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WAC NEWS AND EVENTS

SEEKING FACULTY READERS

The success of the Writing Proficiency Examination program in evaluating the writing of about 12,000 students each year as part of the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement relies on the participation of faculty from all departments in the University as paid readers. We're inviting all interested faculty to work with us scoring the WPE. Readers earn a minimum of \$210 for a full day of reading. Full training is provided.

For further information, or to sign up for training, please contact Fiona Glade, GEAR Coordinator, at fiona.glade@csus.edu.

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Writing Across the Curriculum Resources for Faculty and Departments

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) provides faculty and departments a variety of resources for the teaching of reading and writing. Contact **Dan Melzer** at (916) 278-6925 or melzer@csus.edu to take advantage of the following resources:

WAC Resources for Faculty

One-one-one consultations. Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, is available to meet with individual faculty to help with designing reading and writing assignments, responding to student writing, managing the paper load, etc.

Campus-wide workshops. Visit the WAC website at www.csus.edu/wac for information about upcoming workshops on topics such as designing successful writing assignments, responding to student writing, creating more effective reading assignments, etc.

Library of reading and writing resources. WAC maintains a library of books on topics such as responding to writing, designing writing assessment, writing in specific disciplines, etc.

Faculty development retreat. Each fall semester, the Monday before classes begin, WAC hosts an all-day faculty retreat for the teaching of reading and writing across disciplines. Visit the WAC website in the spring for information about the retreat.

WAC Resources for Departments

Consultations. Dan Melzer is available to consult with departments on designing writing assessment, improving reading and writing curriculum, designing writing-intensive courses, etc.

Workshops. WAC can design a workshop or series of workshops to address specific reading and writing issues in your department.

Writing tutors. Through the Tutoring in the Disciplines program, WAC provides on-site tutoring for departments and colleges. WAC splits the costs of tutoring with the department or college and provides a tutor or trains a tutor provided by the department.



PHOTO BY SAM PARSONS



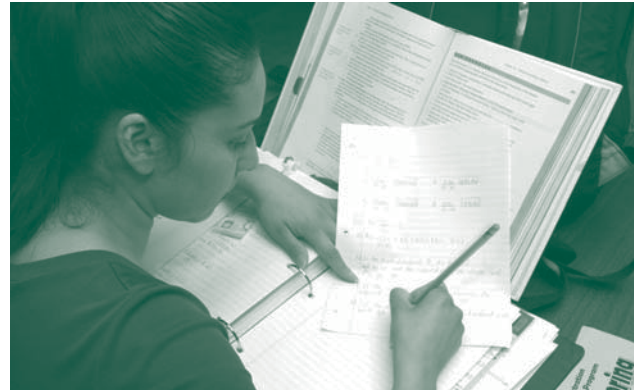
PHOTO BY SAM PARSONS



Creating “Plagiarism-Proof” Assignments

On October 10, 2006, Writing Across the Curriculum presented a campus-wide workshop on creating “plagiarism-proof” writing assignments. The following advice is from the workshop.

We all need to be concerned about plagiarism, and we all need to make it clear to students that presenting someone else’s work as their own is not ethical. But many instructors focus their energy trying to catch students they suspect of plagiarism, rather than focusing on the many ways instructors can discourage plagiarism simply by designing “plagiarism-proof” writing assignments. Of course, no writing assignment is entirely plagiarism-proof, but the good news is that strategies for designing assignments that discourage plagiarism are also strategies for improving the success of writing assignments for students and instructors.



Discouraging Plagiarism by Creating a Rhetorical Situation

Every writing assignment has a “rhetorical situation:” a context for writing that includes a sense of purpose and a role for the writer, a genre and medium of text, and an audience. The more “generic” the rhetorical situation of an assignment, the more likely it will be that some students will plagiarize. By creating a more complex and interesting rhetorical situation, we can significantly reduce the risk of plagiarism while at the same time making our writing assignments more interesting and meaningful for students. Here’s an example of a “generic” assignment:

Write a ten-page research paper arguing for or against the death penalty.

By creating a more specific and interesting rhetorical situation, we can retool this assignment to make it “plagiarism-proof:”

The head of the California Department of Corrections has asked you to prepare a report that reviews the literature on the death penalty in California and makes a case for or against the death penalty using both the literature review and evidence from interviews with lawyers, judges, prisoners, and criminologists in California.

