WRITE FREE OR DIE

IN THIS ISSUE

Go to the Robot: Leaning in to ChatGPT and AI Writing Technologies
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You've probably heard about or even started playing with Open AI's ChatGPT. If you haven't, go try it; see what's holding so much current cultural cache. We can't ignore the development of this software and others like it (as emphasized in this *New York Times* article). Instead, questions and conversations are swirling around how to use them strategically (exemplified most recently in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which argues that we do students a disservice if we pretend it doesn't exist). We now ask: Should you/how can you incorporate them into your class curriculum?

What Folks Are Saying
I'm encouraged that so many writing programs and writing center administrators have (cautiously) embraced rather than rejected these new software programs. We do not view them as an attack on our profession or a threat to our existence. Rather, we view them as tools, work with them, and incorporate them into a new writing process. Recently, CEITL hosted a "Talk About Teaching" session (you can view the recording on the link provided), where I presented with colleagues Associate Professor Laura Dietz and Assistant Professor Sam Carton from the Computer Sciences, and Scott Kimball from Professional Success. We discussed where we are in this new age of writing technology. The consensus: *move forward, but carefully and armed with information.*

Future Tense: Upcoming Writing Across the Curriculum Events

April 1: UNH to host Northeast Writing Centers Association (NEWCA) Conference.
Founded in 1983, the Northeast Writing Centers Association (NEWCA) is a regional affiliate of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). NEWCA has a long history of fostering collaboration among writing center practitioners and scholars throughout New England and New York. Members include administrators and staff of writing centers and persons interested in writing centers. The Connors Writing Center are proud to once again play host to this annual conference, celebrating 10 years since we last hosted. This year's conference will feature a special lunch session with Cinthia Gannett and Tom Newkirk, who will help us celebrate "Writing Legacies at UNH."

June 5-7: Writing-Invested White Mountain Faculty Retreat, at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel.
The UNH Writing Program invites applications for *any* faculty member invested in improving student writing in their courses. (Priority given to writing-intensive course faculty). 10 participants design or revise the writing elements in their course(s). Includes lodging with lunches at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel (family members are welcome to accompany participants). Participants then become part of the larger Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Faculty Network. See final page of this issue for full advertisement or contact Meaghan.Dittrich@unh.edu. **Application deadline has been EXTENDED to March 31**. This annual even made possible by the generosity of the Dey Family Fund.

This sentiment echoes what the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum (AWAC) asserts in its "Statement on Artificial Intelligence Writing Tools in Writing Across the Curriculum Settings." Their language confirms what we have promoted at UNH since we drafted the WI guidelines nearly two decades ago. These guidelines, in turn, follow NCTE's position statements on best practices for teaching with writing. Research constantly reminds us that to cultivate and develop skills, we must focus on the tenets of "processes and practices such as peer-response and revision; encouraging writing in multiple genres, including ones connected to specific disciplinary practices."

Writing-as-Process almost always automatically forestalls many issues of plagiarism or attempts at academic dishonesty.

In mid-February, writing studies scholars convened at the annual Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Unsurprisingly, one of the best-attended sessions was a roundtable on ChatGPT. Texas A&M's Director of Writing and an Assistant Professor of English Gavin Johnson reminded us that we can't always assume that students are "digital natives;" that they'll know how to use this tech; that policing is not pedagogy; and that a pedagogical response to AI calls us to work *with* students rather than being reactionary and "catching" them.

Similarly, Professor Harry Denny of the Purdue OWL asked us to consider the student's perspective: if the instructor doesn't care about the writing, the process, and the student's writing journey, why shouldn't students use ChatGPT? He suggests that instructors get to know their students as writers, incorporate process steps, utilize low stakes and high stakes projects, interrogate and reevaluate their own writing processes, and find ways to incorporate "Meaningful Writing" into course design.

Denny also mentions that "multilingual and vernacular bias exists in this software because it tries to produce the white vernacular that challenges nobody and respects nobody." The software doesn't capture the voice of students of color, first gen students, etc. Denny continues, "Chat bots produce *boring* writing with nothing like a voice." The writing produced is clear but not complex or intellectually rigorous.

