WRITE FREE OR DIE

IN THIS ISSUE

Out of Practice: Unplugging Your Student Writer

Meaghan Dittrich, PhD
Director, University Writing Programs

Many forms of writing that students practiced during COVID are now making it difficult for them to engage with writing in a social format. Students are uncomfortable with speaking up, participating, or even offering differing opinions. During the pandemic, their social development didn't take the usual trajectory we've seen students take in the past. They weren't provided with the same social opportunities as their previous cohorts. Many of them developed anxieties surrounding communal interactions, and now the in-person classroom is a pile of unknowns. How do we gently lead them back onto the path of being part of a public community of critical thinkers? How do we get them to test their ideas, be comfortable with the discomfort of experimentation and multiple viewpoints?

Dipping into the Inkwell

Faculty are concerned about post-COVID writers and are experiencing anxieties themselves – mostly about Artificial Intelligence (AI) writing disrupting students' education, as Beth McMurtrie addresses in her September 2023 piece in the Chronicle of Higher Education.[1] Therefore, there is a greater push for more in-class handwritten activity to avoid cheating. This can be an effective stop-gap measure as an occasional occurrence, but we can't recommend it as regular practice as a sustained substitute, for the following reasons:

- New tools we use become part of our cultural process (ubiquity means we can't ignore the tool). These students are no longer used to handwriting, so they will be processing something unpracticed (handwriting) alongside trying to accomplish the other goal of integrating course content.

Future Tense: Upcoming Writing Across the Curriculum Events

To stay up to date, please visit our Events page on our website

National Day on Writing Celebration: Tuesday, October 17, 12:30-2:00pm in Hamilton Smith Atrium
A community gathering to write, and to celebrate why we write! All are welcome: UNH students, faculty, staff, and community members of all ages.

WAC "Coffee & Conversations" Hour with CEITL: November 2, 1:00-2:00pm in Conant G02.
An opportunity to meet with colleagues and discuss pedagogy, learning activities, writing in your courses, assessing the effectiveness of your teaching, etc. Bring a colleague with you to join in the teaching and learning conversations! Refreshments provided. Worth 1 CEITL point. Register **HERE.**

WI Retreat at the Browne Center: January 16 & 17, 2024. This year's annual Writing-Invested Faculty retreat is open to *any* faculty member interested in integrating writing in their courses. Up to 15 available spots. Worth up to 4 CEITL points. For more information, see our flyer on the last page of this issue or contact unh.writing.programs@unh.edu.

WAC Spring Guest speaker: TBD. Worth 1 CEITL point.

- Accessibility issues, especially with timed writing.

- Doesn't motivate students to want to learn by discovery (Don Murray's "write to learn" approach).

- Do you really want to go back to trying to read illegible writing?

In addition to the occasional handwritten exercise, the following are excellent ways to reengage students with course content and to make writing a collaborative activity.

Low-Stakes = Low Stress
What you're looking for are low-stakes writing events – either ungraded activities or something worth below 10% of a heavier-weighted assignment. This would discount a high-stakes writing assessment like a "blue book essay." Jason McIntosh has an essay in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*[2] about low-stakes writing assignments, titled "Is This for a Grade?" which takes you through the truth of the student writing experience and nails down the reason for why low-stakes writing *works* as a regular writing practice and learning method. Not only does this lessen the stress for students, it also makes grading easier for you. Many of these assignments can be "credited" as a simple check mark or complete/incomplete in your Canvas gradebooks.

Get it Together
Emphasize writing as a communal/ collaborative space, rather than an isolated thing you do by yourself. Especially provocative is collaborative in-class writing that has a lightly competitive element to it – something to motivate students to one-up each other. One example is that of the sensory paragraph. Give them basic information and have them beef it up with descriptive language to make it the most vivid paragraph they can. See which set of students can make the more detailed description.

This isn't just about how to help students; new strategies can make your life easier, as well. Do you struggle with writing assignment prompts? Brainstorm with your students about how to collaboratively design the essay prompts – they'll feel more invested in the assignment if they have a hand in creating it, and the onus won't fall all on your shoulders.

