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TEACHING WITH WRITING

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING INTENSIVE CURRIULUM (WIC) NEWSLETTER

Volume 15, Issue 3 Spring 2006

WIC Events

Fall 2006

WIC Faculty Seminars

October 9, 16, 23, 30 and November 6.
Monday
3—5 pm
121 Waldo Hall

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Departments Assessing Writing: Portfolios, Rubrics, Surveys, and More

by Sarah Ghasedi, WIC TA

Dan Edge and Becky Warner

WIC Lunch Seminar May 5th

Throughout OSU, departments are working to develop and improve writing assessment practices. This collective effort was the topic of a recent Eating-to-Learn WIC lunch entitled "Departments Assessing Writing: Portfolios, Rubrics, Surveys, and More." During this event, panelists Dan Edge of Fisheries and Wildlife, Becky Warner of Sociology, and Kevin Boston of Forest Engineering described assessment strategies that include rubrics, surveys, and portfolios. In addition, they candidly discussed the challenges, successes, and learning experiences involved as their diverse departments strive to assess writing projects and at the same time use the assessment data to continually improve their programs. These presentations have opened the door to further interdisciplinary discussion and communication about student writing assessment in the future.

Sociology Chair Becky Warner explained that her Department recently made some dramatic changes in its assessment efforts. First, she noted that past approaches testing how well Sociology students had learned course material did not generate enough useful data. One reason is that such tests focused on generalities, but not on whether students had learned the subject material well enough to explain it to others. Also assessments were administered at the beginning and end of a student's time in the Department. This method faltered because at the beginning when students were initially tested they did not know the material, and by the end they were close to graduation and were not motivated to take the test seriously.

New assessments within Sociology courses use rubrics that focus on two key

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Fall 2006 WIC Faculty Seminar: Call for Participants

Faculty interested in the fall 2006 Introductory WIC Faculty Seminar should ask their department chair to send an email nomination to WIC Program Director Vicki Tolar Burton at vicki.tolarbuton@oregonstate.edu.

The seminar, designed both for faculty who plan to teach WIC courses and for those who want to learn to use writing in non-WIC courses, will meet five Monday* afternoons from 3 to 5 pm: October 9, 16, 23, 30, and November 6.

Note: The day has been changed from Wednesdays to Mondays

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Departments Assessing Writing:
Portfolios, Rubrics, Surveys, and More

areas: content (75%) and writing (25%). An example of this type of rubric can be seen at <<http://wic.oregonstate.edu/Theory%20Rubric.doc>> This rubric rates student work as sophisticated, competent, or unsatisfactory. Students receive 20 points for meeting specific assignment requirements, 10 points for ideas and content, and 10 points for writing mechanics. The data generated from these rubric-based assessments have not only identified strengths and weaknesses in the Sociology program, but as Warner notes, the process raised some interesting questions about responsibility: "Where is our responsibility, and when does it lay elsewhere? What should be taught in bacc core vs. upper-division Sociology courses?" These are discussions that connect across disciplines and between instructors and administration.

More specifically, data obtained from these rubric surveys revealed that while Sociology students tend to be strong in areas like word choice, they often struggle to make arguments based on quantitative data. For instance, Warner explains that her students might struggle to answer questions like the following: "How do you interpret the table? What are the numbers, what do they say, what do they mean?" In an attempt to address this problem, the Sociology Department is in the process of moving all upper-division requirements into their department. For example, Warner hopes that teaching Statistics within the Sociology Department will help emphasize the relevance and importance it occupies in the discipline.

Fisheries and Wildlife Chair Dan Edge explained that one of the ways in which his department assesses the success of their program is through alumni surveys conducted every three years. These surveys focus on post-graduation data (the success of graduates): "We ask the students a number of questions relating to their preparation; for example, whether they would be willing to share GRE scores. We even ask those students if they would give us permission to contact their current employers in order to assess their satisfaction with our 'product' in various skill areas." Students are also asked to rate the importance level of various skills and the degree to which OSU prepared them for executing these tasks. A copy of the FW Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan is available online at: <<http://wic.oregonstate.edu/WICFWDraftAssessmentPlan.pdf>>

In addition, writing is assessed based on rubrics that have been designed for individual FW classes and are specific to individual assignments. Writing is assessed in two sophomore, two junior, and several optional senior classes (including one WIC course). Afterwards, faculty must go back and characterize student performance in specified categories. The data is then recorded in spreadsheets where progress may be tracked over time.

