WRITE FREE ⧫ OR DIE

IN THIS ISSUE

News That You Can Use
Ed Mueller, Director, University Writing Programs

Given the circumstances, we'll dispense with the usual philosophical piece in this space and instead share information that we hope will be of use to faculty who are getting into the semester and now managing student writing online.

1. Resources:

Self-Help: One simple simple tip for managing writing online is to make maximum use of resources: handouts, videos, virtual texts, etc. Students can use them for immediate self-help while working on assignments. Faculty may employ them to help with feedback, to integrate into assignment instructions, or to inform various stages of student writing (like referring to thesis statements early in the process and self-editing checklists later in the process). In support of these uses, we have cleaned up and updated all the links on our Resources Page. The "Connors Writing Center Handouts" and the "Helpful Links for Writers" sections would be good places to start.

Future Tense: *Upcoming Writing Across the Curriculum Events*

April 13: Application deadline for the 2020 Writing-Invested (WI) Faculty Retreat, Mount Washington Hotel (June 8-10). The UNH Writing Program is still planning to reprise the WI (Writing-Invested) Faculty retreat experience. All faculty who are invested in writing in pedagogy are welcome to apply, with priority to those teaching WI courses. The experience consists of a three-day offsite at the Mount Washington Hotel followed by three sessions at UNH in the following year. The salient goals of the retreat are to give faculty a more full awareness of the principles underlying writing in pedagogy and WI courses, to equip them with practices to enhance their work with student writing, and to promote connections among writing-invested faculty. Please see the flyer that accompanied this newsletter or email Ed Mueller: **edward.mueller@unh.edu**

THE FOLLOWING EVENTS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED TO SPRING 2021

Online Writing Instruction: How & Why. This will be a faculty workshop on managing student writing in online environments, with an emphasis on managing feedback. The guest presenter will be Scott Warnock, past Co-Chair of the College Conference on Composition and Communication Committee on Best Practices for Online Writing Instruction and author of the signpost text, *Teaching Writing Online.* Made possible through the generosity of the Dane Writing Across the Curriculum Fund. Spring 2021, TBA.

Student Exit Interviews: Writing Committee exit interviews with a panel of graduating seniors on their writing histories at UNH. Faculty are invited to join and participate. Spring 2021, TBA

Exagerration is a billion times worse than understatement.

–William Saffire (Anti Rule #54)

WAC(ky) People

UNH Writing Program

Ed Mueller, Director

Lauren Short, Associate Director

Danielle Lavendier, Associate Director

Writing Committee:
College Representatives   Term End

Paul-- Huimin Li   **2021**
(Finance)

COLSA— Davida   **2021**
Margolin (MCBS)

CEPS— John LaCourse   **2020**
(Engineering)

COLA 1— Josh Lauer   **2022**
(Communication)

COLA 2— Soo Hyon Kim   **2020**
(English)

CHHS— Lauren Ferguson **2022**
(Recreation Management
and Policy)

UNHM— Gail Fensom*   **2020**
(English, Director of First-
Year Writing Program)

   *Faculty Chair

Permanent Representatives:

Writing Program Director:
   Ed Mueller (Academic Affairs)
Writing Center Director:
   Meaghan Dittrich (Academic
   Affairs)
Director of Composition:
   Cris Beemer (English)
CEITL:
   Catherine Overson (Academic
   Affairs)
Discovery Committee:
   Kathrine Aydelott
        (Dimond Library)

Ex officio (non-voting):
 Committee Secretary:
   Elizabeth Smith (Registrar)

Faculty Resources: we have added a "COVID-19 Continuity Section" to the "Faculty Resources"area of our page. In addition to a link to the excellent support provided by UNH IT, you will find links to resources offered by the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators and also the "Online Toolkit" provided by the Association of College and University Educators. In the latter two, there are both videos and other content, to include walk-in webinars. Colleagues in the WAC Faculty Network are also a resource, and as usual, the UNH WAC program will continue to be available to consult via email, zoom, and even voice (once known as "phone"): contact edward.mueller@unh.edu.