Of course, it's possible that, like students in David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University," ChatGPT may be failing its way toward success. But it's notable that Bartholomae points out that the key feature of academic discourse and what we look for in student writing is the creation of new and original ideas or connections. One of AI's major limitations is that it doesn't draw conclusions, provide analysis, or make human judgments. This is simply not what the software is designed to produce (yet). But if Harry Denny isn't worried yet, neither am I.

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"The machines do not solve problems with greater insight than men do, only faster. Only faster!"
~ Isaac Asimov

Using ChatGPT in Your Course

New technologies require us to keep reassessing our practices and their aims – a necessary but often difficult task. Indeed, a new version of ChatGPT is scheduled to launch this summer and we'll be forced to recalibrate once again. It can be exhausting keeping up, but we are more effective if we can be adaptable. Examples of this in the past include the introduction of Wikipedia, spell-check, citation generators, Grammarly, etc. We now use all these things, but informatively, without blind acceptance of their products. We tweak, we revise, we make their output our own. If we're smart, we can view ChatGPT much the same way.

We respect faculty's academic freedom while also honoring institutional academic honesty policies. Many faculty will make the decision to ban its use, which is perfectly understandable. Each course has its own unique contexts that will make certain pedagogical practices appropriate for one course and not for another. That is, of course, up to the individual instructor to decide.

However, if you *do* choose to adopt ChatGPT, AWAC offers these questions as a starting point: "Might the acts of critiquing, rewriting, or discussing AI-generated text foster growth? Are there scenarios where student writing might productively be complemented, supplemented, or assisted by AI language generators?"

Here are some strategies instructors have been experimenting with:

- Use for in-class prompts, starting points, outlines, messy first drafts, pointing out ways to make a current draft stronger (the software will provide bulleted suggestions for how to improve an argument).
- Invite students into the conversation – construct your policy with them, figure out what boundaries you can set together as a collaborative contract, as Susan D'Agostino suggests in Inside Higher Ed.
- Faculty member and Director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Learning Analytics posted an example of how to incorporate ChatGPT into his graduate seminar. The policy gives his students permission to use the software but holds them accountable for it.
- Faculty usage (e.g., when creating a writing assignment prompt): Have ChatGPT help you construct your assignments, rubrics, and lesson plans! Remember *you* have the final say in what the end result looks like. In the end, you are the writer and get to decide.

Some instructors are using AI-detection software, such as GPTZero or Turnitin, to ascertain whether students' writing is bot-generated. This will be an even more ubiquitous and tempting "solution," as LMS platforms such as Canvas and Blackboard are contracting integration with these programs. However, studies are showing us that these detection programs are *far* from accurate and often indicate false positives – not to mention the ethically troubling matter that they retain student work without consent. **Use with caution.**

The Connors Writing Center Approach to ChatGPT

In a word: *minimalism*. In a February staff meeting, our CWC consultants crafted a presentation adapted from an activity designed by Ashley Squires at Avila University's Writing Center. They then discussed how they could potentially use the software in CWC conferences. Sometimes students come to see us with no idea where to start their writing process. ChatGPT offers up an opportunity for a starting point.

The CWC defers, first and foremost, to our traditional training – working with students on brainstorming, asking open-ended questions, discussing audience, focus, organization. As always, our conferences with student writers depend on conversation and collaboration. However, we can all get stuck at some point, even the consultants. If conversation reaches an impasse, asking ChatGPT to weigh in is a potential option for the conference to become unstuck. The first protocol, in this case, is to **refer to the instructor's individual class policies.**

Barring any ban on its usage, the writing assistant and student writer could prompt the software to generate a list of topics or search terms for the student to use when researching the Library's databases, creating an outline as a starting point, identifying an audience, fine-tuning a research question that narrows the scope of the student's project. Students still need to engage in rhetorical and critical-thinking skills and strategies in order to craft an effective prompt for the software. The clearer and more specific you are in asking ChatGPT your question, the better the result it will produce. From that point, the writer makes the decisions for what the writing looks like moving forward.