> ***"Assessment generated more conversation within the faculty than any other conversation we've had throughout the years." - Dan Edge***

According to Edge, the process of generating these rubrics was not without its struggles: "It was difficult to determine how to characterize those competency areas. That took a lot of discussion. We weren't doing the sophomore courses early on, and some of the first assessments suggested that we did have problems with the writing, but when we looked at it, we saw that it was actually a function of the fact that over time our students had forgotten or were no longer learning how to use the library to find their primary literature. In order to address this problem, we asked students to go to the library and meet with a librarian to help them find something. Then they wrote a short paper describing what they found and how the librarian helped them find it.

One of the issues we have is that half of our new students are transfer students. They all have to go back and take sophomore classes. They come to us with quite a bit of variation in their training. We know which community colleges in our program are turning out good students; these could provide a model for some of the others."

Also, his Department's efforts to develop better assessment ignited a tremendous amount of unanticipated communication: "Assessment generated more conversation within the faculty than any other conversation we've had throughout the years." And along with the discussion came a tremendous amount of work. Edge admits, this work is the most difficult part of assessment: "The workload was the most difficult and problematic part for us. The key is getting quality information with the least amount of effort."

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Departments Assessing Writing:
Portfolios, Rubrics, Surveys, and More

According to Kevin Boston, Forest Engineering faces a special set of difficulties because it is officially accredited/certified by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). As a result, the Department must structure their assessment processes in a way that meets specific ABET guidelines. FE's interpretation of those guidelines inspired them to use a portfolio model, displaying work generated in relevant courses. FE tracks relevant student work and maps all assignments individually by specific learning objectives according to ABET regulations: "We've mapped all the assignments in our program and assigned them to various learning objectives. Every term, every class, every year," said Boston.

In addition, ABET requires the department to demonstrate that they are using information gathered in the assessment process to continually improve the program. Over the six-year period between accreditation visits, they expect to see evidence that the department utilized information gathered in the assessment process to improve the program. Thus, information gathered through this process must be used to make changes in the program on a continuous basis. Also, all ABET learning objectives are measured and/or mapped in order to meet accreditation requirements, so students must meet *all* regulations; therefore, incompletes will be given unless they pass each individual assignment. A link to Boston's PowerPoint presentation can be found at: <<http://wic.oregonstate.edu/WIC.ppt.>>

"We've mapped all the assignments in our program and assigned them to various learning objectives. Every term, every class, every year."
- Kevin Boston

These presentations sparked discussion among other guests present at the WIC lunch as well. One area of agreement seemed to be that communication is incredibly important for students in all majors. Dr. Steve Tesch of Forest Engineering noted that employers long for better communication among engineers: "A note came to me this morning with the results of a recent employer survey of engineers characterizing the relative importance of those program outcomes. The #1, most important outcome was effective communication. We meet once a year to discuss outcomes. Invariably, we spend more time talking about effective communication and lack thereof than we do about technical competence. I think employers would love to have us find some magic pill to help this."

Pre/Views

By
Vicki Tolar Burton,
WIC Director

At this time of year, "Post/Views" might be a more apt title for this column. I begin with gratitude to Wayne Robertson, Assistant Director of the Center for Writing and Learning, for the three years' work he invested in the film project *Writing Across Borders*. This documentary is already changing the teaching and learning of international students across the country. When Wayne presented the film at the International Writing Centers Association meeting in Minneapolis last fall, he gained rock star status within that community. The film was well received and is now being widely shown across the country. And Wayne has been elected to the Board of the IWCA.

Then in March, we were notified that the film has won a Bronze Telly Award (see article on page 4). Kudos to Wayne on the award. Thanks also to Stevon Roberts, who edited the film, to videographers Michael Bendixen and Amoriss Walker of OSU CMC, to Hitomi Kuromoto for her elegant designs of packaging and advertising, to Brian Ko for his original art work, and to Susan Schwartz (now retired) and Dawn Moyer of OSU's International Cultural Service Program for organizing the student participation in the project. And I especially want to recognize the wonderful OSU international students who appear in the film and speak so eloquently about their experiences as writers at home and in America. I have now seen the film many times, and these students inspire me every time.

