



In this issue, we recap some suggestions made in a workshop given by Beth Bradford for Writing Fellows. Ms. Bradford is best known among us for her great work with students for whom English is a second language. But I was reminded by her workshop at the spring luncheon that she is a gifted teacher with something to teach all of us.

Writing is a tremendous learning tool, no matter what the subject, because it is "visual thought;" it is like thinking on paper. But how about using informal writing to

learn about—writing?

In one of her handouts, Ms. Bradford lists ways to get students to use writing to learn. First, make sure you have some scrap paper on hand to give to your student. Then consider suggesting one of the following write-to-learn activities which addresses your student's own situation:

- *freewrite reactions to the assignment
 - *write assumptions and associations ("This reminds me of...")
 - *cluster/web/mind map to remember details
 - *ask questions or make lists
- More specifically, many of you have asked "What do I do with very rough drafts?" Bradford has some great WTL suggestions for that too:

- *write an outline of the paper thus far, followed by
- *clustering, then freewriting, to fill gaps
- *using charts, Venn diagrams, or some other organizer to look at the structure of the paper
- *list questions a reader might have
- *answer the questions
- *free write the opposing argument.

Don't forget: these WTL activities should never be analyzed for grammar or structure. Encourage the student to use these as springboards to dive back into her paper and begin constructive revision. And you just might find these activities useful for your own writing process as well!

WRITING across the Curriculum

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Writing Around Richmond

Fellows Give the Best Advice by Renee Macbeth, fellow

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A new addition to the Writing Across the Curriculum program, the Fellows' Retreat and Luncheon is a great opportunity for the fellows and the program. At these gatherings are good food, great community, and a chance for fellows to share their advice for and experience with the program. 1999 saw the completion of two such luncheons, one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Both of these experiences were very valuable for all involved.

The Spring 1999 luncheon was a chance to gain some pointers about



tutoring ESL students. During the first half of the retreat, Beth Bradford gave an amazing interactive presentation of the problems facing ESL students and then gave advice for how to best help this population. The second half of the luncheon was spent discussing ways to better the program. Fellows also completed a survey, which served as a tool to collect other suggestions.

At the fall luncheon, we were pleased to find that one of our suggestions to the WAC Administrators had already been acted on: WAC Director Joe Essid announced that the Writing Fellow mailboxes which fellows had requested at the

spring retreat were now in the Writing Center. These boxes provide a place for Writing Fellows to pick up papers from students should they need to leave a draft for a Fellow's advice.

Dr. Essid explained that "we heard clearly last spring that Fellows often experience difficulty exchanging drafts with students who don't turn their papers along with the rest of the class. Fellows suggested some easily accessible mailboxes would help. They identified the problem AND the solution!"



The next chance to participate in the food, fun, and feedback of a luncheon will be early in the Spring semester. Put the luncheon on your calendars for next semester; not only is it a "free lunch," it is your chance to contribute to the future of the program.

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“What Good Does Tutoring Do?” **by Desiree Maldonado, '99, Writing Fellow**



Don't students have enough work papers, readings, tests, group projects, and did I mention papers? I think that the average student at the University of Richmond writes about ten papers a semester. Then why, you ask, would anyone in their right mind volunteer to read and edit an additional thirty papers a semester? Simple: because he or she belongs to the WAC program.

I became a Writing Fellow my second semester sophomore year, and yes I have spent a couple of sleepless nights reading Freshman Core papers. The work is sometimes hard and not always as rewarding as I could wish, but despite the bumpy spots, I would do it all again.

I remember a certain freshman student who had very basic writing problems. He had no idea how to structure a paper, no thesis statement, and at times did not even have a clear idea of what he wished to express. I followed a couple of his papers and later switched classes.

One night, I got a call and it was him. He wanted me to fellow more of his papers, because he felt that I knew him and his writing. I am not sure what he meant by that statement. I guess it was his way of letting me know that he felt comfortable with me, and most importantly that he un-

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derstood that when I criticized his paper it was for his own good. He never got an A on a paper, but his telephone call to me, I believe, was his way of letting me know that he appreciated what I did, and that he truly believed it made a difference.

I had never, before that moment, realized how important my job was. I do not believe I ever did much for him; sometimes we would just sit and discuss the topic. I would ask him why he had used a certain quote or what he was trying to prove by raising a specific point. I gave him a few basic grammar pointers subject-verb agreements, sentence fragments, and so forth but mainly concentrated on his content. Correct grammar usage is of the utmost importance to express oneself clearly, but I firmly believe that if someone has a problem verbalizing what he has to say, content and not grammar is the place to start. I think that this is one of the things he appreciated: I had read and tried to understand his paper, his thoughts, and I was trying to get him to improve not only his writing skills, but how he expressed what he had to say. Writing is one of the best ways human beings have of expressing themselves, their views, and their ideas. It is a privilege to belong to an organization that helps students better express what they have to say to the rest of the world.

Larina Orlando and Alisa Palmisano: WAC Outstanding Fellows, 1999 **by Terry Dolson, Writing Fellows Coordinator**

Resident WAC expert, Dona Hickey, probably said it best: “she’s vigilant, diligent, and intelligent.”

These words describe both of the fellows who were presented with the first “WAC Outstanding Fellows Award” last spring. WAC Director Joe Essid presented certificates of appreciation and \$50.00 gift certificates to Carytown Books just before the two seniors graduated in the spring.

Dr. Essid explained that the WAC program wanted to honor writing fel-

lows who do an especially excellent job, above and beyond the call of duty. Larina and Alisa were nominated by WAC faculty for whom they had worked.

Because this was the first time the award was presented, both Alisa and Larina expressed surprise at the honor. Over lunch, Dr. Essid, Larina, Alisa, and I talked about the Writing Fellows program here at the University of Richmond. Many people at other schools are surprised that we can maintain a quality program with only undergrad-

uate tutors. But we are not surprised; we are very aware of the intelligence and dedication of our fellows. If a student makes it through Dr. Essid’s training course, he or she is ready for what lies ahead.

Sometimes I think that, because fellows are paid for their work, we forget to also say “thank you” and recognize the outstanding work fellows do. This award, which we hope to present again in Spring, 2000, is one way to recognize the excellence and “extra effort” we see in WAC every day.



Upcoming Events:

Writing Fellows Retreat and Luncheon

Fellows old and new should plan to attend this very important event.
Saturday, January 22 11:30-1:30 University Club

WAC Faculty Luncheons

Wednesday, February 23: Assessing Student’s Writing

practical advice for those who want to avoid the “whichever step it lands on” method of assessing student writing!

Monday, March 27: Using “Writing To Learn” Strategies: How and Why

ways to painlessly incorporate writing in your classes