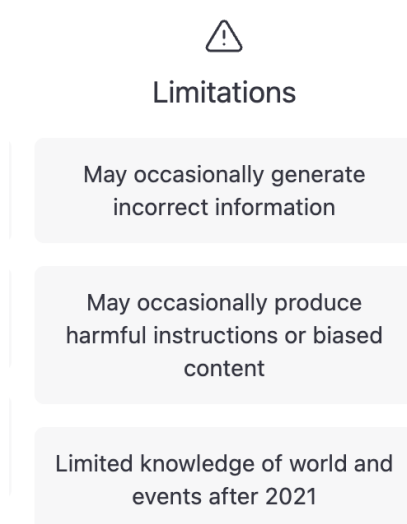We also believe in providing as much information as possible to the students who visit us. That includes sharing the limitations of the software and giving warnings and caution about usage. This is something we *strongly* encourage faculty to do in their classes, as well. Any information provided by ChatGPT, like much of the information we find on the web, should be vetted, double checked, and followed up with more research. ChatGPT is an excellent starting point, but by no means an end result. We disclose the drawbacks…

Limitations

As with any tool, ChatGPT isn't perfect. It clearly acknowledges on its landing page three major limitations:

⚠️
Limitations

May occasionally generate incorrect information

May occasionally produce harmful instructions or biased content

Limited knowledge of world and events after 2021

Its understanding of genre is based on tropes/stereotypes/generalizations that may not be accurate.
- Doesn't understand the nuance of academic conventions or adapt to different audiences
- It often produces a "standard" 5-paragraph essay (a good starting point or general outline, but not college-level caliber).
- For many referencing styles there are no specific guidelines yet for citing ChatGPT or other generative AI. (The University of Queensland has a useful resource page on how to integrate it as a source.)
- One of the most important approaches to using this as a tool is to follow up by asking what has been left out of the response it provides you.

These points can deter many students, turning them away from using the software in the first place. If those don't, however, often the busy server stops them. And soon the paywall will.

Tips, Takeaways, and Support
- The technology is still new; we don't know all the implications yet.
- It shouldn't be ignored, but **be clear what your policy is in your class**.
- If you're going to use it, know how to use it strategically and teach your students how to use it based on *your* expectations. Your class; your rules.
- Process-based writing "safe-guards" against many abuses of the software.
- Have student read the Privacy Policy so they know how their data is used.
- What students think: They saw how it was useful, but didn't want to use it, didn't want to relinquish their control. I find this encouraging.
- Potential to lend more opportunities to access(ibility) (e.g., a tool for non-native English speakers).
- Can be a useful tool for both faculty and students alike.
- Know the murky distinction between plagiarism vs academic integrity/dishonesty. Have a discussion with your students about what they know/don't know.
- Bots have no ownership. That makes this complicated.
- Scholars cite research so that other scholars can consult the same sources if desired. Since an identical prompt given twice to ChatGPT will produce two different sources, citation in the traditional sense may be tricky.

CEITL has set up a webpage with dedicated resources for teaching with AI, which we have also linked to on the Writing Program's Resource page, along with several other links for both students and faculty. Good luck to all of us in this undiscovered country!

Ask Callie:

Your teaching concerns addressed by our very own Callie Barry

As Transposed from Purr to Person by Ashley Barry, Assistant Director, UNH Writing Programs

Dear Callie,

I'm frustrated that my class isn't particularly talkative this semester and I'm unsure how I'll grade their participation. How can I get them to speak up? Or are there other ways I can get them to participate?

-Sincerely,
Situated in Silence

Dear Situated in Silence,

Hi there! I'm Callie, a tortoiseshell cat. I'm a fan of naps by the fire and snuggles on the couch and, like many torties, I've got a lot of *tort-itude*. Despite being known for our diva-like attitudes, many cultures see tortoiseshell cats as lucky. According to folklore, we can do everything from healing warts to preventing shipwrecks. So, you're welcome in advance for my advice!

Your students are really *fur-tunate* to have an instructor like you who's willing to rethink this. There are plenty of reasons why your students may be reticent to participate in class discussions, ranging from having a mental illness or disability that creates anxiety about speaking up to simply not understanding our expectations after several years of pandemic learning. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to expand our definition of participation to address many of these causes. Let's scratch the surface.