Design an activity that is meant to be written in groups, where students must collaborate to describe an event, a story, an experiment, a case study, a primary document analysis, etc. Whatever is most relevant to your course content. This is also a great opportunity to discuss the difference between summary, analysis, and synthesis.

Consider Going Multimodal
In James Lang's recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, he expounds upon Jessica Singer Early's 2022 book *Next Generation Genres: Teaching Writing for Civic and Academic Engagement*. Singer Early

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" ~ Helen Keller

states that traditionally there are only a limited number of form-essays in academic writing (the personal, the analytical, the research essay) and that, as Lang paraphrases for us,

> ...those same assignments are also ones that ChatGPT can mimic very effectively. Limit your written assignments to traditional form, and you risk offloading much of the learning that happens in your courses to artificial intelligence. More important, you close down other pathways that students can use to explore ideas, engage in arguments, and communicate with peers.[3]

So, get yourself and your students to think outside the box of genre and discipline-specific conventions. What would get your student to think about your course content and generate ideas in a way that doesn't look like traditional academic writing?

Consider the podcast as a form of assignment submission. A great deal of composition goes into creating a podcast – it necessitates its own writing process. At the very least, you need to brainstorm, have an outline, a general "script," etc. It also engages students in a medium they do need practice in – *presenting on* their subject.

Make it Reflective

We also appreciate Lang's explanation of Singer Early's concept of the "artist's statement" (or "creator's statement") for a writing assignment; have your student justify their process, the impetus for their topic, their argument, their journey (the good, bad, and ugly) for the paper they've written. A bonus is that it also creates a reflective opportunity for the student with a clear audience (yet another genre of writing on its own). Chances are, they'd be hard pressed to invent a tall tale of their journey to the draft.

In the end, students want reassurance that they aren't out there in the void on their own as writers. So, show them that writing doesn't happen in a vacuum. Perhaps share your own writing process with them, tell them how you struggle, what you struggle with, and how you overcome those struggles as a writer.

Each writing event should be an opportunity for students to experiment with ideas they haven't thought about before, to grapple with new or even uncomfortable ideas and perspectives, to question concepts they don't fully understand. If we don't provide them with a safe space to experiment, to write-to-discover, to mess up a bit, then they will quickly learn that there is a penalty for being learners-in-process, a penalty issued in red ink.

_____

[1] McMurtie, Beth. "What Will Determine AI's Impact on College Teaching? 5 Signs to Watch." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* September 8, 2023.

[2] Jason McIntosh, "'Is This for a Grade?': Understanding Assessment, Evaluation, and Low-Stakes Writing Assignments," essay, in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing,* vol. 5 (Parlor Press, 2022), 28–42.

[3] Lang, James M. "How to Create Compelling Writing Assignments in a ChatGPT Age." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* April 4, 2023.

"You don't start out writing good stuff. You start out writing crap and thinking it's good stuff, and then gradually you get better at it. That's why I say one of the most valuable traits is persistence."
~ Octavia E. Butler

Ask Butters & Pippin:

A conversation between two purrrrfect kitties

As Transposed from Purr to Person by Elizabeth Drummey, Assistant Director, University Writing Programs

Dear Butters & Pippin,

What does a WI course designation at UNH mean?

-Sincerely,
Looking to Learn

Dear Looking,

P: Good day, I'm Pippin the orange cat. I enjoy napping in a sunny window, snuggling with my humans, and occasionally begging for beef jerky or pepperoni. And I'll have you know the "orange cats share one braincell" meme is quite insulting. I am an intelligent and distinguished gentleman, thank you very much!

B: And I'm Butters the tuxedo cat! Don't let my dapper appearance fool you! My humans call me Captain Chaos and a menace to society. I spend my days scaling window screens, catching bugs, and knocking everything and anything off the counter.

P: Luckily for you, we're the *purr*fect ones to tell you all about the W at the end of your course number. We may be cats, but we learned quite a lot when our human taught a WI course last semester. First, don't be embarrassed that you don't already know.

