



What Really Happens in the Writing Center?

Plush couches fill the room. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee filters down the hall. Four computers stand ready for eager fingers. And to top it off, a handful of smiling consultants are ready to aid your students in the writing process—*any* part of it. The location: Eddy 6, home to the CSU Writing Center and a variety of consultants with skills ranging from computer science to philosophy, from beginner's notes to polished thesis.

Contrary to the belief of many, the Writing Center is not a place for remedial lessons in composition. Quite the opposite, the Writing Center and its consultants offer a comfortable environment in which to discuss any series of paper-related topics. Such topics include, but are not

limited to, brainstorming, outlining, formulating a thesis, connecting ideas within a paper, formatting a works cited page, and polishing an almost-completed work.

Consultations begin as soon as a writer walks through our door. With a warm welcome, we ask clients to sign in and fill out preliminary paperwork to give us a better sense of their specific paper goals. Because consultations occur on a walk-in basis, your students may have a short wait, although we try to accommodate clients as quickly as possible. Upon completing paperwork, clients are free to sit at the location of their choice, whether couch, table, or computer.

Consultations typically last half an hour. We ask that clients bring their assignment

sheet, if applicable, to the consultation, as this aids both the consultant and client in tailoring the written work to the assignment's requirements. During the consultation, the consultant will ask questions to both gain an understanding of the assignment and content of the piece, as well as to engage the client with the work to promote learning and progress. At all times, clients maintain ownership of their work. Further, we do not discuss grading with students during a consultation. Upon completion of a consultation, the client's paperwork is filed and kept confidential unless the client specifies otherwise.

Still, we realize that many of your students are busy with coursework and the rushed nature of everyday life. For

(continued on page 2)

Writing Assignments that Connect to Professional Practice

In the field of counseling psychology, when a psychological assessment is performed, the resulting information (diagnosis, recommendations, etc) must be communicated to several different audiences. This is especially true when the client is a child. Often the child is old enough to need some information about what's going on and why he or she is being tested but needs a less sophisticated explanation than, say, the parents. The information given to the par-

ents, in turn, needs less psychological jargon than the information given to other professionals in the field.

Clearly, then, there are several reasons why a psychology student would do well to learn to tailor the same psychological information to address multiple audiences. In fact, if the student hopes to work professionally in the field of psychology, the ability to communicate to child, parent, and professional audiences may be a necessary, rather

than just a useful, skill.

Further, such writing assignments can provide opportunity for students to practice and receive feedback on their emerging abilities and their grasp of concepts. The exercise of adapting information for differing audiences is a good test of how well a student understands the material.

Serena Enke, doctoral candidate and Teaching Fellow in Psychology.

WAC vs. WID vs. WIC

Writing across the curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and writing-intensive courses (WIC) are three terms often used interchangeably. While these three terms can start to sound like alphabet soup, in fact each one has its own history and meaning. Writing-across-the-curriculum is a set of educational initiatives to address the general writing needs of college students. Related to the regularly recurring complaints that Johnny (or Joanie) can't write, formal and informal undergraduate WAC programs were first developed at small colleges almost 30 years ago. WAC Programs attempt to encompass some of the more recent research findings related to composition studies: that writing is best taught as a process; that writers learn by writing and receiving good feedback, often to their work-in-progress; that students need writing experiences within all their classes, across all four years of their coursework; and that such writing experiences cross disciplinary boundaries and prepare students for writing in their careers and lives.

Writing in the Disciplines is sometimes considered a subset of WAC or may be seen as a separate entity altogether. WID focuses on teaching the conventions and norms of writing within a particular major or discipline. WID tends to focus on longer or more formal writing projects and directs students towards particular forms, styles, citation guides, and audiences as they exist within their field of study.

Finally a "writing-intensive course" is a general moniker for classes that emphasize writing as a way to learn and offer scaffolded writing assignments to help students master not only disciplinary conventions but also the content or material under discussion.