Co-producing, with Lisa Ede, and promoting *Writing Across Borders* has been a highlight of my time as WIC Director, and especially of this year. Presenting a short clip of the film at the Dean's leadership meetings in various colleges and giving each academic department a copy to use with faculty and students enables the WIC program and the Center for Writing and Learning to give something back to OSU, something we believe will improve writing and writers, teaching and teachers on our campus. The reception of the film both locally and at national conferences has shown us that it truly meets a need at home and far beyond the OSU campus.

We hope that *Writing Across Borders* will help faculty and students begin conversations about the role of culture in writing, the challenges

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Writing Across Borders

Wayne Robertson
WIC Lunch Seminar, April 21st

A presentation of *Writing Across Borders* was followed by a question and answer session with the film's director, Wayne Robertson, who is Assistant Director of the Center for Writing and Learning at OSU. The audience was composed of international students and concerned faculty members who spoke about the impact of these issues on their lives and understanding of themselves as writers, teachers, mentors, and friends.

The film ignited discussion and debate about appropriate ways of assessing international student writing and encouraged faculty to seek an atmosphere of greater openness and compassion for the struggles faced by international students.

Copies of the DVD can be purchased at the OSU Bookstore for $12.50.

The 27th Annual Telly Bronze Award

Founded in 1978, the Telly Award is the premier award honoring the finest video and film productions, with over 12,000 entries annually from all 50 states and many foreign countries. In the recently announced results of the 27th Annual Telly Awards, the Writing Intensive Curriculum Program and the Center for Writing and Learning film *Writing Across Borders* received the bronze award for non-broadcast education film/video. The *Writing Across Borders* website is located at <<http://cwl.oregonstate.edu/wab>>

Blog Models for Teaching and Learning

Jon Dorbolo
WIC Lunch Seminar, April 7th

Jon Dorbolo, Director of the Technology Across the Curriculum Program, discussed implementation strategies and uses of educational blogs, which are customized to serve specific student/faculty needs. At the beginning of his presentation, an audience member asked Dorbolo to define "blog," reminding all attendees of the important fact that this new form of technology is still not familiar to everyone. Dorbolo addressed the variety of blog deployment models available.

For example, independent models allow each student to control a particular blog, while a syndicate model feeds individual blogs, websites, or desktops from syndicate streams. Educational blogs can also be used for a variety of teaching purposes including journals, research, peer review, discussion, and publication.

For the handouts accompanying this presentation, visit the WIC website at <<http://wic.oregonstate.edu/EducationalBlogging.pdf>>

Strategies for Improving Graduate Student Writing

Vicki Tolar Burton
WIC Lunch Seminar, April 14th

Vicki Tolar Burton, Director of the Writing Intensive Curriculum Program, shared advice based on various ways of improving graduate student writing. She described models for organizing courses that will help graduate students prepare for the intensive writing of a thesis or dissertation.

Additionally, she identified specific issues that faculty and graduate students need to address related to writing theses or dissertations.

"Don't let perfect be the enemy of good"
- Vicki Tolar Burton

And finally, Dr. Tolar Burton focused on ways graduate students can improve management of time and resources and maintain emotional health (a significant and oft ignored component of success) throughout the process. One of her mantras, "Don't let perfect be the enemy of good," could probably benefit most thesis and non-thesis writers alike.

Her helpful, detailed handout is available at << http://wic.oregonstate.edu/ImprovingGraduateStudentWriting.pdf>>

Hacking Blogs: Writing Conversations Your Way

Paul Bausch,
WIC Lunch Seminar, May 12th

Paul Bausch, co-creator and designer of Blogger Software, gave a visually and intellectually rich presentation on the way blogs are changing the landscape of the electronic world. Some quotable observations from Bausch's presentation include:

♦ "Weblogs are challenging our traditional ideas about authority, trust, identity, and community."

♦ "Blogs are forcing us to think about the role of amateurs and what they can contribute."

♦ "Technorati currently tracks over 75,000 new weblogs created every day, which means that on average, a new weblog is created every second of every day – and 19.4 million bloggers (55%) are still posting 3 months after their blogs are created."