B: Yeah! Lots of instructors don't know what the W means. Our human didn't even know until halfway into the semester! Plus, not all WI courses have the W at the end. If you're not sure if your course is WI, you can always check with your department head.

P: WI stands for Writing Intensive. Every undergraduate student at UNH must take four WI courses during their time here: English 401 and three others. This requirement is part of the Writing Program that was established in 1995.

B: You'd think that a writing intensive course would always be some kind of English class, right? But no! You can find WI courses in every single department. Because UNH believes literacy should be "the concern of the entire faculty and the whole university curriculum," not just the English department (["University Writing Requirement"](#)).

P: So now that you know what WI means, let's talk about what it means for a course to be writing intensive.

B: Doesn't that just mean there's a lot of writing in the class?

P: Not quite, Butters. There are three guidelines for WI courses:

- **Writing throughout the course should count for 50% or more of the final grade.**

- **Writing should be treated as a process.**

- **There should be both high and low-stakes writing throughout the course.**

There should be multiple assignments, but that could be the case even in a course that isn't designated as writing intensive. **WI courses specifically need to have writing assignments due throughout the semester, not just one large essay due at the end.** *Meow* let's talk about what writing as process means.

B: Oh, I know! **You should provide your students with the chance to do multiple drafts for each writing assignment.** Each draft allows them to focus on different things without worrying about everything at the same time. Like Peter Elbow says, in the first draft, students should just get their ideas on the paper while, in later drafts, they can edit and focus on smaller details.

P: Ex*cat*ly. **It's important for students to get feedback at each step of the writing process.** The feedback doesn't always have to be from you as the instructor. You, a writing fellow, or a TA can look at outlines and drafts via email as well as schedule individual conferences with students. Getting feedback on drafts gives your students ways to improve as writers and get a better grade on the final draft.

B: And don't forget to also compliment them on what they're doing right! It builds their confidence and motivates them to keep working hard. It's nice to hear "Good kitty" and get a pat on the head!

P: **You can also work some peer review days into your course schedule so your students can provide feedback to each other.** Reading and critiquing their classmates' work is a great way for students to learn to be better writers. Fiona Paton also notes that it allows them to practice inter*purr*sonal skills that they will need for future courses and, someday, their careers.

B: Pippin peer reviews me all the time!

P: And yet you so rarely implement my feedback…

B: Because your feedback is usually, "Butters, no." And I live by the motto, "Butters, yes!" I do have a question, though. I know all about high-stakes writing. That's those big papers the human spends so much time grading. But what's low-stakes writing?

P: That's a *fur*tastic question, Butters. **Whereas high-stakes writing counts for a large portion of a student's grade, low-stakes writing counts for a small part, or even no part, of the grade.** That gives students a chance to practice their writing skills without worrying about it affecting how they do in the course.

B: Oh, I see. Would drafts count as low-stakes writing?

P: Yes, drafts are an excellent way to incorporate low-stakes writing. Even though you'll be providing feedback on the draft, it's best not to put a grade on it. You can just give credit for being turned in or even not make it part of the student's formal grade at all. **In-class free writing is another option.**

B: Give your students five or ten minutes to write either about a set prompt or anything at all. At the end, you can let them share with the class if they want, but they don't have to turn the writing in. Some instructors have free writing in almost every session to turn writing into a daily habit.

P: Free writing allows students to actually *write* without worrying about it being good. Anne Lamott says that all writers, whether they are professionals or students, begin by writing bad drafts. Many students struggle to start writing because their inner editor tries to make everything perfect from the start, resulting in them never putting something on the page. During free writing, encourage your students to focus on just getting words on the page instead of editing as they go.

B: After all, as we learned from Elbow, editing is a different part of the writing process than producing.

P: If you implement these practices into your WI course, we're sure it will be *paws*itively wonderful!

B: And if you still have any questions, want some feedback on your syllabus, need help writing your assignment prompts, or want your TAs trained to give feedback on writing, you can contact the University Writing Programs (UWP) by emailing unh.writing.programs@unh.edu. Our human works in the UWP, and she and her colleagues would be happy to help you!