Professor Sarah Sloane, English

Writing Tip:

The Five-Minute Workshop is an excellent way to provide a short, focused writing lesson on a variety of topics such as quotations, transitions, or even sentence structure. Here's the basic approach:

- Provide an example
- Specify a context for use
- Generalize the concept or lesson

See an example of a Five-Minute Workshop in the bottom right-hand corner of this page.

The Writing Center: Dedicated Tutoring

We like to think that all Writing Center consultants are dedicated, i.e. committed to writers and the Center's goals. Recently, however, a small group of specially prepared consultants is giving new meaning to "dedicated." Beginning Spring 2007, the Writing Center piloted a dedicated tutoring program that matches consultants with disciplinary courses to provide enhanced writing consultations. To date, dedicated tutors have worked

with Computer Science, Psychology, and Agriculture classes.

Dedicated tutors add knowledge of course content, writing assignments and instructor expectations to their training as facilitators of writers' growth. Students in the courses have the advantage of not only working with such consultants but also of making appointments with the consultants rather than dropping into the Writing Center. This arrangement benefits consultants

and students alike.

Dedicated tutoring appeals to writing consultant Erin Parson because it connects her with a specific subject or group of people and allows her to learn about assignments, communicate with students and professors, and contribute her background knowledge to the task at hand.

Blaine Smith, another consultant, echoes this sentiment and adds that "It is nice that content classes offer assistance to students so they can

(continued on page 3)

What Really Happens in the Writing Center (continued)...

those who do not have time to come into the Writing Center for a personal consultation, we offer the option of submitting an online draft. Drafts can be submitted through the website—writing.colostate.edu—and will be responded to in a manner similar to a personal consultation. We typically reserve thirty minutes for each online draft, which allows us to read and respond to approximately five pages of written work. While we do our best to respond to online drafts in a timely manner, we do ask for five business days to complete a

response and send it back, as walk-in consultations receive top priority.

Consultants are more than happy to accommodate the questions and needs of your students with supplementary books or relevant materials. Yet they also strive to keep the experience educational, and therefore do not proof-read papers. While we are more than happy to help students discover common grammatical errors, our mission is to provide clients with the knowledge to fix these problems in the future. As a result,

we aim to look at surface errors only in the last few minutes of a consultation.

Whether beginning the writing process, or looking for help in wrapping the process up, your students can be assured that the CSU Writing Center has the resources they need to help them meet their goals. Whether it's a piece of creative fiction, or a lab report on metabolism, your students will engage in positive discussion with our consultants who are happy to discuss writing concerns and strategies. Even if writers only have an idea in their heads, they should stop by. Who knows, they might be inspired!

— *Article by Laurel Lachowicz, Writing Center Consultant. Laurel is pictured here with a writer during a recent consultation at the Writing Center.*

Writing Center Hours:

Eddy 6: M–Th, 10:00–4:00
F, 10:00–1:00

Morgan

Library: Su–Th, 6:00–8:00

A Five-Minute Lesson on Paragraph Coherence

1. Find a short description of a technical process that students are unlikely to be familiar with. For instance, I use a published description of fishing techniques used by salmon gillnetters off Puget Sound.

2. Show students two sample descriptions of the process, the first lacking transitions and connective phrases, the second possessing these elements.

3. Have students identify the version that was easier to understand. Probe their ability to explain the difference.

4. After they have exhausted their ability to identify transitions and connective phrases that create coherence, generalize the lesson by talking about unity and internal coherence in paragraphs or have them practice the skill with a short in-class exercise.

