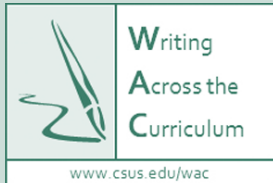




# WRITING

## *across the curriculum*

NEWSLETTER



### WAC NEWS & EVENTS

#### Call for Submissions: Student Writing Journal

The Faculty Senate Subcommittee for Writing and Reading is now accepting submissions for *Writing the University*, an online journal of undergraduate writing across disciplines at Sacramento State. Visit the website for submission guidelines:  
[www.csus.edu/wac/journal.html](http://www.csus.edu/wac/journal.html).

#### Social Sciences Writing Course

The English Department is now offering an upper-division course titled Writing in the Social Sciences (English 120S). This course will be taught by English department faculty with a social science background (primarily TESOL/ applied linguistics). For more information, contact Julian Heather at [jheather@csus](mailto:jheather@csus) or 278-5394.

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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](mailto:melzer@csus.edu) or (916) 278-6925.

## Advice for Responding to Graduate Theses and Projects

One of the most important kinds of responding we do as teachers—and one of the most time-consuming—is giving feedback to graduate students during their process of writing and revising theses and projects. In spring 2008 Writing Across the Curriculum gave a campus-wide workshop focused on strategies for responding effectively and efficiently to graduate student theses and projects. The following advice is based on the discussions at the workshop.

- Ask students to sign a contract outlining expectations for both parties.**  
 A thesis contract can help make our high expectations for thesis writing clear to students, and also give students a realistic sense of how long it will take us to respond to their work. For an example thesis contract, visit the teacher resources section of the WAC website at [www.csus.edu/wac/WAC/Teachers/responding\\_theses.html](http://www.csus.edu/wac/WAC/Teachers/responding_theses.html).
- Ask students to review example theses in the library.**  
 Students writing a thesis are working in an unfamiliar genre, and they often struggle with organization, development, tone, etc. Asking students to become familiar with the conventions of a thesis in your discipline by reviewing examples in the library can save you some time commenting on those conventions.
- Encourage students to sign up for thesis writing workshops and groups the first month of the semester.**  
 At the beginning of the fall and spring semester WAC and Graduate Studies offer a thesis writing workshop and thesis writing peer response groups. Students who join a peer writing group get feedback on their drafts before they submit them to you, saving you time by providing an extra layer of response.
- Recommend that students schedule regular appointments at the University Writing Center.**  
 Thanks to funding from Graduate Studies, the University Writing Center in 128 CLV is able to offer up to an hour a week of regular tutoring for graduate students working on their theses. Writers should come to the Writing Center in week two or three of the semester to ensure a regular tutoring hour.
- Save sentence-level editing for the final draft, and put more of the onus on the student to revise and edit.**  
 Don't ask writers to fine-tune sentences that may not be retained in the final draft, and don't become a proofreader. If a student has a pattern of errors (for example, frequent problems with comma splices or subject/verb agreement), mark and explain one instance of the error and ask the student to edit the rest of the thesis.

For more information or help with responding to thesis writers, contact Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at 278-6925 or [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu).

## Writing Partners -- Building a Connection between Classrooms

By Jessica Green, English Department

If you have ever considered incorporating community involvement into your course curriculum then there is an established service learning project at Sac State that could be right for you. **Writing Partners** -- a Service Learning project designed to increase social awareness and educational interconnectedness -- can be used to enhance the learning experience and student potential within any discipline. **Writing Partners** is essentially a letter-writing communication between college and elementary school students that is designed to benefit both sets of students. Because **Writing Partners** can be tailored to meet the needs of any classroom, and is a low-maintenance and manageable service learning project, instructors are able to increase student learning without adding to their workload.

**Writing Partners**, one of the programs designed a decade ago by Write to Succeed, Inc., is being used within college courses across the country, in addition to being used by a handful of Sac State instructors from disciplines across the curriculum. The versatility of the program allows instructors to meet and expand multiple course goals including, but not limited to:

1. **Re-emphasizing Course Content** – Letters often include explanations of course content which must be rearticulated for a young audience. Instructors can stipulate the content of the letters to complement the course material.
2. **Writing Practice and Technique Building** – Students write an average of four letters per semester, which provides practice in organization, audience awareness, formal letter writing, and sentence and paragraph variation. Letters are most often assigned as homework assignments that utilize techniques and content taught within the course.
3. **Community Involvement and Greater Social Awareness** – College students are matched with elementary students from Title 1 schools (meaning all or most students are from low-income homes). As seasoned students who have achieved the esteemed position of attending college, the Sac State students are asked to share a “glimpse” of the college experience with young students who have had little or no experience with college life. The elementary students often teach the college students valuable lessons as well (e.g. about the socioeconomic realities of the United States).
4. **Increased Student Involvement within the Classroom** – Students enjoy and look forward to sending and receiving letters. Taking 10-15 minutes of class to read portions of letters aloud adds to the overall sense of enjoyment and community within a course. Spring 2008 English 1 student Luisana Pasillas concurs: “I love writing (the elementary students) and waiting for their letters. It was great to see how excited they were about college and (I was) glad that we were able to give them some advice. I did **Writing Partners** twice and will be glad to do it again.”

## Q&A

with Brendan McVeigh, Community Partnerships Coordinator for the Community Engagement Center at Sac State.

### 1) How do Sac State faculty members contact the Community Engagement Center?

Please contact Community Engagement Center at 278-4610 or [cecenter@csus.edu](mailto:cecenter@csus.edu)

### 2) What steps are involved in setting up a partnership? Steps to setting up a partnership --

- a. Schedule an appointment to meet with the Community Engagement Center to develop writing partnership. Partnerships take an average of one to four months to develop.
- b. Write an introduction letter to the potential Community Partner.
- c. Visit the school site with a Community Engagement Center representative and meet with the partner teacher.

### 3) What paperwork, etc. is required by the faculty member and Sac State students participating in Writing Partners?

Instructors complete a *Faculty Course Profile* to register their course as a service learning course with Community Engagement Center. Sac State students complete liability forms.

Having just completed a semester with **Writing Partners** as part of my English 1 curriculum, I can assert that it was one of the most enjoyable and beneficial aspects of my course. Students were able to rearticulate information from the essays they were working on within our class which was a relaxed way to begin the revision process. Additionally, having a “real” audience assisted students in understanding the importance of organization, tone, and writing techniques. Finally, as English 1 student Kelly Bartlett summed up the experience: “Because we weren’t just writing papers, we were also writing to younger kids it made the course more fun.” As an educator, seeing students bond and learn from each other throughout the semester, and then wrapping up **Writing Partners** by meeting on campus for a culminating event of touring Sac State and saying goodbye, is memorable in a way that was unmatched by other aspects of my curriculum, and I look forward to remaining actively involved in **Writing Partners**.

To learn more about how to incorporate Writing Partners into your course(s) and to become matched with a community partner contact the Community Engagement Center at Sac State at 278-4610 or [cecenter@csus.edu](mailto:cecenter@csus.edu).

**Staff Fall 2008**

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Calaveras Hall, room 128  
M, W, R 6 pm – 9 pm, T 6 pm – 8 pm  
Library 3501A (3 South)

**Location: CLV 128**  
**Phone: 278-6356**  
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