P: If you would like to submit a proposal for a WI-designated course, see our faculty page for instructions.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm weary from all this talking, and the sunshine is shining right on my bed. Farewell and best of luck.

B: And I see a water glass the humans left *so* close to the edge of the counter. They're in for a surprise when they get home! Bye-bye!

_____

Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers.* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life.* New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Paton, Fiona. "Approaches to Productive Peer Review." In *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition* edited by Duane Roen et al., 290-301. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2002.

"University Writing Requirement." University of New Hampshire. November 1995, https://www.unh.edu/student-success/sites/default/files/media/2022-07/university-writing-requirement.pdf

"I think there are two types of writers, the architects and the gardeners. The architects plan everything ahead of time, like an architect building a house… The gardeners dig a hole, drop in a seed and water it… they don't know how many branches it's going to have; they find out as it grows."
~ George R.R. Martin

The Grammar Box:
One of These Things is Not Like the Other: Parallel Structure
Rachel Roy, Assistant Director, University Writing Programs

Sometimes when reading student writing (or our own), something strikes us as "off," but it can be hard to pinpoint why. It might be due to a breakdown of parallel structure! Parallel structure is usually one of those things that we, and our students, can intuit as writers. However, when we write long lists or complex papers, it can be easy to lose parallel structure in our own writing.

What exactly is parallel structure? Parallel structure is when one or more sentences, clauses, or words follow the same grammatical structure. This is usually used to show that these sentences, clauses, or words have the same level of importance. A common place to find parallel structure is in lists. For example, in the following list, all of the verbs use the –ing (gerund) form: *Paul enjoys reading, writing, and researching.*

However, when lists get longer, writers sometimes lose this parallel structure. Consider the following example:

He was a good student because he studied ahead of time, attended office hours, and works hard every day.

Here, the last list item "works hard every day" breaks from the grammatical structure of the first two list items "studied" and "attended." Breaking parallel structure in this way can make writing feel awkward or unclear.

Compare the same sentence with parallel structure to the first example:

He was a good student because he studied ahead of time, attended office hours, and worked hard every day.

If writing sounds awkward or is hard to follow, check to see if they're following parallel structure. "Check the paper for "and" and "or" to find lists and check that all of the list items follow the same grammatical structure." You can also give students the Connors Writing Center handout on parallel structure for more information.

"I hate writing. I love having written." ~ Dorothy Parker

Join us for a
National Day On Writing
Writing Party
#WriteOut   #WhyIWriteNH   #WhyIWrite

What: A community gathering to write, and to celebrate why we write!

Remind Me!

Where: Ham-Smith Atrium

When & How: 12:30-2:00pm, Tuesday, 10/17

https://tinyurl.com/NDOWReminder

Who: All are welcome! UNH students, faculty, staff, and community members of all ages.

your passion your career
UNH ENGLISH TEACHING

CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

C-WRET
Writing Research Engagement Teaching

CLC
Community Literacy Center

NH Literacy Institutes

University of New Hampshire
College of Liberal Arts

Synopsis of CEITL TAT: "Leveraging AI in your Class"
Written by Elizabeth Drummey & Rachel Roy

On Tuesday, September 19, 2023, CEITL hosted the first in their Talk About Teaching Series, "Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in your Class," presented by CEITL Learning Architects Scott Kimball, Mike McIntire, and Fran Keefe. The workshop kicked off with an AI generated video of a pirate talking about AI. Mike later explained how he utilized several tools to create his video. He used ChatGPT to write the script, EBSynth to put together the visuals of the video, and ElevenLabs to create the pirate voice. This showed the ways instructors could use these platforms in their own classrooms, for multimodal assignments. It also seemed to show that AI could do almost anything that a human could do…

However, Generative Artificial Intelligence is not actually "intelligent," instead, it just mimics intelligence. Generative Artificial Intelligence, like ChatGPT, is trained in human input scraped from the internet. Essentially, these Large Language Models (LLMs) are just really advanced text prediction algorithms. But, because LLMs are trained and crowdsourced data, which is a large sample size, they are accurate about 75% of the time, making them intelligent. It's important to note that, when AI doesn't know something, it doesn't know that it doesn't know. Something like ChatGPT usually delivers information with total confidence—this fabrication of facts is called "hallucination."