Margaret Price offers us the concept of "kairotic spaces" to help understand the less-formal, unscripted spaces in academia that folks with mental illnesses or learning disorders may have more difficulty navigating. Kairotic spaces have all or most of the following criteria: "1. Real-time unfolding of events 2. Impromptu communication that is required or encouraged 3. Participants are tele/present 4. Strong social element 5. High stakes" (Yergeau et al., 2013). While cats like me who have no problem speaking up (when we feel like it) may not see class discussions as difficult to navigate, the pairing of spontaneity and academic impact can cause such spaces to feel *purr-ilous*!

Three of the ways she suggests we work on making kairotic spaces more accessible are by making them "flexible, multimodal, and responsive to feedback" (Price, 2010, p. 130). Are you with me so fur?

When my human was working from home during the pandemic, I watched her use lots of tools (like Google Docs, Jamboards, Mentimeter, or regular old discussion boards) to allow students to engage in class in flexible and multimodal ways. Often, this meant allowing them to participate anonymously and sometimes later on after they'd had some time to think. Maybe you were doing the same! Why not try drawing on these tools and techniques now? Your students may already be familiar with them plus they can help alleviate anxieties and lead to more fruitful discussions.

First, allowing students to record their responses to your question on a Google Doc or Jamboard means they can respond anonymously, which may free them up to share some brilliant ideas they may not have been brave enough to share aloud. Some people just express themselves better with the written word. This can help alleviate some anxiety about public speaking and speaking up in front of your peers.

Don't feel like you need to make participation anonymous all the time. If you're worried about how to count those contributions, make some of those moments not optional (by using a poll or question with Mentimeter, for instance). If you have 20 participants and 20 students, it's easier for you to give everyone full credit. For moments that you count as optional, use your teacher's intuition. You may recognize a student's writing voice in their response. Students may claim their responses during class discussion by following up on the point they made. In short, when you know your students, it's relatively easy to figure out who's paying attention and engaging and who's taking an open-eyed cat nap.

You know how when your human is bothering you, but you can't think of the best response right away? And only after hours of plotting does it dawn on you to attack them in the middle of a snuggle session? No? Okay, maybe it's just me.

But using these tools or discussion boards on Canvas means that students can add those delayed responses and reactions later that day. You might be concerned that this will only create a hairy situation for you, but it doesn't have to. If you already ask students to do informal writing in class, you know that you don't have to respond to every free write.

The same can be true for delayed participation: check your boards or documents at the end of the week and give those delayed responders an extra point in your book! Or a pat on the head!

Speaking of grading, by having forms of discussion that exist outside the ephemeral in-person response, you now have some tangible data to help you with that pesky participation grade for your quieter students. But you don't have to wait until the end of the semester to give your students feedback on how they're doing in this area: you could have a mid-semester check-in grade to let students know how they're doing. Just as you give feedback on drafts of their papers to help them improve, giving them some feedback on this area of performance can help make the abstract concept a little more concrete.

Let's press *paws* for a second—Have you tried all this but are still struggling? Ask students for their feedback! A common refrain in disability studies is "nothing about us without us," meaning that it's vital when we're making decisions that impact people (like folks with disabilities or our students) to involve those people to voice what they need and want. After all, I'm just a cat—what do I know? You could try giving your students quick anonymous surveys (via Mentimeter, Google Forms, Answer Garden, or many others) throughout the semester to ask them which forms of participation are working for them and what they might like to see. Just as different things work for different people, some classes may be more engaged in some of these forms than they are in speaking. Catnip also helps.

If you keep thinking about participation and engagement like this, you and your students will both be feline fine!

"I know all those words, but that sentence makes no sense to me."

~ Matt Groening

The Grammar Box: What, "the"...?
Caroline Hall, Assistant Director, UNH Writing Program (Caroline.Hall@unh.edu)

It's probably been a while since your students heard the terms definite and indefinite articles, but they are those tiny little words that we use all the time. The definite article, *the*, points to a specific noun and it is used when we know the identity of the person, place, or thing in question. Indefinite articles are *a* and *an*, which apply when we're talking about a noun where we don't know the specific identity.

Where articles can really get confusing, though, is when we start thinking about count versus noncount nouns. We can use the definite article *the* no matter if it refers to a count or noncount noun when we're talking about a specific person, place, or thing: If we shout, "Show me the money!" we might be demanding someone show us the money they're going to give us. However, for the indefinite article, it makes a difference when we're talking about noncount nouns. You wouldn't say "I need *an* air." We can't count air or point to a specific air, so it's a noncount noun and you'd likely say, "I need some air."