♦ "The [weblog] features of being open, publically addressable, and non-hierarchical are similar to the protocol that makes the web possible."

♦ "Every blog reader is a potential writer."

Pre/Views

By
Vicki Tolar Burton

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international student writers face, and strategies that can make this a welcoming place for them. We also hope international students who see the film will feel encouraged to initiate conversations with their professors about writing.

Included in my gratitude as the school year closes is Sarah Ghasedi, whose dedication as the WIC TA this year has done so much for the program. Sarah's work on the newsletter has been outstanding, and she also has contributed generously behind the scenes to help make WIC events successful. Sarah is completing her thesis entitled *Illusions of the Human in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and H.G. Wells's The Island of Dr. Moreau* this term. Congratulations, Sarah, and thank you.

I want to recognize and congratulate former WIC TA Tracy Ann Robinson on the completion and defense of her thesis, "Charting Their Own Course as Writers: A Study of Writing-Intensive Student Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting at Start of Term." See the article on her research presentation on this page. By next fall we hope to have the Start of Term Questionnaire available for use in WIC courses. This carefully designed learning tool invites students to take responsibility for their own learning and progress as writers in a WIC course.

Thanks also to WIC office assistant Jeanna Towns, whose energy and enthusiasm keep us all moving in the right direction.

Charting Their Own Course: Students Self-Assessing and Setting Goals at Start of Term

Tracy Ann Robinson

WIC Lunch Seminar, May 26th

Tracy Ann Robinson, Corporate Relations Communications Coordinator for Mechanical Engineering, presented the research generated in her recently completed MA thesis, which proposes the use of a survey-format, start-of-term writing questionnaire (STQ) for students beginning WIC courses. The survey invites students to set goals for themselves as writers in the course and self-assess their strengths and weaknesses as writers. Robinson, a former WIC TA, became interested in this subject when she noticed that many instructors and students are uncertain about their roles in WIC courses. The survey was designed primarily to enhance student learning, but can also enhance faculty experiences.

Additionally, it can help faculty meet students where they are in order to help them actively engage in the writing process with the understanding that their goals and needs are important and will be addressed. An in-depth handout from the presentation, including the STQ and multiple tables containing data and results, can be found at <<http://wic.oregonstate.edu/WICRobinsonCharting.ppt>>

In addition, Robinson's complete thesis is available online at <<http://hdl.handle.net/1957/1939>>

Congratulations to WIC's 2006 Development Grant Recipients

Department of Design and Human Environment

Carol Caughey and
Mary Pedersen, Proposers

The Department of Design and Human Environment (DHE) has been awarded a WIC grant for a two-day retreat for DHE faculty during the Summer of 2006 that will allow faculty members to discuss Writing Across the Curriculum philosophy in all four of their majors and examine a variety of writing assignments/activities in their courses. The grant will also fund an evening wrap-up meeting in spring 2007 to review DHE's progress on implementing changes in the writing components of the courses and on assessing the effectiveness of the Department writing guide.

Center for Writing & Learning

Wayne Robertson, Proposer

The Center for Writing and Learning (CWL) has been awarded WIC funding to help achieve national distribution of the film *Writing Across Borders*. These funds will help facilitate DVD duplication, webpage maintenance, and editing for the film's website. CWL's goal is that the film will eventually become a self-sustaining project.

In Memoriam
William Reese Petty (1954-2006)

By Sarah Ghasedi, WIC TA

Dr. William Petty, an English Instructor and extended campus faculty, passed away on March 30, 2006. Dr. Petty joined OSU's English department in 1996 and became a pioneer in the University's Extended Campus through the development of innovative strategies for helping student writers improve through online instruction. He was also an active member of the WIC Advisory Board.

"Dr. William Petty was a terrific instructor and teaching resource for OSU Extended Campus for many years, contributing both in his teaching capacity and as a mentor for other instructors who were learning about online teaching," said Director of the Department and Student Services for OSU Extended Campus, Paula Minear. "He served as our resource expert in techniques to facilitate writing in online courses. William responded quickly to his students, used discussion boards to stimulate thinking and creativity, and designed assignments to encourage lively interaction with and among students. William shared his enthusiasm for the theoretical structure of novels with his students. Over the years many students have communicated their pleasure in taking his courses and have commented on their delight with their learning under William's guidance."