Scott cited a March 2023 survey that showed 43% of students admit to using AI, and 50% of those students use it for assignments and exams. 61% of students believe it is the new norm, but 54% say there has been no open discussion about AI in the classroom. If this is the new norm (and it certainly seems to be), we need to embrace AI into our lesson plans while also minimizing students' improper use of it.

Since students are already experimenting with using AI, Scott shared ways that instructors can minimize the impact of generative AI in the classroom. His first suggestion was to design assignments and prompts that focus on the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, such as to analyze, evaluate, and create. While AI can summarize, it can't draw out new ideas. Similarly, you might ask students to make connections between class content and prior experiences and knowledge—things AI won't be able to do.

For instructors interested in using AI in their classroom, Scott encouraged having open discussions with students about the usefulness and limitations of the different AI tools available. Instructors might consider allowing students to use an AI chatbot, like [ChatGPT](#), for things like brainstorming. Instructors could use AI for themselves to draft lesson plans, prompts, or scenarios to use in class. It can also be helpful to draft assessment tools, like quizzes. Instructors should also note that AI detection tools, like Turnitin, have a high false-positive rate (up to 10%); Scott cautioned against using these tools to accuse students of writing with AI.

The Talk ended with Fran leading a workshop on using different forms of Generative AI. We got hands-on experience with [Firefly](#), [Dall-E](#), and ChatGPT and saw for ourselves its uses and limitations. It was fun and provided a lot of laughs (Firefly apparently doesn't know what a platypus is), but also educational for how we can bring AI into our classrooms and notice when our students are using AI.

You can [sign up for future Talks About Teaching here](#).

*"What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend,
it ceases to exist." ~ Salman Rushdie*

Dangling Modifier
Students *Can* Write: Understanding Transfer

Rachel Roy, Assistant Director, University Writing Programs

As Butters and Pippin taught us in this issue, to fulfil UNH's writing requirement, students must take English 401 (first-year writing), as well as three other writing intensive classes, including at least one in their major. Despite this requirement, a commonly heard refrain is that "students can't write." Perhaps it's not that they "can't" write, but rather, that they are struggling to transfer their writing skills across disciplines.

What is Transfer?

Transfer, in writing studies, is the idea that students will be able to apply the knowledge they gained about writing in one context—say, First-Year Writing—to other contexts—say, a lab report in an upper-level STEM course. Composition scholars who study writing transfer generally agree that all instructors need to teach for transfer because students don't always draw connections between contexts on their own. In fact, teaching for transfer is part of English 401's (First-Year Writing) mission statement. In all their efforts, instructors work to help students learn how they might transfer the skills they acquire in English 401 to the other writing situations they will encounter in their other courses and throughout their lives – so that students will be able to relate the new to the known.

First-Year Writing (FYW) asks students to write about writing and to consider things like purpose, audience, and tone in the essays they read and write. In this way, FYW helps students develop a meta-awareness of writing. But, when students leave FYW, they sometimes lose this meta-awareness, or struggle to apply this knowledge to writing assignments in their major. Why?

Frustrated Transfer

Rebecca Nowacek argues against the idea that students have "negative" or "zero" transfer. Instead, she coins the term "frustrated transfer." Where successful integration is when "students consciously see a connection and sell it to their audience," frustrated transfer is when "the connection is neither consciously seen nor effectively sold" (41). For Nowacek,