Student Resources: We have added staff to the Online Writing Lab (OWL), which provides remote, asynchronous conferences to students. A word of caution, even with added staff, it is not resourced to work in support of entire classes. Think of it as a student service rather than a class service. The optimum use would be to make students aware of it as a resource, or to encourage selected students to consider using it for additional support on their assignments.

Grad Student Support Resources: The Connors Writing Center will continue supporting via remote means grad students who are enrolled in the thesis/dissertation support service.

2. Real-Time Plans:

The Connors Writing Center is working on scheduling synchronous Zoom sessions. These will be topic-based and allow students to drop in and connect with writing center staff in real time to discuss writing. The schedule and further information will be posted on the Connors Writing Center Facebook Page.

3. Looking Forward:

In the absence of information to the contrary, we are still planning on holding the Writing Invested Faculty Retreat. It may be difficult to see beyond the moment or predict the trajectory of events leading to early June, but we encourage interested faculty to apply. If we are obliged to cancel, applications received this year will receive priority consideration for next year: it's all good!

I never think when I write; nobody can do two things at the same time and do them well.

–Don Marquis

Would You Like To Be In The Picture?

The Sixth Annual Writing-Invested Faculty Retreat

Apply by April 13: See "Future Tense" for Details

June 8-10, 2020

At the Mount Washington Hotel

Student Writing Must be Graded by the Teacher
Excerpted From *Bad Ideas About Writing*

https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf (Open Source Text)

It's a common assumption that when students write something for a class, the teacher should evaluate that writing and return it with a grade.

Writing in graded situations becomes writing for a grade, whereas writing in other circumstances seeks effectiveness as a standard. When students write for a grade, they come to see writing as transactional (given to someone in exchange for credit) rather than actionable (created with purpose and designed to achieve a goal). That's somewhat like a journalist writing news reports to please the layout designer rather than to meet the needs of the publication's readers.

....

Instead, we should teach people how to improve their writing through peer review. Variations of peer review help us write in many of our day-to-day situations. We learn what sorts of text messages work best by observing how our friends text and respond to us. We learn what makes an effective email by reading the ones we get and responding or deleting as we see fit. We learn how best to craft Facebook posts by seeing what kinds of content can garner the most likes—at its heart a form of quick (and addictive) peer review. Consider, too, all of the review features available on websites such as Yelp, Amazon, LinkedIn, Angie's List, and so on. Reviews offer feedback and critique by users/peers.

With all these systems of peer feedback already available to us, students need to learn to make use of them. Teachers could benefit from saved time and energy if they incorporated peer review systems of various flavors in their classes, reducing their workload and providing a variety of feedback for their students. Students, then, would learn to trust—and derive practical value from—the feedback of a real audience beyond their teacher. Writers who can peer review effectively become purposeful readers, thinking of texts, from classmates' work to their textbooks, as devices used to achieve goals, rather than as static documents designed only to inform. The mantra that "you can't believe everything you read on the Internet" makes rational sense but seems to fail us at crucial moments. Thinking critically about the things we read takes longer than clicking Like, retweeting, reblogging, or sharing; the efficiency of social tools discourages complex questioning that challenges and validates claims. In-class peer review helps writers think carefully about the implications of writing and the ways writing can help solve problems.

Friend, Chris."Student Writing Must Be Graded By The Teacher." *Bad Ideas About Writing.* Edited by Cheryl E Ball and Drew M Lowe. West Virginia University Libraries. 2017, pp 27

Ask Spence:

Your teaching concerns addressed by our very own Spence Lavendier

As Transposed from Purrs to Person by Lauren Short, UNH Writing Programs

I'd like to incorporate more writing in my classes, but I don't have the luxury of classes capped at 24 students. Do you have any advice for how to manage writing instruction in larger classes?
--Large Class Larry

Dear Large Class Larry,

It's a well known fact that cats are masters of management. I reflect fondly upon my days of "teaching" large classes of mice who is boss. That said, I have some advice about managing writing in large courses that will have you *feline* good.