So, the next time you find yourself pointing to a student's misuse of an article, consider giving them some pointers on count vs. noncount nouns. That could be what's tripping them up!

Dangling Modifier: Net Gains

Caroline Hall, Assistant Director, University Writing Programs (Caroline.Hall@unh.edu)

Other articles in this issue of *Write Free or Die* look at new technologies like ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, Mentimeter, and Jamboard. In this article, I'm going to take you back in time—all the way back to 1989 and the creation of the World Wide Web. Specifically, I'm going to try to convince you to "mix things up" in your classes by integrating website creation into your writing and presentation assignments.

You might have one nagging question: won't the technologies we're working with be outdated by the time I wear out my current shoes?

Absolutely. Within a few years, they will probably go the way of the duck-billed platypus; it's still around, but most people forget about it. This is what has happened to the free versions of PiktoChart, Wix, and Weebly, three technologies I used with students back in the paleotechnologic world of 2016. People use them, but the visuals they create look as antiquated as garials. (Wix still has a good reputation and a legitimate free version, but I have reservations: see the accessibility section, below.)

But it's not about the technology. It's about the skills your students are using. And those will outlast Canva, just like your own communication and problem-solving skills have probably outlasted the rise and fall of MySpace —or, at least, of Google+. Of course, Microsoft Office and Facebook will, like horseshoe crabs and cockroaches, doubtless outlive us all. But your students are likely familiar with these technologies already, and it might be an uphill battle to convince students to use them in new ways.

When your students write academic papers for an academic audience in Word or create PowerPoint presentations for their classmates, they are practicing context-specific skills, which the late, great educator John Dewey compares to "exercises in the gymnasium with pulley weights to 'develop' certain muscles" whereas he compares general and novel activities to "a game or sport" where "novel emergencies have to be met; the coordinating forms have to be kept flexible and elastic" (77).

I'm not suggesting that you "quit the gym," metaphorically speaking, but that incorporating some genre "cross training" might help your students gain problem-solving skills and agility that traditional academic writing may not provide.

You don't need to recreate your course from scratch.

This is the biggest mistake I made in my website creation units. I focused too much on the technology rather than thinking of it as a "cradle" that holds the work students were already doing.

You could ask students to publish work they are already doing in your class. If you followed that approach, the only changes would be that students would get an increased sense that their work can be seen by the "real" world and that they would need to use their problem-solving skills to get their work onto the site. Alternately, many courses already include formal group PowerPoint presentations. Replacing the PowerPoint with a UNH **myPages** site still forces students to focus on design and be selective about the material they choose to present. MyPages also has a "group" option, so you can preserve the collaborative nature of projects you might be doing while putting a twist on them.

Use **myPages**

MyPages is the best website creation software for UNH students and faculty because it is UNH endorsed, designed for universities, accessible with UNH usernames and passwords, and encrypted and secured, so you needn't worry so much that your assignment has caused all of your students to have their identities stolen. It also includes several clean, simple, UNH-approved templates, so students don't have to excessive intellectual bandwidth fumbling with idiosyncratic tools and over-the-top templates. Instead, they can use their mental energy to focus on the quality and accessibility of their writing.

"If you have any young friends who aspire to become writers, the second greatest favor you can do them is to present them with copies of The Elements of Style. The first greatest, of course, is to shoot them now, while they're happy."

~ Dorothy Parker

Unlike the free website builders I've explored, myPages is focused on presenting text rather than providing flashy visual content, which will make it a better "container" for uploading or linking student work.

Consider the challenges.

I'm not going to lie. The myPages interface was not intuitive to me. I thought I could fumble my way through it without much trouble, but I couldn't. It took me an hour to figure out how to add "Our Work" and "The Course" sections to the menu bar and make them functional, upload pdfs of student papers into the "Our Work" section, and create a course description. I found it useful to remind myself that frustration was part of the learning process, and that if I was going to ask my students to undergo the potential frustration of wrangling with new technology, it was only fair if I did so myself.

Build in "frustration breaks" to step away from the technology while you are learning it, and take "trial and error time" into account when you are scheduling homework for your students. For your first attempt at creating a collaborative course site, you might want to stop at what I described above: a bare-bones website with descriptive menu items, a collection of pdfs of student papers, abstracts for their papers, and descriptions of the course and assignment. Fortunately, as I mentioned above, the default myPages design is clean, accessible, and eco-friendly, so you won't need to waste time retrofitting it.

If you decide to do more advanced work on myPages or to use a more flexible option like Wix, here are a few additional suggestions:

Consider following UNH brand guidelines.

You're probably already introducing technologies, genre norms, and styles—APA, MLA, etc.—in your classes. Website creation is one more chance for problem solving and genre learning. It's one that may connect especially well to students' professional lives. The companies they'll work at in the future will have their own styles, norms, and brands—and these probably won't look like academic writing. Flexibility and brand awareness is doubly important at not-for-profits and small schools or businesses where each employee may need to "wear many hats", only one person may have a key skill, or non-specialist employees may be "inventing the wheel" with technology and communications.

Consider audience.

If you have assignments that ask students to write for a "general" audience, a website may be an organic place for them to practice this skill because they won't be writing for their instructor while pretending their instructor is actually Uncle Jim. (The result is often that poor Uncle Jim is either credited with far more subject-specific knowledge than he probably has or is treated as though he is in kindergarten.) After all, if you choose to, you can publish the webpage, and a general audience may see it.

But with roughly 2 billion "live" websites currently online, it's likely your main audience will be bots, webcrawlers, and ChatGPT. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; webcrawlers and bots are probably figuring out the relevance and popularity of your site, and poor ChatGPT needs all the help it can get finding quality information to help it with its compulsive lying problem. Part of website creation is wooing bots, proving to them that your work deserves to be "higher up" in Google searches. This is where SEO (or search engine optimized) writing becomes important.

Still, it's useful for students to know that their website *could* be seen by the Uncle Jims of the world and for them to know that they have a high-quality website they can link in their professional portfolio or, better yet, that they can create their own professional website to share with potential employers—or with other Patriots fans, crossword puzzle constructors, or spey rod fly fishers.

Consider accessibility.

Website creation is an opportunity to attend to elements of accessibility like color contrast, fonts, and alt text. MyPages handles these problems for you, but a website builder like Wix or SquareSpace will tempt you with elaborate templates that are inaccessible to people with color blindness or are cluttered and difficult to navigate.

Consider privacy.

Many website builders have free versions and are encrypted and secure, but they are still clogged with advertising and may email your students weekly for *years* after the class. It took Wix five years to give up on me. Personally, I would rather fight the good fight with the myPages interface.

Consider your sanity.

You don't need to do everything. If you are like me, you will probably try to cram branding, search engine optimization, color theory, accessibility, and audience interaction with online sources (pg. forthcoming) into one unit. Don't be like me. My students got confused, and so did I.

Of course, you'll hear brilliant presentations from amazing educators, like our recent WAC guest speaker Allison Harper Hitt, who seem to do "all the things." But Dr. Hitt made it clear that figuring out how to use different technologies in teaching is a slow and ongoing process. But more, importantly, it can help teaching fresh, and most importantly, it can be fun. Consider incorporating website design to link new skills to your students' net of existing skills.

Works Cited

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"Writing Processes"
Excerpt from *Involved: Writing for College, Writing for Your Self* (Open Source)

~An Author's Confession

Often enough when I sit down in my familiar desk chair and turn on the computer, I have no idea what I am going to write or how I am going to write it. Not every day, not on every page, but often enough, I find myself at a loss as to what to do next. I may have a general idea for a book chapter on a certain topic, using certain materials and referring to certain ideas. Or I may need to write a handout for a class or a recommendation for a student who wants to go to law school. Beyond these general goals, however, I really have no idea what will go on the page or how I should organize my thoughts to produce those words.

This is usually the moment I go make a cup of coffee, or read my e-mail, or find out what new games my son has loaded on the computer. I have the dreaded blank-page syndrome. I can't begin to imagine how I should begin working, how I am going to fill up the page to have something creditable to meet my deadline. Not knowing what words to start putting on the paper, I am overcome with panic and an overwhelming desire to do something else.

After almost half a century of writing and almost thirty years of teaching writing, I ought to know better - but then again I keep getting myself into new spots, so even if I figured out what to put on the page yesterday, I still don't know what I ought to put on the page today. That's what creative work means - and all writing is creative work, even if it is just creating a summary of an article you have just read. You create something new, and if it is new, how could you know before you began what it would be? Inevitably, almost all writers at one time or another face the questions of, What am I doing? Can I do this? How do I even begin thinking about this?

~Trusting the Process

I have learned one thing that helps control the panic and guides me toward useful activity. Writing is always a series of processes. I have come to trust the processes of writing. If I take first steps that seem to make sense, I will start to go down a path that will lead to a finished piece of writing. As I go down the path, I will engage in different activities that will help me figure out what I am doing, how I should go about it, and eventually what words I will use.

I can't expect a finished product to emerge the moment I turn my mind to a writing task or stretch my fingers over the keyboard. Any one of a number of rather different activities can get me going. I think about the goals I wish to accomplish. I jot down phrases or ideas I think might be relevant to the subject. I look over the writing that I have done to that point on the project, maybe even outline it, to see where the work was going. I look for some data or sources that will help develop my ideas. I freewrite about the germ of a thought in the back of my mind. I read something related to get some ideas. I ask myself where I am in the process of writing. Any of these or many other actions can help me take the next step, bring my task into clearer shape, and make my task that much easier the next time I sit down to write.

Transitions Seeks Essay Submissions, Editors for Its 2023–2024 Edition

Twenty years after the first publication of UNH's first anthology of first-year writing,
Transitions is still going strong

Transitions is preparing its next edition, seeking writers and editors. *Transitions*, an e-anthology of writing from UNH's English 401: First-Year Writing, is published annually in August for use in English 401 classes.

"Every year I'm truly impressed by the writing that our First-Year Writing students produce in our classes. Our teachers do a wonderful job of mentoring the students to craft work they are proud to publish. Further, the graduate students take on the work of publishing *Transitions* each year—they are professionals, and it is always a delight to see what they create," writes Cristy Beemer, Associate Professor in English and the UNH Director of Composition.

First-Year Writing students produce four major assignments during the class, and they may submit this work for consideration in the following year's issue.

"You're not writing this just for me, you're writing this for your peers," General Editor Ashley Barry explains to students in the class.

Transitions 2022-2023 General Editor Ashley Barry and Assistant Editor Rachel Roy met recently via Zoom to describe the process of creating the anthology and the encourage submissions for the upcoming edition.

Last year, English 401 students submitted a total of around 200 essays, including 100 for consideration in the personal essay section. Students who are selected for the anthology receive a stipend of $100 as well as a large reading audience. English 401: First-Year Writing welcomed 2200 students this year.

The essays are then used in English 401 for reading and discussion of both the content and craft, as models for the different genres studied in the class: personal essays, critical analysis essays, annotated bibliographies, and researched persuasive essays.

Assistant Editor and incoming General Editor Rachel Roy explains, "One of the purposes [of *Transitions*] is definitely to have teaching examples," including specific techniques which students can emulate, such as innovative structures or incorporation of sources. "We try to have different things that students could do."

Multiple drafts of the same essay are particularly welcome.

"We have the intention of identifying a paper that's gone through some significant changes," Barry says. "That would be a really interesting way to see the process of that writer, that writer's paper."

General Editor Ashley Barry and Assistant Editor Rachel Roy described *Transitions* to incoming English 401 instructors in August.

Barry and Roy commend the work of writers featured in this year's anthology.

"We had different perspectives that gave a different angle into topics," Roy says.

Transitions 2022-2023 also included something new: images. Images such as graphs or illustrations can helpfully compliment an essay.

"I really hope we he future," Barry says. Beemer explains, "Although there are some limitations due to copyright [of the images], we are hoping to showcase multimodal essays in future versions of *Transitions*.

Once students have submitted their writing in May, the *Transitions* staff gets to work. This year, section editors Jess Flarity (personal essays), Jen Daly (researched persuasive essays), and Ann DeCiccio (critical analysis essays) drew on their experience in teaching English 401 to select works for the anthology.

"Anyone who's working on *Transitions* has taught or is teaching English 401 and so has a good sense of what an excellent essay for this might look like. They've got that expertise so that they can also say, 'I could imagine talking about this essay in this way in my class,'" Barry says.

The work of the editors involves lots of conversation. Barry and Roy describe the energy and fun during the long summer meetings to discuss submissions.

"When everyone agrees on an essay and is so enthusiastic about it and talks about how much they can't wait for students to read this, that is such a great moment," Barry says.

Incoming General Editor Rachel Roy welcomes applications for section editors for the upcoming edition by March 10; English 401 students may submit their own essays for consideration by May 10 at https://mycourses.unh.edu/enroll/4XT7XE

~Laura Smith, Principal Lecturer in the English Department

~The Variety of Processes

Writing is a process of responding to the statements of others, a way of acting and participating within the drama of the term. Because each kind of paper is part of a different drama, a different kind of interaction, the writing process varies from situation to situation. Thus the process of writing a summary of a chapter for study purposes (see page 107) differs somewhat from Image removed for copyright reasons. Part One Writing Your Self into College 47 the process of writing a summary to demonstrate to a teacher that you have read and understood a difficult philosophic passage (see pages 127-130). Both of these differ substantially from the process of answering an essay exam question based on the same material (see pages 127-130). If these apparently closely related activities (covered in Chapters 5 and 6) differ, how much more would they differ from preparing an analytical essay (see Chapter 9), a laboratory report (see Chapter 12), or a persuasive argument (see Chapter 15)?

The different assignments writers in college are likely to encounter are described in various parts of this book. Their locations are listed on the chart on this page. In these sections the text identifies at least one good path that leads in the appropriate direction. You may well think of others that will also work for you.

Bazerman, Charles. (2015). "Chapter 3: Writing Processes," *Involved: Writing for College, Writing for Your Self*. (pp. 44-70). The WAC Clearinghouse. https://wac.colostate.edu/books/practice/involved/ (Originally published 1997 by Houghton Mifflin)

Past Perfect: *Director's Notes*

Meaghan Dittrich, Director, University Writing Programs

This January, the Writing Program, in collaboration with Assistant Professor Katherine Lockwood from MCSBS/NUTR, Allyson Rider from the Office of Community, Equity and Diversity (OCED) and Scott Lapinski from Student Accessibility Services (SAS), our WAC graduate students helped facilitate a CEITL faculty workshop on designing accessible writing assignments. In our session we offered guidance and suggestions on how to effectively create writing assignments that speak to any student with any learning background or (dis)abilities. This workshop also offered faculty an opportunity to discuss and/or work on their own assignment prompts during the session. Once again, we'd like to let faculty know that the Writing Program is always available for one-on-one consultation for faculty as they seek feedback in designing their writing assignments.

In February, our annual WAC guest speaker event built on our January workshop and Dr. Allison Harper Hitt provided us with some in-depth scholarship and pedagogical practices for how we can best meet students where they are and think about how best to design writing prompts with all students in mind. In higher education, there is a tendency to try to diagnose disabled students and default to accommodations rather than crafting more accessible pedagogical environments. Meeting students' needs requires foregrounding accessibility in physical and digital spaces, curricular and programmatic design, and interactions with each other. Dr. Hitt's presentation addressed how to design writing classrooms and curricula that are truly accessible, rather than simply accommodating of difference.

"To me, writing an ongoing series feels like driving a freight train downhill. All you can do is steer and pray."

– G. Willow Wilson

2023 White Mountain Faculty Retreat

Open to *ALL* Faculty

Applications due March 31

**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 Omni Mount Washington Hotel **June 5-7, 2023**. Writing-Invested faculty are instructors interested in improving student writing in their courses.*

INCLUDES

- **3-day lodging** at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel (participants may be accompanied by spouse/family)
- **Lunch for 3 days** (family welcome)
- **3 follow up sessions** at UNH (in August, December, and May) 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 send the following information to the
Director of UNH Writing Programs at Meaghan.Dittrich@unh.edu
by March 31, 2023:**

1. Name, Dept., email
2. Course(s) with writing (WI or other) that you have taught or plan to teach
3. Courses you intend to develop or revise during the retreat
4. A brief statement about what you hope to take away from the experience
5. A brief statement about what you hope to contribute to the experience of colleagues
6. A statement affirming availability for both the June retreat and 3 follow up sessions at UNH (dates TBD)