Even successful transfer does not require students to be aware of the skills they are transferring. Nowacek's transfer matrix shows what is required for successful transfer and successful integration. However, just because students may be unaware of and unable to sell those connections, this does not necessarily mean that transfer has not occurred, only that it was a "frustrated" attempt to transfer.
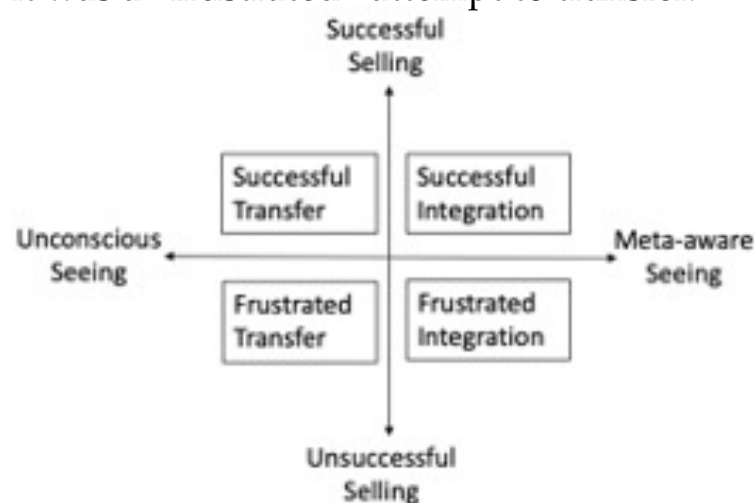
Thinking of transfer as frustrated, rather than as zero or negative, may help us as instructors to see the ways that students are trying to transfer writing skills, even when those attempts are unsuccessful.

Teaching for Transfer in Your Course

Nowacek claims that instructors hold several roles that relate to the teaching of transfer: the "handlers" of genre through creating assignments and prompts as well as the audience to whom students are writing (68). Understanding these roles can help you as the instructor to facilitate writing transfer in your own class: demystifying genre conventions, designing assignments that cue for transfer, and helping students develop a meta-awareness of genre.

Genre Conventions

Instructors can help facilitate transfer by introducing students to genre conventions. Nowacek argues that "genres provide a powerful exigence for transfer" (96). In other words, when students have familiarity with a genre, they can more easily draw connections to a new genre. However, prior genre knowledge can also hinder transfer. For example, if a student has experience writing research papers from high school, they might default to writing a five-paragraph essay

that follows a very formulaic structure that doesn't quite fit the genre of a research paper in a psychology course. Instructors should make clear what the expectations are for this new (though maybe familiar) genre. Here are a few questions to get you started on defining a new genre for students:

➢ What tone and style will students be expected to write in?

➢ How often should they be citing original sources?

➢ Should they use first person or third person?

➢ Should they use past or present tense?

➢ Why do you write in this tone/style/tense? What purpose does it serve for this genre?

Assignment Design

The assignment description is a great place to define genre conventions for specific papers. When designing assignments, it is helpful to use language that is consistent with what students are likely to be familiar with. For example, using terms like "audience," "purpose," and "tone" in the assignment description can help to cue students to draw on the rhetorical skills they developed in First-Year Writing. In Olson and Kim's 2021 study on engineering students and transfer, they found that "engineering instructors' reinforcement of rhetorical terms such as evidence, claims, or sources…improved students' understanding of lab reports as a distinct genre with genre-specific features." Here, instructors used a lab report assignment description to clarify the genre using terms commonly used in First-Year Writing, which helped students transfer their knowledge from that course to their lab report.

Meta-Awareness of Genre

Finally, it can be helpful to give students the space to compare writing conventions across genres. While it is helpful for you as the instructor to first define genre conventions for students, it is also useful for students to develop a meta-awareness of genre more broadly as they move through various disciplines.

Nowacek found that "students extend their genre knowledge and transfer writing-related knowledge by acting as bricoleurs…[by] comparing and combining and making connections, abstracting and repurposing strategies"(126). She suggests that instructors could model for students how to compare and make connections across genres, and to give students opportunities—either in class or as part of the assignment—to do this work on their own. As students develop this meta-awareness of genre, they will more easily be able to transfer their writing skills across genre and across disciplines.

Transfer can be as difficult for students to do as it is for instructors to clearly identify. But the more instructors can demystify genre expectations and clarify assignment expectations, the more students will see connections across genre and discipline, and successfully transfer their writing skills from one context to the next.

_____

Sources

Rebecca S. Nowacek, *Agents of Integration: Understanding Transfer as a Rhetorical Act* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2011).