Strategies for designing assignments that discourage plagiarism are also strategies for improving the success of writing assignments for students and instructors.

By adjusting the genre (a report with a “literature review” and “recommendations” section rather than a generic research paper), the audience (making it specific to California) and the role of the writer (students must conduct interviews), we’ve retooled the assignment and made it both more interesting and more difficult to plagiarize.

Here’s another example of an assignment with a generic rhetorical situation:

Write a report describing the migration of settlers on the Oregon Trail in the late 1800s.

With a little creative thinking, this assignment can be revised to make it “plagiarism-proof:”



Write a diary of a settler on the Oregon Trail in the first-person point of view, from the start of his or her journey on the Oregon Trail to the end of the first year of living in the West. Include a one-page diary entry for each month, and be sure to include the kind of themes we've been discussing in class: encounters with Native Americans, social networks, gender roles, farming methods, etc. At the end of the journal, include an annotated bibliography of the sources you used to get

information for the diary.

By giving the writer a role other than just "student" (a settler on the Oregon Trail) and revising the genre so that it is not a generic "report" (a diary and annotated bibliography), we've created an assignment that meets the objectives of having students report on their knowledge of the Oregon Trail but does so in a way that encourages creativity and discourages plagiarism.

Discouraging Plagiarism by Building in a Writing Process

Research into the reasons students plagiarize reveals that sometimes students put off writing an essay until just before it is due, and then are tempted to plagiarize when they've run out of time. Building in a writing process can help prevent this phenomenon while at the same time leading to better final products. What follows are ideas for teaching writing as a process:

✓ **Assign a proposal or prospectus.**

Ask students to create a proposal or prospectus outlining their proposed topic, what they already know about the topic, the types of sources they might use, etc. Give students a brief response to their proposals or have peers respond.

✓ **Break larger papers into an assignment sequence.**

Rather than just assigning a ten-page research paper and collecting it in a month, create a sequence of assignments that mirror the research writing process: a prospectus, an annotated bibliography, a literature review, a series of reading response journals, a position paper, and then the final research paper.

✓ **Use peer response.**

Have students bring a draft of their essay to class, or work outside of class using email or the WebCT discussion board. For advice about using peer response, see the WAC website at http://www.csus.edu/wac/peer_response_overview.stm.

✓ **Require a rewrite.**

Respond briefly to a draft of the essay, focusing on content issues like organization, focus, development, etc.

✓ **Require a process memo.**

In a process memo included with the final draft, students describe their writing process: how they chose the topic, how they revised their essay from draft to draft, why they chose the organizational strategy they did, where they found their sources and why they chose to use the sources they did, etc.

✓ **Use portfolio assessment.**

Rather than collecting only a final draft of the essay, collect rough drafts and final drafts in a portfolio (this might include a peer response draft or a draft that you commented on). Ask students to include a process memo with their portfolio.



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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 (916) 278-6925.



SACRAMENTO STATE
WRITING CENTER

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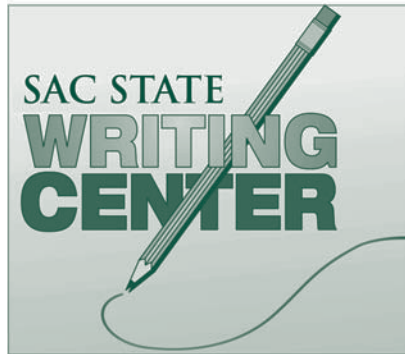
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A PAGE FROM THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center provides free one-on-one writing help for your students.

The Writing Center can provide help for students in any course: Writing Intensive, graduate courses, thesis writers, WPE/English 109, etc.

Tutors can:

- **Help students learn to be better writers**
- **Help students locate and correct errors**
- **Give students feedback on focus, organization, and clarity**
- **Help students brainstorm ideas for their paper**

Tutors can't:

- **Correct papers for students**
- **Address all aspects of a student's writing in one session**
- **Tell students what to write**

FALL 2006 WRITING CENTER HOURS
Calaveras, Room 128

Monday - Thursday
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Friday
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.