In 2004, Dr. Petty was awarded a WIC grant to design and offer a WIC seminar on online WIC pedagogy. He was co-leader of this seminar with Dr. Vicki Tolar Burton, Director of the Writing Intensive Curriculum, in winter of 2005. Dr. Tolar Burton said: "William Petty was a valued colleague and friend of the WIC program who was generous in sharing his innovative, student-centered ideas for teaching writing online. I am especially grateful for his work with the WIC Advisory Board on behalf of online teaching and learning. I will miss him as a colleague in WIC and in the English Department."

The WIC Program wishes to honor Dr. Petty and to remember the passion, kindness, and dedication with which he lived and worked.

By Jon Reese Petty, William Petty's twin brother

William Reese Petty, 51, died of a heart attack on Thursday, March 30, 2006 at Highline Medical Center in Seattle, Washington with his wife, Katie Hynes-Petty, at his bedside, one day short of his 22nd wedding anniversary. William was born in Hawthorne, Nevada and grew up in the Reno-Sparks area. William lived in England for two years and finished his undergraduate work in both English Literature and Philosophy there. William met his wife (and best friend) in England and shortly after their return to the states they relocated to Eugene, Oregon where William took his master's degree and his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon in Modern/ Post Modern American Literature. At the time of his death William was a well-respected Instructor in the English Department of Oregon State University. William loved teaching, reading, writing, popular culture, cooking, baking, watching his children play sports and music and loved to travel with his family. William also enjoyed following his favorite sports and teams throughout the year.

William was a devoted husband, father and brother. He is survived by his loving wife Katie, daughter Hannah, 14, son James, 7, sisters Fawn Cassidy of Bakersfield, California and Cherie Zielinski of Reno, Nevada and his brother John Reese Petty of Reno, Nevada. He was preceded in death by his parents, and brothers Lewis and Larry.

William will be remembered for his humor, intelligence, generosity and kindness.

It was a wonderful life.

By Dr. Mark Merickel, Associate Dean and Professor of Education, OSU Extended Campus

William was truly one of the most gentle souls and wonderful teachers I have known in my 35 years as an educator. I feel fortunate to have known William and to have had the opportunity to work closely with him over the last several years.

The loss of William will be felt deeply by all in the Extended Campus community - students, faculty, and staff. William served as a core member of the faculty teaching courses offered through the OSU Extended Campus over the last eight years Williams' online English classes extended OSU English Literature to hundreds of students for whom it was impossible to attend those classes on the Corvallis campus. William's dedication to his students and his ability to teach, guide, and communicate personally and bring his online courses "alive" was universally praised by his students and his colleagues.

William left behind not only those of us who were his colleagues, friends, and beneficiaries of his dedication and scholarship; he left behind a legacy and blueprint for all future OSU online educators.

I personally will miss William and the grace and elegance with which he approached the field of online teaching and learning. He made a difference in the way OSU provides education to so many that could not come to the physical campus to take classes because of their familial, financial, occupational, and other community responsibilities. William understood that and his understanding and caring translated into online teaching and learning that was an example for us all.

William Petty will be greatly missed!

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http://wic.oregonstate.edu

"The WIC program works to support all teaching faculty interested in using writing to help students learn."

Writing Intensive Curriculum

About Teaching with Writing

Editor: Vicki Tolar Burton
Assistant Editor: Sarah Ghasedi
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Teaching with Writing is the newsletter of the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. As part of the Baccalaureate Core, all OSU students are required to take an upper-division writing-intensive course in their major.

The content of WIC courses ranges from Bioengineering Design to the History of Photography. While subject matter differs by department, all WIC courses share certain commonalities defined by the Faculty Senate:

- Informal, ungraded or minimally graded writing is used as a mode of learning the content material.
- Students are introduced to conventions and practices of writing in their discipline and use of borrowed information.
- Students complete at least 5000 words of writing, of which at least 2000 words are in polished, formal assignments that have been revised.
- Students are guided through the whole writing process, receive feedback on drafts, and have opportunities to revise

For complete information on WIC guidelines, visit the WIC web site at <<http://wic.oregonstate.edu>>