Assign Less to Achieve More:
Instead of assigning multiple longer assignments, consider short papers and exercises that link to in-class instruction. These shorter pieces of writing can allow you to check in with student understanding of course concepts and return the assignments to students in a more timely manner.

Assign Writing That is Not Graded (or Read):
Informal writing, or "writing to learn," does not always require grading, or reading for that matter. For instance, if you ask students a question during lecture, the process of thinking and writing through a response is beneficial in itself. Students may exchange and discuss their informal writing with peers in class or use this writing as a starting point for discussion.

Save Time When Responding to Writing: It can be useful to keep a stock of comments that you commonly use on particular writing assignments. Then, when you teach that writing assignment again, you'll be reminded of common errors that you can address in class. You can also save exceptionally good models of student writing to serve as samples for future semesters. Remember to remove any identifying information before distributing to your class!

Assign Group Projects: The mathematical advantage of group writing projects in larger courses is difficult to ignore. If you have 90 students in groups of 5, you'll have 18 papers to grade instead of 90. While advantageous in terms of numbers, group work can be challenging to many students who have not been asked to collaborate much in their undergraduate careers. If possible, meet with students to establish guidelines, goals, and a discuss the division of labor. See the section on managing group writing under our Faculty Resources section on our web page for more information.

Other Advice: For more information, you might take a *meow*ment to peruse the "Using Writing in Large Classes" faculty tip sheet produced by the WAC Clearinghouse. It is one of their many excellent faculty tip sheets that you might find helpful.

For more information, please email Spence at dml2002@wildcats.unh.edu or ls2010@wildcats.unh

Dangling Modifier: Peer Response

Scott Lasley, Associate Director, University Writing Programs

Frequently used in writing courses across the disciplines, peer response can be a valuable but sometimes confounding part of a writing course for faculty and students. While it can provide students with a helpful way of understanding how their writing is interpreted, peer response can present a variety of challenges that hinder students' ability to understand its usefulness. What follows are some considerations and suggestions for how you might design more effective peer response sessions.

Schedule peer response regularly. Given that peer response is a skill that requires refinement and practice, it needs to be implemented regularly throughout a course to be successful at helping students improve. Giving students multiple opportunities to practice how to give effective feedback to their peers' work allows them to see peer response as an integral part of their writing process.

Provide models and instruction on effective feedback. Because students frequently come into a class with a superficial perception of what it means to provide feedback, it's important for faculty to provide models and direct instruction on what effective feedback looks like. One way that might be done is by having students participate in a practice peer response session where they respond to a sample paper, leaving time to discuss what kinds of feedback they would provide and how feedback might be made more useful for the writer. If you do not have a sample to share, then consider creating a sample.

Aid Students in providing constructive feedback. When designing a peer response activity, you will want to consider how to structure it to help students understand what they should be focusing on when responding to their peers' work. You could approach this by providing a list of questions for students to respond to after they have read through a peer's draft or have them develop and pose questions for their peers to respond to in the session. In either approach, you can refer to lessons on peer response from previous classes to help students connect what they learned to what they are doing in the current peer response activity. Putting students into groups of 3 or 4 can also prove useful in giving students multiple perspectives on their draft and helping them note patterns and differences across their peers' responses.

Provide accountability for peer feedback. Consider making peer response count for a grade in order to remind students that it is an important part of the course and the writing process. For example, you may award credit for students who come prepared for the peer review and actively participate or assign credit to students for bringing complete drafts to the peer review. Accountability can also be achieved by having students respond to their peers' feedback, noting what they found helpful and what they felt could have been more useful. This doesn't just provide students with incentive to take peer response seriously, but it also helps them understand how their feedback is being interpreted and valued.