Olson, Wendy and Dave Kim, "An Exploratory Study of Far Transfer> Understanding Writing Transfer from First-Year Composition to Engineering Writing-in-the-Major Courses," *Across the Disciplines* 18, no. ¾ (2021): pp. 265-283.

"He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying."
~ Friedrich Nietzsche

Faculty Profile: Elizabeth Fowler, User Engagement and Student Success Librarian

Elizabeth Drummey, Assistant Director, University Writing Programs

Elizabeth Fowler

In the days leading up to the start of the semester, you could find Liz Fowler in Dimond Library, providing tours, giving orientations, and introducing herself to both new and returning students. Liz has worked at the library since March 2002, first as a circulation assistant at the main desk and later as the Research and Instruction Services Coordinator after receiving her master's in library science from the University of North Texas. In Fall 2022, she began a new role as User Engagement and Student Success Librarian. "How to fit it all in a nutshell?" she says with a laugh when asked what this role encompasses. It is largely about ensuring the library aligns with one of UNH's main pillars: enhancing student success and well-being. To do this, she works with both the other library staff and colleagues across the university to increase engagement, outreach, and orientation initiatives. On a day-to-day level, this means making sure students are aware of all the resources the library has to offer.

The first few weeks of the semester are critical for informing students of the library's resources. Dimond Library has so much more to offer than just their expansive catalog. They subscribe to numerous databases students can access from the website, and they have research guides for subjects and even individual courses. There are subject librarians for every department who work with both students and faculty. There is even an "Ask a Librarian" chat on the website, where students can get an online answer Mondays through Fridays from UNH library staff. The resources also extend to the space the library offers students, from quiet rooms to the reservable group study rooms. All of these can make a world of difference in students' academic experiences. Liz says, "I really am hoping that through more orientation at the beginning of the year, students will begin to build on their awareness of the resources rather than limiting themselves.

However, making students aware of the resources to them is only half of the battle. They also need to be aware of *how* to use those resources. The library staff are aware that the search functions on the website aren't always the most intuitive, which is why Liz and a few of her colleagues will begin user testing them this fall. This testing will involve observing users complete specific tasks and seeing what obstacles they face. In addition to this, Liz is working with another team to conduct interviews and surveys to get further feedback. The results will be vital for the library staff to know where improvement is necessary and how best to implement it, ultimately allowing them to offer even better support for students. Liz says, "Leading initiatives that will help to identify student library-user needs and helping to build a culture of user feedback are aspects of my work that I'm excited about delving into."

Liz's favorite part of being the User Engagement and Student Success Librarian is interacting with the students. In addition to providing tours and orientations, Liz meets with individual students. The questions she gets vary and can be as small as how to look up a book and access it online. However, Liz wants students to know, "No question is too big or too small." She and the other library staff are happy to help and won't judge the students for what they do or don't know. She frequently meets with English 401 students to help them figure out their research questions and keywords, which databases to use, and how to use the search function. Sometimes they just need someone to discuss their assignments and ideas with. She loves "helping them to puzzle things out" and realize, "They did have solid ideas and strategies but just needed another sounding board."

Liz's big hope is that students' attitudes toward the library will change. She worries that they see going to the library as tedious and something they're forced to do. Rather, she wants it to be a community, "a place where they belong and they are welcome." If the crowds of students reading, working and just hanging out in Dimond Library this semester are any indication, Liz's hope is well on its way to being realized.

"In a good bookroom you feel in some mysterious way that you are absorbing the wisdom contained in all the books through your skin, without even opening them." ~ Mark Twain

Faculty Survey

The UNH Writing Program conducts faculty surveys every few years to gauge awareness of the University Writing Requirement and interest in Writing Intensive (WI) support.

UNH has committed substantial resources to creating and sustaining a University Writing Program that reflects our comprehensive commitment to student writing and learning. As a body, faculty at UNH have long been deeply invested in supporting and improving student writing in their courses, reflecting the charter's values in describing the place of student writing and learning in the undergraduate curriculum. To that end, we wish to understand how aware faculty are of the writing requirements at UNH and where our services are needed to strengthen faculty development.

