

## WAC News and Events

### Campus-wide Workshops

Faculty and students may RSVP by contacting Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu) or 278-6925.

#### Handling the Paper Load: Responding Effectively and Efficiently to Student Writing

The WAC Program invites all full and part-time instructors to attend a workshop on responding to student writing. The interactive workshop will cover time-saving advice for responding to student writing, using rubrics and other response tools, and responding more efficiently without sacrificing effectiveness.

The workshop will take place on Wednesday, September 22, from 12–1:15 p.m. in the Foothill Suite of the University Union. Appetizers and refreshments will be served.

#### Thesis Writing Workshop

Please announce to graduate students in your discipline:

On Friday, September 24, from 3–4:30 p.m. in the Forest Suite of the University Union, the WAC Program will present a thesis writing workshop for all Sac State graduate students. The workshop will cover issues such as time and stress management, the writing process, campus thesis writing resources, and library research.

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## 1<sup>st</sup> annual Reading & Writing Across the Curriculum Conference

The Writing Across the Curriculum program invites all full-time and part-time teachers, administrators, and staff to attend a half-day conference featuring a variety of panel presentations focusing on successful approaches to reading and writing across disciplines.

**When:** Friday, February 18, 2005,  
12:30–5:00 p.m.

**Where:** University Union Hinde  
Auditorium and Orchard  
and Forest Suites

Presentation topics will include:

- Effective approaches to assigning and responding to student writing
- Writing assessment for courses and departments
- Pedagogies for multilingual writers
- Strategies for dealing with plagiarism
- Using technology to improve reading and writing
- Campus reading and writing resources for faculty and students

A conference program will be available in December at:

<http://www.csus.edu/wac/conference>.

#### Submit a proposal for the conference

All full-time and part-time instructors, administrators, and staff are encouraged to submit a proposal for an individual presentation or a panel.

Guidelines for submitting a proposal can be found at the conference website, <http://www.csus.edu/wac/conference>.

The deadline for submitting a proposal is December 20, 2004.

Questions about the conference? Send an email to [wac@csus.edu](mailto:wac@csus.edu).



## Designing Successful Reading Assignments

In the Spring semester of 2004, the Writing Across the Curriculum Program presented the campus-wide workshop “Designing Successful Reading Assignments.” Workshop attendees shared techniques for promoting active reading and helping students read difficult texts. The articles on pages 2–3 present information from the workshop that can help instructors in any discipline design more effective reading assignments.

### Using Reading/Writing Connections to Promote Active Reading

Most academics share the belief that reading is more than just fact-finding and digesting information: students must also think critically about texts, often through written response or classroom discussion. Consider using writing to promote active reading by deploying one or more of the following techniques:

**Reading journals.** Reading journals are formal or informal responses to readings, often with a focused prompt from the instructor. Reading journals are usually brief and given a low-stakes, holistic grade. In reading journals students can summarize, respond, synthesize, relate reading to personal experiences, etc. Reading journals can be used in the classroom to spark discussions and hold students accountable for thinking critically about reading assignments rather than merely recalling information from the readings on a quiz.

**Web CT discussion posts.** The WebCT electronic discussion board can be an effective tool for “electronic reading journals.” The discussion board makes responses visible to other students, and students can respond to each other. You can guide students’ reading by giving them prompts for each discussion thread. Like reading journals, discussion posts are usually brief and given a low-stakes, holistic grade.

**Microthemes.** Microthemes are “mini-essays” on a focused topic (usually one page). In a microtheme students might define key terms from a reading, summarize a research article, or respond to an author’s thesis. Like journals, microthemes can be evaluated quickly and holistically.

**Double-entry journals.** A double-entry journal is a tool to encourage students to both summarize and respond to texts. Students draw a line down the center of their notebooks (or create a two-column table in their word processing programs) and list main ideas from the reading in one half of the journal and their responses or questions in the other half. Like reading journals and microthemes, double-entry journals can be used to spark class discussions.

Most academics share the belief that reading is more than just fact-finding and digesting information: students must also think critically about texts, often through written response or classroom discussion.

If you’d like to know more about these active reading techniques and how to integrate them in your classes, contact Dan Melzer at 278-6925 or [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu).