Provide feedback on students' peer feedback. As an extension of accountability, providing feedback on student feedback practice, either as a group or individually, will help to make it more effective, both for students and as a tool in your teaching. For example, if student feedback tends to be of the "this is great" variety, then that can provide a useful teaching moment to show how to expand that response into something more substantial (and might also provide a self-assessment for you to look over the instructions or structure of the peer review). In order to save time, you can provide feedback to your class by noting patterns across a selection of the students' feedback

You can also put it in the hands of students. If you see an example of exemplary

peer feedback, you can share it as a model for the class.

While these suggestions are by no means exhaustive, they should help to generate ideas for developing peer response activities. Much like writing, peer response is a skill that requires time and practice.

As important as peer feedback can be for the writer and as an efficient mechanism for providing feedback to student writing in classes, it has also been demonstrated that the process of reading other students' writing and producing feedback is beneficial for the reviewer, perhaps more so than any feedback received. In this way, peer response is a valuable teaching tool in itself.

As you consider (or reconsider) how to use peer review in your classes, you might want to think about framing it for your students in terms of how developing peer review skills will have value for them in the future and not just in the moment for your class.

Additional Resources

- University of Michigan Sweetland Center for Writing's Guide for [Using Peer Review to Improve Student Writing](#):
- Colorado State University's [Guide on Peer Review](#):

For more information, contact
sel2005@wildcats.unh.edu

The Grammar Box: Ending Punctuation with Parentheses

Lauren Short, Assoc. Director, UNH Writing Program

Have you ever written something (that required a parenthetical) and were uncertain how to end your sentence? Does the period go before or after the parenthetical?

A good rule to remember is to punctuate your sentence in the way you would if the parenthetical weren't there, and to not leave the parenthetical dangling outside the sentence. For example:
- *Those tacos were outstanding (at least for New Hampshire)!*

On the other hand, if you are using a complete sentence within your parenthetical, you should punctuate that sentence inside the parentheses:
- *Those tacos were outstanding! (You'd be surprised they were from New Hampshire.)*

Also remember to punctuate inside and outside of the parentheses when necessary. For example:
- *The tacos were tasty (weren't they?).*

Though looks may be deceiving, parentheses are not a part of the sentence's subject. For example:
- *The man (and his taco) was uncertain of the future, but he knew it would include more Mexican food.*

Finally, commas are more likely to follow parentheses than to proceed them. For example:
- *When he got home (after his taco binge), he fell asleep immediately.*

For more information, see GrammarBook.com's page on "[Parentheses and Brackets](#)" (with a taco in hand, if you must).

Grad Student Profile: Hamda Aljassam, Civil Engineering

Hamda Aljassam epitomizes a hard-working graduate student. At the University of New Hampshire. He is working on his second master's degree in civil engineering. His previous master's degree has an emphasis on construction management and his current degree will have an emphasis on environmental engineering. Hamda sees this combination as crucial to understanding and coping with the environmental impacts of modern technology. This is evident in his current project, working on hybrid bioreactor technology for landfills. The goal is to set up a system to that uses hybrid bioreactor technology to convert waste to fuel in the form of methane gas, thus reducing the environmental impact of landfills in New Hampshire.

Hamda's work dispels the misconception that science fields don't value strong writing skills. Writing is a crucial component of all projects in the civil engineering field, often making up thirty to forty percent of the work effort. Hamda constantly uses writing in his lab reports, and it plays a pivotal role in not only conveying his findings but in summarizing the work of others. Hamda identified clarity, simplicity, and directness as key components of effective writing in civil engineering.