This survey is intended for **_ANY AND ALL faculty_**, not just those currently teaching WI courses. We greatly appreciate you taking a few moments of your time to fill out **this survey** so that we may continue to support the needs of faculty and students in writing across the curriculum.

For any questions, please contact Meaghan Dittrich, Director of the University Writing Programs at
unh.writing.programs@unh.edu.

Past Perfect: *Director's Notes*
Meaghan Dittrich, Director, University Writing Programs

This past April, UNH hosted the annual Northeast Writing Centers Association (NEWCA) conference. Our keynote address, "Story Culture Live: Black American Story Spaces as Actionable Anit-Racism Work" was given by Clarissa Walker of Rhode Island College. Founded in 1983, NEWCA is is a regional affiliate of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). UNH is an active participant in NEWCA and the larger community of writing centers internationally, who seek to stay up to date and collaborate on all matters regarding how to best serve your student writers and faculty in our community.

On June 5-8, 2023, the UNH Writing Program hosted 8 faculty members at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel. Participants were invested in improving student writing in their courses and will become part of the larger Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Faculty Network. Along with the rest of her cohort, Assistant Professor April Bailey of the Psychology department spent her time at the retreat focusing on how best to incorporate the WI guidelines into her syllabi and assignments. She shares the following about her experience:

> Because I graduated from a research-focused PhD program at Yale, I had little teaching experience prior to starting as a professor. I will be teaching writing courses for the first time next year. The WI retreat thus came at the perfect moment. The framework and remote location of the retreat encouraged me to fully devote 2+ days to thinking, talking, and reading about teaching. I spent that time iterating through multiple drafts of my syllabi and assignment plans. If it were not for the WI retreat, I doubt I would have found this time away from my research obligations. I still would have taught my new courses next year, but they would have been more "thrown together." I am excited to now offer a (hopefully) richer experience for my students.

This annual event is made possible by the generosity of the Dey Family Fund. For information on how to apply to this year's retreat (to be held during J-term at the Browne Center in Durham), see the flyer at the end of this issue.

And on Friday, September 22, Hamilton Smith Hall saw a collection of English alumni from the past 50 years in order to celebrate awarding its first PhD to come out of the department. English PhD alumni achievements and insights were the centerpiece of the event, with an exhibit of alumni books, and some returning alums' participation in conversations about their work—in scholarship, administration, teaching, nonprofits, and other areas—and about the state of humanities. Were it not for key individuals coming out of the English PhD program through the years, our WAC program and the Connors Writing Center would not be the successful programs they are today. Their inception in the 1990s and early 2000s were primarily due to the work of faculty and graduate students coming out of the PhD in Composition.

2024 Writing-Invested Faculty Retreat

Open to *ALL* Faculty
(tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure track, lecturer, clinical, etc.)

Applications due December 1, 2023

Sponsored by the UNH Writing Programs through the generosity of the Dey Family Fund

The UNH Writing Program invites applications for the Writing-Invested retreat at
The Browne Center: January 16 & 17, 2024.
Writing-Invested faculty are instructors interested in improving student writing in their courses. Spaces available for up to 15 faculty participants.

INCLUDES
- **2-day** seminar at the Browne Center in Durham, NH
- **Breakfast & Lunch for 2 days**
- **2 follow-up lunch sessions** at UNH (in May and December, 2024) to discuss progress of your work and continue the discussion of improving student writing

HIGHLIGHTS
- Learn current, research-based best practices to enhance student writing
- Understand and discuss the multiple roles of writing in the classroom
- Create assignments aligned with the core competencies of your course
- Discuss assessment and revision strategies
- Gain a network of writing-invested faculty colleagues at UNH

TO APPLY

Please fill out our PDF application (also found on our "Events" page at www.unh.edu/writing) and send to unh.writing.programs@unh.edu.

Questions can be addressed to the Director of UNH Writing Programs at Meaghan.Dittrich@unh.edu by December 1, 2023.