage your students to seek out the Writing Center. It is a win-win for everyone when students use this powerful resource. They will learn important writing skills such as prewriting, formulating ideas, and organizing and structuring their papers so as to write more clearly. You will receive papers from your students that show a marked improvement in their writing and the relief of knowing that you are not alone in helping provide students with the skills that they will need to write better paper.

SACRAMENTO STATE WRITING CENTER

Calaveras 128

278-6356

writingcenter@csus.edu

DIRECTOR

Professor Cheryl Smith