## Helping Students Read Difficult Texts

As instructors, we are both experienced readers and “disciplinary insiders:” we each have our own set of effective reading strategies and we are able to bring a great deal of background knowledge to the texts we read in our discipline. Part of the reason students struggle with difficult texts is because they lack solid reading strategies and the necessary background information. Following are some techniques for helping students read difficult texts more successfully:

### Assign reading as a process.

Ask students to skim longer readings, reread texts, or discuss readings in small groups. Break up longer readings into shorter segments, and scaffold the most difficult readings. Just as many students work under the myth that good writers get it right on the first draft, they often believe that good readers don't need to reread

### Teach disciplinary reading.

Sometimes students struggle with readings because they're unfamiliar with the genres of specific disciplines (executive summaries, scientific reports, sonnets, etc.). Review the expectations and patterns of the

genres of the readings you assign, and discuss how readers in your discipline approach texts.

### Use writing to improve reading.

Asking students to write about texts encourages close reading, rereading, and active reading of difficult texts. It's especially important to use reading journals or one of the other reading/writing connection techniques discussed on page 2 when you assign texts you know students will have difficulty reading.

**Discuss reading myths.** Many students have misconceptions about reading (good readers understand everything the first time, good readers

are fast readers, reading is just memorizing information). Discussing these myths, and sharing your own reading process with students, is a way to give students more successful reading strategies.

### Encourage collaborative reading.

Ask students to discuss reading in small groups, either in class or on a WebCT discussion board, to emphasize that reading is a “socially constructed” activity and to make use of peer feedback to improve reading comprehension.



The content of the site was created by the University Plagiarism Committee: Nick Burnett, Mary Reddick, Mark Stoner, Don Dixon, Bruce Bickle, Rosemary Papalewis, and Dan Melzer.

## New Sac State Plagiarism Website for Students and Instructors

The University Plagiarism Committee, under the leadership of Ric Brown, Vice President of Academic Affairs, has created a website to help students understand how to correctly cite sources and avoid plagiarism at <http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>. The site also has plagiarism information for instructors. The site defines plagiarism, provides examples of correct citation style, and provides links to other citation and anti-plagiarism resources.

Please consider including a link to the website in your course description or WebCT pages and using examples from the website to help students understand how to cite and integrate outside sources.

## Thesis Writing Resources for Graduate Students

Because of requests for graduate thesis writing resources from both faculty and graduate students, the Writing Across the Curriculum program has created a number of new programs and resources for thesis writers: Thesis Writing Groups, thesis writing workshops, and thesis writing resources pages on the WAC website.

**Please announce the following resources to graduate students:**

### Thesis Writing Groups

#### What are Thesis Writing Groups?

Groups of 3-5 graduate students in the same department or college who meet regularly over the course of a semester to give each other feedback on theses or written projects. The Writing Across the Curriculum Program organizes and assists the groups.

#### Why should students join a Thesis Writing Group?

Meeting regularly with a group and sharing their writing will keep students on schedule and give them helpful feedback from a peer audience. Whether they are just starting their thesis or project or they are almost finished, getting feedback from a group of peers will be valuable.

#### What do the Spring 2004 participants have to say about the Thesis Writing Group experience?

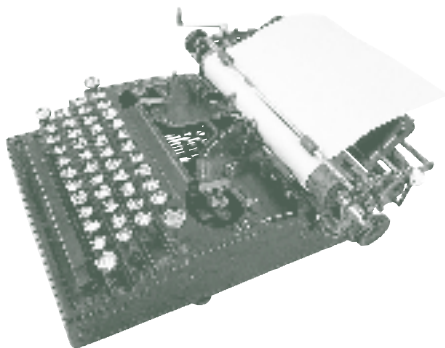
“The most helpful aspect of the thesis group program was finding another person who needed the same kind and level of involvement as I did.”

“Before I started meeting in my small group I felt stuck and discouraged. I really couldn’t see how I was ever going to finish based on my lack of progress at that time. I’m not done yet, but I feel like I made significant progress and can see a glimmer of the light at the end of the tunnel now.”

“The thesis group was very helpful in providing feedback AND making sure that I stayed within a schedule for completing my work.”

#### How do I join a Thesis Writing Group?

Contact Dan Melzer, the University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at 278-6925, or send an email to [wac@csus.edu](mailto:wac@csus.edu).



### Thesis Writing Workshop

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Students can RSVP by contacting Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu) or 278-6925.

### Thesis Writing Resources on the WAC Website

Please ask your graduate students to visit [http://www.csus.edu/wac/student\\_resources.htm](http://www.csus.edu/wac/student_resources.htm) for advice about the thesis writing process and print and online resources for thesis writers, including discipline-specific resources.