He also noted that in many cases it is not enough to simply fill out the proper forms when proposing an idea in environmental engineering. He said that while you can always "get by" by filling out forms, the most effective proposals also tell a story, one that carefully considers the specific audience for that project. It is necessary to show not only what is currently happening and what has happened in the past, but also what will happen in the future. These aspects of writing have proven challenging for Hamda, but he's always found that taking the time to practice by writing and rewriting has helped him meet these challenges head-on.

After Hamda earned his master's degree in civil engineering from California State Long Beach, he moved back home to Kuwait in 2005 where he met his wife, Heba, with whom he had two sons, Dhari and Meshari. He was excited to move to New Hampshire with his family in 2019 because of the variety of environmental and engineering features here: mountains, lakes, oceans, power plants, and landfills. The fit seemed natural for studying the effects of technology on nature.

However, the move brought challenges as well. The writing style back in Kuwait contains some differences from the writing here. There is more elaboration in the writing he was reading back home, and adjectives are often placed differently. Perhaps the biggest adjustment was changing from reading right to left. Reading academic articles in English and continuing to practice his writing skills helped him rise to these challenges. In his words "if you don't use it, you lose it" when it comes to writing skills, and continued practice has been the key to sustaining his skills.

After he finishes his program, he plans to eventually return to Kuwait, where he hopes to make a difference, both locally and globally. He intends to use the skills he has acquired at UNH to help Kuwaitis rise to the growing challenge of the introduction of technology into the natural world. To help him do so, he plans to continue honing his skills in writing clearly and concisely so that he can best convey his findings to the people of Kuwait and worldwide.
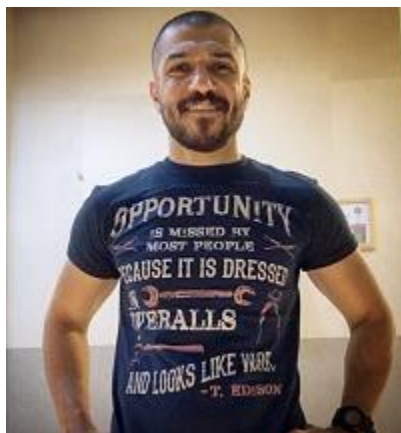
Corey Chamberlain, Global Student Success Program Liaison, Connors Writing Center.

I write slowly because I write badly. I have to rewrite everything many, many times just to achieve mediocrity.   *–William Gass*

Facilitators and Participants in the fifth Annual Writing-Invested Faculty Retreat at the Mount Washington Hotel, June 2019

Top Row, Left to right: *Kate Gaudet, Catherine Moran, Melissa Rodgers, Lauren Short (facilitator), Sam DeFlitch (facilitator).* **Front Row, Left to Right:** *Ed Mueller (facilitator), Madhavi Devasher, Will Smiley, Chrissy O'Keefe, Elizabeth Harrison, Michelle Labbe , Rosemary Caron , Sue Hess.*

Past Perfect: *Director's Notes*

Ed Mueller, Director, University Writing Programs

Online WI Courses, Looking Beyond The COVID-19 Timeframe:

Everyone realizes that migrating the entire curriculum online, mid-semester, is an unprecedented situation, one that we're still dealing with. As such, it is understood that the parameters outlined in Faculty Senate Motion #XVII-M12 that would normally require a new WI proposal for creating an online WI course have been set aside. In other words, under the present circumstances, all online WI courses will render WI credit for the spring 2020 semester. Once we are outside of the exception period, however, WI designations for online courses will not persist--except for those that were already fully online and WI designated prior to the exception period. Currently, the fall 2020 semester is outside of the exception, meaning that to list a course as WI and online would require a WI proposal. Having said this, nobody knows what the future holds. If the decision is made to continue with the entire UNH curriculum online for fall 2020, then the exception will continue and WI designations will persist for all courses. The Writing Committee will continue to review and monitor developments and make recommendations to facilitate learning during these extraordinary times.

<u>Last Word</u>

With sixty staring me in the face, I have developed inflammation of the sentence structure and a definite hardening of the paragraphs.

–James Thurber