— *Sue Doe, gtPathways Coordinator*



Commenting on Student Writing

While assigning and grading student papers can be a daunting task for any faculty member or graduate assistant, the Writing Studio web site, located at writing.colostate.edu, can help. For instance, check out University Distinguished Teaching Scholar Kate Kiefer's* tutorial called "Teaching in the Margins: Commenting on Student Writing," located at <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/commenting/index.cfm>. Here you'll find information on:

- designing writing assignments that connect to course goals
- commenting in the margins
- commenting at the ends of papers
- common misunderstandings and myths associated with grading student writing
- disciplinary assistance in agricultural science, arts and humanities, business, economics and finance, engineering, mathematics, natural resources, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

**Professor Kate Kiefer, English*

Dedicated Tutoring (continued)...

better express their ideas and articulate what they are learning in that class. It shows how important writing is for all areas of study."

With two consultants working with PSY100 and another with AGRI/IE 270a, the dedicated tutoring program is available to over 500 students this semester. The Writing

Assignment Samples

You can view sample writing assignments from other campuses by going to the gtPathways web site at <http://writing.colostate.edu/GTPathways/assignments.cfm>.

There you will find writing assignment examples for the following contexts:

- Academic papers
- Professional genres
- Public arguments

Contact gtPathways Writing Integration Coordinator, Sue Doe, at Sue.Doe@colostate.edu for additional help with writing assignment design and revision.

E680—gtPathways Writing Integration

- a one-credit course for GTAs and others
- offered twice a week for five weeks
- Section one—CRN 66728—7:45-9 TR Eddy 119, Aug 25-Sept 28 (Psychology section)
- Section two—CRN 66729—4-5:15 TR Eddy 119, Aug 25-Sept 28
- Section three—CRN 66730—12:30-1:45 TR Eddy 119, Sept 29-Nov 2

Turn grading into a professional development opportunity!

Write to Engage

Faculty who are familiar with the writing across the curriculum movement have almost certainly heard the phrases "writing to learn" and "writing in the disciplines." Writing to learn involves activities that help students understand key concepts in a given discipline, typically through activities such as summaries and responses, note taking, and posts to discussion forums. Writing in the disciplines refers to efforts to help students learn about and become familiar with the communication practices typical of professionals in a discipline, usually through writing assignments such as journal articles and research reports.

Between these two extremes lies a third approach: writing to engage. Building on the value of asking students to think critically about information and issues central to a discipline, writing to engage moves beyond the relatively low-level writing activities associated with writing to learn while avoiding the need for specialized disciplinary knowledge required for writing assignments associated with writing in the disciplines. Writing to engage asks students to take on higher level thinking tasks without the need for lengthy writing assignments. As such, it can be an ideal tool for courses in the gtPathways program.

Consider, for example, a writing assignment, no longer than 300 words, that asks students to identify the most important ideas in an assigned reading and then to evaluate the merit of those ideas in light of a reading assignment made earlier in the semester. By asking students to make judg-

ments about key arguments, you ask them to go far beyond simply listing and remembering key points. You ask students, in effect, to engage in a dialogue with readings in ways that call for the complex thinking we hope to see in our best undergraduate students.

If you're interested in exploring the connections between writing to engage and critical thinking, sign up for the TILT Summer Conference on Learning and Teaching, held the week after finals week. The conference theme, "Integrating Critical Thinking into Your Courses," will be led by nationally recognized educator Bill Condon from Washington State University. The conference and its accompanying course-redesign workshop calls attention to the central importance of providing opportunities for students to think critically about the information, ideas, and arguments they encounter in their courses. For more information about the conference, go to the web site at <http://tilt.colostate.edu/summer>

*Professor Mike Palmquist
Director, TILT*

An In-Class Writing Tip

"In Sociology 205: Contemporary Race-Ethnic Relations, Professor Lori Peek has her students respond to information presented during the class period or asks them a central question related to course material. She has deemed this query the "Question of the Day." This approach not only gets students practicing writing frequently, but it also gives Dr. Peek feedback as to what the students are and are not learning during class periods."

*Zac Watne
Sociology GTA*

THIS NEWSLETTER WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING.

TILT and Teaching Certificates



The Graduate Teaching Certificates program, offered through the Institute for Learning and Teaching (<http://tilt.colostate.edu>), provides graduate students an opportunity to learn about, reflect on, and practice teaching at the post-secondary level. The program is flexible, allowing graduate students to focus on areas of teaching that most interest them and best meet their professional needs. In collaboration with the Graduate School and Computer Training and Support Services, the Institute offers four Teaching Certificates:

- The Certificate in College Teaching
- The Certificate in Service-Learning
- The Certificate in Teaching With Technology
- The Certificate in Learning Management Systems

Technology Uses and Writing Integration—Local Research by Justin Jory

With the development of information technologies such as the World Wide Web, digital technologies have found increasing prevalence in communication practices utilized outside the university. Faculty who are concerned about preparing their students for successful communication in these technology-rich environments might consider the technology enhancements available for writing integration. Many strategies are available that prepare students to function as critically literate writers in an age of technology-driven communication. Arguably, these strategies may be an increasingly important part of the instructional equation.

But how are faculty at CSU currently integrating digital technologies into their courses that also integrate writing? And how might they use technology-enhanced writing pedagogies to more effectively enhance learning?

A case study conducted in the Spring of 2008, entitled *At the Intersection: Initial Faculty Uses of Technologies to Accomplish State-Mandated Writing Integration*, attempted to answer these questions.

Interviews with faculty and GTAs from across the Colleges of Liberal Arts and from the Department of Psychology suggest that course management software is being widely used to assist with dissemination of writing assignments, with transmittal of course information, and to

some extent with grading and responding to student writing. Yet other opportunities remain possible. For instance, the use of electronic discussion forums provides an opportunity for enlarging discussions begun in the classroom. Students might also engage in electronic, out-of-class peer reviews of one another's work. These are just two ideas among a host of available options.

CSU's own Writing Studio [see information below] offers a state-of-the-art interface for implementing pedagogical choices such as the discussion forum as well as many other electronic opportunities for enlarging student exposure to 21st-century strategies for writing and learning through writing.

—Justin Jory, MA, English

gtPathways Writing Integration

Sue Doe, Coordinator

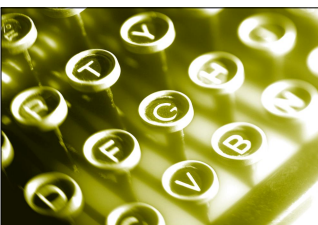
Office Location: Eddy 314

Phone Number: 491-6839

Email:
Sue.Doe@Colostate.Edu

Danielle Bodelson, Editor:
Email: dayo21@aol.com

gtPathways Web Address:
<http://writing.colostate.edu/gtPathways/index.cfm>



Writing@CSU

The Writing@CSU Web site and its Writing Studio are designed to help writers by providing access to writing guides, activities, tools, and links to other resources available on the Web. The site offers an experience similar to a well-run workshop -- timely advice from teachers, feedback from other writers, helpful examples, and access to tools (such as the To-Do List, Ideas, Outline, Bibliography, Draft, Blog, and ePortfolio tools). These tools can help any writer write effectively for varied audiences and occasions.

The work a writer creates in Writing@CSU's Writing Studio is stored in a database so that it can be revised, shared with other writers, or submitted to other writers

for comment. A writer's work is kept in a confidential, password-protected account so that the only people who can view the work are the writer and others the writer invites to review it. To get a Writing Studio account, simply go to

<http://writing.colostate.edu> and create one.

Writing Studio Instructors can also create and manage class pages -- and any teacher can request to become a Writing Studio Instructor by simply sending an email message to Mike Palmquist at Mike.Palmquist@ColoState.edu or to Jill Salahub at Jill.Salahub@Colostate.edu. For more information, contact Jill by email or at 491-7253.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

For questions about Writing-Across-the-Curriculum consultations and workshops please contact Professor Sarah Sloane (Director of WAC) at Sarah.Sloane@Colostate.Edu or Associate Director of WAC, Laura Thomas at Laura.Thomas@Colostate.Edu

TO: