EVALUATION OF THE SEMINAR ON WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM, FEBRUARY 2005

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Prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

As part of a year-long effort to promote and evaluate writing education on the Delta State University (DSU) campus, a two-day writing seminar was held on February 17 and 18, 2005. The event focused on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), and featured two distinguished consultants who visited the campus from George Mason University (GMU) in Virginia, Dr. Christopher Thaiss and Dr. Terry Myers Zawacki. The seminar was sponsored by the Standards-Based Teacher Education Project (STEP), in collaboration with the DSU Student Engagement Champions and the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee.

Consultants

Dr. Christopher Thaiss is Professor of English at George Mason University and a nationally known expert and leader in Writing Across the Curriculum programs. He developed and directed the Writing Across the Curriculum Program at GMU, he has been the coordinator of the National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs since 1981, and he is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*. Dr. Thaiss has authored or edited ten books as well as numerous scholarly articles. His books include *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Programs in Writing Across the Curriculum* (2001), *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum* (1998), and *Writing to Learn: Essays and Reflections on Writing Across the Curriculum* (1983), and he is currently working on two books, including *Alternative Discourses: Reports from the Disciplines* with co-author Dr. Zawacki.

Dr. Terry Zawacki has been on the faculty at George Mason University since 1990 and holds appointments in English and Women's Studies. In 1995, she developed and directed the Linked Courses Program, a cross-curricular learning community initiative. She has been the director of the University Writing Center at GMU since 1997, and since 1998 she has directed their well-known Writing Across the Curriculum Program. She has authored several scholarly essays on Writing Across the Curriculum and has given numerous lectures and public presentations on

WAC. She has consulted with several universities on developing writing programs, and is a section editor for the National WAC Clearinghouse site.

February 2005 Writing Seminar

The writing seminar commenced on Thursday morning, February 17, 2005, and consisted of three portions. First, the consultants met with various groups to discuss strategies for developing a Writing Across the Curriculum Program at Delta State University. Second, the consultants conducted a series of workshops for DSU faculty on incorporating writing into the classroom. Third, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki gave a keynote address at the Bologna Performing Arts Center (BPAC) for the DSU campus and community members, including teachers from the Delta.

In addition to the scheduled events, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki met informally with various people involved in planning the seminar and DSU's WAC program, including during meals.

WAC Consultations

On the morning of February 17, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki met with three groups to consult on developing a WAC program at DSU The meetings were held in 209 Union and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The first group included members of the Student Engagement Committee and Student Engagement Champions for 2004-05. The second group included members of the DSU Writing Across the Curriculum committee, members of the DSU Understanding Through Literacy committee, Librarians, and representatives from the Academic Support Lab and the Writing Center. The third group included deans and department/division chairs.

Workshops

On the afternoon of February 17 and the morning of February 18, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki conducted workshops for DSU faculty. The opening workshop was held Thursday afternoon, February 17 at 1:00 pm in the Delta Room, and was entitled "What to Do if Students 'Can't Write.'" Following this workshop, Dr. Thaiss offered a workshop, held in the Delta Room, entitled "Managing the Paper Load Part I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing." At the same time, Dr. Zawacki moved to 329 Ewing and gave a workshop entitled "Managing the Paper Load Part II: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently." On Friday morning, Dr.

Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki repeated the two "Managing the Paper Load" workshops. These sessions were held in the Union, in rooms 302A and 309. Repeating the workshops allowed faculty members to attend both workshops if they wished. Following these workshops, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki offered a concluding workshop entitled "Defining Standards for Student Writing," in which they demonstrated a technique for developing grading standards for student writing exams.

Keynote Address

On the evening of February 17, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki gave a keynote address in the Bologna Performing Arts Center. The address was entitled "Writing Well in School: What We've Learned from Faculty and Students." This event was designed for a wider audience than the workshops, and it was advertised to DSU faculty and students, as well as to teachers at Delta high schools and community colleges, and to writing programs statewide.

Informal Meetings

Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki arrived on Wednesday evening, February 16, and were met at the Memphis airport by Dr. Milton Wilder, who took them on a brief tour of Memphis and the North Delta. They then proceeded to Madidi Restaurant in Clarksdale, where they were greeted and met with various guests, including Collier Parker, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Hines Cronin, DSU STEP coordinator; Dr. Milton Wilder, representative from DSU's WAC committee; Dr. Bill Spencer, Professor of English and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Darlene Crone-Todd, chair of the Student Engagement Champions for 2004-05; Dr. Susan Allen Ford, director of DSU's Writing Center; and Dr. Alan Barton, coordinator of the Writing Seminar. John Ford and Carolyn Elkins, faculty in the English Department, and Barrie Todd of the technology support division attended this dinner as well.

During their visit, Drs. Thaiss and Zawacki had other meals at various restaurants on campus and around Cleveland. They were joined at these meals by representatives from the WAC committee, including Dr. Jenetta Waddell and Dr. Bobby Moore; by members of the Student Engagement Champions, including Dr. Darlene Crone-Todd, Jan Cooper, Dr. Luther Brown and Dr. Alan Barton; by Dr. Bill Spencer from the Office of Academic Affairs; by Dr. Hines Cronin, DSU STEP representative; by Heidi Eyre from the Psychology Department; and by three students, Stephanie Avritt, Carl Kaplon, and Catherine Bishop, who assisted with logistics at the keynote address.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Data Collection

Two tools were used to evaluate the Writing Seminar. The first consisted of brief questionnaires that were distributed to all participants at each workshop and the keynote address. The second was through an e-mail sent to DSU faculty and staff shortly after the seminar, asking people that participated in the events to reflect on the most valuable lessons they learned.

The questionnaires were given to participants at the beginning of each event. Participants completed the questionnaires and returned them after each event. Respondents did not put their name on the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were designed and prepared by members of DSU's Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, and consisted of five questions. The first four question were closed-ended and provided respondents with four response options: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. These four questions were:

(1) The content of this session addressed my interests and needs

(2) I will be able to apply the content of this session

(3) The application of this content will improve the quality and quantity of student writing at Delta State University

(4) The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions).

The fifth question was open-ended and provided respondents with the opportunity to comment on the event. Question 5 was:

(5) What suggestions do you have for content and/or format for further sessions on student writing?

See Appendix F for a copy of the questionnaire.

The e-mail requesting people's reflections on the events was sent on February 21 through the Office of Academic Affairs. Replies were collected over the ensuing two weeks. Student comments were gleaned from conversations with students following the keynote and from extra-

credit assignments in which students shared their impressions of the event. Comments cited here from individual students are with the permission of the student.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses for the first four questions from each event were cross-tabulated, indicating the percentage of respondents for each response category. These are presented in two formats: first, the results for each question are presented by event, and then each event is compared by question.

Responses to the open-ended question on the evaluation questionnaire were copied and reported. Reflections returned in response to the February 21 e-mail were summarized and salient quotes were excerpted and reported. Student comments in papers on the keynote were also summarized, with representative quotes excerpted and reported.

RESULTS

Participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the various events scheduled as part of the WAC writing seminar. Survey responses were generally positive and comments on the events emphasized the practicality of the techniques and the important lessons that were learned from the workshops and keynote address.

The results reported here begin with the attendance at each event, then evaluate each event individually. For each event, a brief summary of the activities and lessons is provided, and the results of the evaluation questionnaire are presented. Finally, overall impressions of the events from follow-up reflections are presented.

Attendance

An attendance sheet was circulated at each workshop. Results are summarized in Table 1. The attendance figures probably slightly understate the actual attendance, as a few people neglected to sign the attendance sheets. Table 1 also shows the number of evaluation questionnaires returned at each event.

A total of 42 people signed the attendance sheet at the opening workshop, "What To Do If Students 'Can't Write.'" All of the colleges and many of the departments and divisions at DSU were represented. Thirty-three of the participants returned an evaluation questionnaire from this workshop.

Twenty-three people signed the attendance sheet at Dr. Thaiss's Thursday afternoon workshop entitled "Managing the Paper Load Part I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing." Participants represented the College of Arts & Sciences, the College of Business, and the College of Education, as well as the Library. Seventeen of the participants submitted an evaluation form from this workshop.

Twelve people registered their attendance at Dr. Zawacki's Thursday afternoon workshop entitled "Managing the Paper Load Part II: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently." Participants represented the College of Arts & Science, the College of Business and the College of Education. Ten of the participants turned in an evaluation questionnaire.

The evening keynote address was held in the Bologna Performing Arts Center at 7:30 pm. As attendees entered, they were given a program, an evaluation questionnaire and a 3x5 card.

Table 1:
Number of Registered Attendees and
Evaluations Completed at Each Writing Seminar Event

Event	Signed the Roll Sheet	Completed an Evaluation
Overview Workshop: What to Do if Students "Can't Write"	42	33
Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing (Thursday afternoon)	23	17
Workshop 2, Responding Effectively & Grading Efficiently (Thursday afternoon)	12	10
Keynote Address: Writing Well in School	128	120*
Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing (Friday morning)	8	9
Workshop 2: Responding Effectively & Grading Efficiently (Friday morning)	17	13
Closing Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing	20	16

*Three additional evaluations were completed using a different form.

They were asked to put their name and affiliation on the card and return it as they left. A total of 128 cards were returned; however, an informal head count before the event started revealed over 160 people in attendance. Of those present, 120 returned valid questionnaires.

On Friday morning, eight people signed the attendance sheet at Dr. Thaiss's workshop "Managing the Paper Load Part I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing." Participants included representatives from the College of Business, the College of Arts & Sciences, the College of Education, and the Library, as well as Mississippi Delta Community College. Although only eight people signed in, nine evaluation questionnaires were received.

Seventeen people attended Dr. Zawacki's Friday workshop "Managing the Paper Load Part II: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently." Attendees represented the College of Arts & Sciences, the College of Business, and the College of Education. Thirteen of those in attendance returned an evaluation form.

Twenty people attended the closing workshop, offered by both speakers and entitled "Defining Standards for Student Writing." These included representatives of the College of Arts & Science, the College of Education, and the College of Business, as well as Mississippi Delta Community College. Sixteen of those present returned evaluation questionnaires.

WAC Consultations

On the morning of February 17, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki met with three groups to consult on creating a Writing Across the Curriculum or Writing in the Disciplines (WID) program at Delta State. A formal evaluation of these meetings was not conducted; however, this section briefly summarizes the topics discussed at these meetings.

The first meeting was with members of the Student Engagement Steering Committee and the Student Engagement Champions. Topics covered at this meeting included peer tutoring, faculty writing, and the WAC program at GMU. The consultants described the WAC program at GMU in some detail, providing insights into the design of a writing program. They started, for example, as a faculty writing group, in which participants received peer assistance in improving their writing. This evolved into a program to teach writing to students, and eventually a WAC program. They were careful to institutionalize the WAC initiative by gaining endorsements from various groups, such as the faculty senate and the individual colleges on campus.

The consultants noted that they had a WAC initiative on campus for over ten years before they added writing-intensive courses. Each major now has at least one designated writing-intensive course, usually either a keystone (early in curriculum) or capstone (late in curriculum) course. The courses require at least 3,500 graded words over the course of the semester, along with substantial interaction to improve writing through direct instruction and feedback. The classes are small so that this is manageable. Those in charge of the WAC program review course syllabi every two-to-three years, and remind instructors in writing-intensive courses of the requirements.

A key component of the GMU program is a network of peer tutors, who are selected based on faculty recommendations, grades, and a personal conference. Most peer tutors are graduate students who have demonstrated some expertise in writing. Peer tutors work with a faculty mentor.

The second meeting was attended by members of other committees and groups on campus interested in writing, including the Writing Across the Curriculum committee, the Understanding Through Literacy committee, the staff at the Writing Center and the Academic Support Lab, and librarians. Following this, the consultants met with deans and department/division chairs. Attempts to acquire notes from participants in these meetings to learn the topics that were discussed were unsuccessful.

Workshops

The results of the evaluations of the four workshops are presented in two formats. First, results from each workshop are treated individually in Tables 2 through 5. Cross-tabulations show the percent of all respondents that strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with each question, by the status of the respondent. These results are discussed in depth. Next, in Tables 6 through 9, each question is treated individually, comparing the four workshops in each table. These tables simply reformat the same information presented in Tables 2 through 5, so the results as displayed in Tables 6 through 9 are not discussed in depth.

Table 2:
Evaluation of Overview Workshop: What To Do If Students "Can't Write"

	N	Rating (Percent)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) "The content of this session addressed my interests and needs"					
All Respondents	32	40.6	43.8	9.4	6.3
DSU Faculty	31	38.7	45.2	9.7	6.5
Other	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(2) "I will be able to apply the content of this session"					
All Respondents	32	28.1	50.0	12.5	9.4
DSU Faculty	31	25.8	51.6	12.9	9.7
Other	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(3) "The application of this content will improve the quantity and quality of student writing at DSU"					
All Respondents	32	15.6	62.5	9.4	12.5
DSU Faculty	31	16.1	61.3	9.7	12.9
Other	1	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
(4) "The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)"					
All Respondents	29	20.7	69.0	3.4	6.9
DSU Faculty	28	17.9	71.4	3.6	7.1
Other	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Missing Values: Question (1), 1; Question (2), 1; Question (3), 1; Question (4), 4.

What To Do If Students "Can't Write"

The first workshop held for DSU faculty was at 1:00 pm on Thursday, February 17, in the Delta Room. Both Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki led this workshop, and the title was "What To Do If Students 'Can't Write.'" The speakers introduced the topics of designing effective assignments and grading student writing effectively and efficiently in this workshop. They effectively modeled their techniques by providing prompts for short writing segments by workshop participants, and used substantial audience input. The speakers asked participants what their state of mind was when they sat down to grade writing, and then had participants reflect on why they felt this way. Comments varied, but many expressed the opinion that their students were not good writers. The speakers indicated in the workshops they would offer approaches that would permit instructors to give their students' papers "a more generous reading."

Results from the evaluation of participants in the overview workshop are shown in Table 2. Valid questionnaires were returned by 33 of the participants, including 32 DSU faculty members and 1 DSU student. There was one missing value for each of the first three questions, and four missing values for the fourth question.

Responses to this workshop were very positive. When asked if the session addressed their interests and needs, over four-fifths (84.4%) of the respondents answered in the affirmative, while fifteen percent of the respondents disagreed. Likewise, over three-fourths of respondents (78.1%) agreed that they would be able to apply the content of the session, while twenty-two percent disagreed. Over three-fourths (78.1%) also said the workshop would improve the quality and quantity of writing at DSU, while twenty-two percent disagreed. Finally, nearly ninety percent of respondents (89.7%) believed the format for the writing seminar was effective.

Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing

On Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, Dr. Thaiss led a workshop on "Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing." Using input from participants, Dr. Thaiss outlined characteristics of an effective assignment. Students can respond more effectively to an assignment if they know, at a minimum, the expected format, the purpose of the assignment, the expected audience and the process. Students frequently are not motivated to complete an assignment because they do not understand its purpose and how it relates to the course objectives. Instructors can help students by making these connections explicit. Students also generally assume the assignment is written with the instructor as the audience, and therefore

they concentrate on what they think the instructor wants. If the instructor expects students to write to a different audience, they need to clarify this in the assignment. Finally, students need to know up front whether there will be opportunities for revisions and editing as part of the process of preparing the assignment. Opportunities to turn in drafts for comments not only help students improve their writing, they can also increase student motivation to complete the assignment. The handouts from this workshop are in Appendix D.

Table 3 summarizes evaluations of Dr. Thaiss's workshop. A total of twenty-five participants turned in evaluation questionnaires on this workshop, sixteen on Thursday and nine on Friday.

Table 3:
Evaluation of Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing

	N	Rating (Percent)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) "The content of this session addressed my interests and needs"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	25	56.0	44.0	0.0	0.0
All Respondents from Thursday Only	16	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
All Respondents from Friday Only	9	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	7	71.4	28.6	0.0	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
(2) "I will be able to apply the content of this session"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	25	52.0	48.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	16	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	35.7	64.3	0.0	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	9	77.8	22.2	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	7	85.7	14.3	0.0	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Table 3 (continued):
Evaluation of Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing

(3) "The application of this content will improve the quantity and quality of student writing at DSU"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	22	45.5	50.0	4.5	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	14	35.7	57.1	7.1	0.0
DSU Faculty	12	33.3	58.3	8.3	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	8	62.5	37.5	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	6	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
(4) "The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	25	44.0	56.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	16	31.3	68.8	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	28.6	71.4	0.0	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	9	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	7	57.1	42.9	0.0	0.0
Other	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Missing Values: Question (1), 1; Question (2), 1; Question (3), 4; Question (4), 1.

At the Thursday workshop, 14 of the respondents identified themselves as DSU faculty, one as DSU staff, and one as "Other" with no further specification. At the Friday workshop, seven of the participants were members of the DSU faculty, and two were faculty members from Mississippi Delta Community College.

The evaluations of these two workshop sessions were positive. All of the respondents agreed that the session addressed their interests and needs, that they would be able to apply the content of the session, and that the format of the seminar was effective. Less than 5% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the workshops would improve the writing at DSU. While virtually all of the responses were positive, the majority of participants at the Friday workshop indicated that they "strongly agreed" with each of the evaluation questions, while at

the Thursday workshop, more of the respondents said that they "agreed" with each item. The Friday workshop may have received higher evaluations because the group was smaller, because some in the group had already attended another workshop and had a better idea of what to expect, or because the speaker had given the same workshop the day before and could make appropriate adjustments.

Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently

On Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, Dr. Zawacki led a workshop on "Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently." Dr. Zawacki focused on grading, but her presentation also included tips for preparing assignments to facilitate providing effective feedback. She asked whether participants had ever tried to respond to their own assignments, to be sure that the questions are framed in a way that students can easily understand the expectations. She also suggested that designing assignments that include opportunities for students to revise and resubmit papers is a good way to improve writing. She suggested instructors should ask students to comment on their revised work, responding to questions such as: How did you improve this paper over the first draft? How did you address the feedback on the draft? What did you work especially hard on in this paper? If you had more time to work on this paper, what would you do? What did you struggle with while writing this paper?

Dr. Zawacki suggested some points for instructors to consider when grading papers. First, an instructor cannot fix every writing issue that a student has with one paper. The teacher needs to focus on a limited set of problems and address those in depth. Trying to fix too much tends to confuse the student, who may not recognize the priorities that the instructor is trying to convey. It is better for the grader to limit comments to salient issues, as this highlights these issues and will send a clearer message to the student. Limit corrections on syntax, grammar and spelling to the most obvious problems in the paper, rather than correcting everything. This gives the student a realistic and manageable problem to work on. Dr. Zawacki also suggested reading essays with a positive frame of mind – i.e. looking for positive elements rather than what is missing. Include comments on a paper's strengths, as this puts students in a positive frame of mind when reading an instructors suggestions.

Finally, Dr. Zawacki offered a few tips on grading. For example, she suggested making comments only in the margins of essays, rather than over the student's text. To correct language issues, the instructor can create a key of the most common problems, e.g. (1) subject-

Table 4:
Evaluation of Workshop 2: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently

	N	Rating (Percent)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) "The content of this session addressed my interests and needs"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	23	87.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	10	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	13	92.3	7.7	0.0	0.0
(2) "I will be able to apply the content of this session"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	23	78.3	21.7	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	10	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	13	76.9	23.1	0.0	0.0
(3) "The application of this content will improve the quantity and quality of student writing at DSU"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	22	45.5	50.0	4.5	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	10	30.0	70.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	12	58.3	33.3	8.3	0.0
(4) "The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)"					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	23	56.5	39.1	4.3	0.0
Respondents from Thursday Only	10	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0
Respondents from Friday Only	13	69.2	23.1	7.7	0.0

Missing Values: Question (1), 0; Question (2), 0; Question (3), 1; Question (4), 0.
All Respondents were DSU Faculty.

verb agreement, (2) run-on sentence, (3) sentence fragment, then put the number in the spot on the paper where the problem occurs. Dr. Zawacki also suggests using a clear grading rubric, and making sure that students have a copy of this rubric. This will make grading more straightforward, which is easier for instructors and clearer for students. The handouts from this workshop are in Appendix D.

The results of the evaluations of Dr. Zawacki's workshop are presented in Table 4. A total of twenty-three participants turned in evaluation questionnaires on this workshop, ten on Thursday and thirteen on Friday. All of the participants at both workshops were DSU faculty members.

The evaluations of this workshop were positive. All of the respondents at both workshops agreed that the content addressed their interests and needs, and that they would be able to apply the information in their teaching. The vast majority also agreed that the content of the workshop would improve student writing at DSU and that the format of the seminar was effective, with less that 5% of all respondents indicating they disagreed with these statements. For both question number 3 and number 4, all of those who disagreed attended this workshop on Friday, and the other participants rated this workshop highly for both questions, with 58% strongly agreeing that the workshop would improve writing and 69% agreeing that the format was effective. In general, respondents rated the Friday workshop higher than the Thursday workshop, although responses for question 2 on the application of the content were slightly higher on Thursday.

Defining Standards for Student Writing

The closing workshop took place Friday morning in the Union, and was led by both Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki. The workshop focused on a method for establishing standards to assess student writing. The speakers demonstrated the variation in standards among the participants using actual essays from a DSU class. Participants ranked the essays and compared their critiques, which the speakers listed on an overhead. The critiques were turned into positive statements and similar statements were combined, then these formed the common list of standards that can be used to assess the essays in a more impartial way. This approach would be useful for grading student writing exams, for example. This approach could also be used within a discipline, if all the professors would carry out this exercise then use the results to develop grading rubrics for writing assignments. Using such an approach would decrease the arbitrariness that students perceive in how assignments are graded.

Table 5 presents the results of the evaluation of the closing workshop. Sixteen of the participants turned in completed evaluation questionnaires. Fourteen of the respondents were DSU faculty members, and the other two were instructors from Mississippi Delta Community College.

Table 5:
Evaluation of Closing Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing

	N	Rating (Percent)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) "The content of this session addressed my interests and needs"					
All Respondents	16	81.3	18.8	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	78.6	21.4	0.0	0.0
Other	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(2) "I will be able to apply the content of this session"					
All Respondents	16	62.5	31.3	6.3	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	64.3	28.6	7.1	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
(3) "The application of this content will improve the quantity and quality of student writing at DSU"					
All Respondents	15	46.7	46.7	6.7	0.0
DSU Faculty	13	46.2	46.2	7.7	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
(4) "The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)"					
All Respondents	16	50.0	43.8	6.3	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	50.0	42.9	7.1	0.0
Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Missing Values: Question (1), 0; Question (2), 0; Question (3), 1; Question (4), 0.

The respondents all agreed that the workshop addressed their interests and needs, with over four-fifth of the respondents strongly agreeing with this statement. Over ninety percent of the respondents indicated they would be able to apply the contents of the workshop in their teaching, while 6.3% disagreed with this notion. In response to the question about improvement in student writing, 46.7% strongly agreed that the workshop would lead to better writing, and another 46.7% agreed with this sentiment, while 6.7% disagreed. Finally, 93.8% of respondents approved of the seminar format, while 6.3% indicated the format was not effective.

Results by Question

Tables 6 through 9 summarize responses to the evaluation questionnaire by question. The results for each workshop are presented for easy comparison. Table 6 presents data for the question "The content of this session addressed my interests and needs." Table 7 presents data for the question "I will be able to apply the content of this session." Table 8 presents data for the question "The application of this content will improve the quality and quantity of student writing at Delta State University." Table 9 presents data for the question "The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)."

Keynote Address

The keynote address on Thursday evening was entitled "Writing Well in School: What We've Learned from Faculty and Students." The presentation began at 7:30 pm and lasted about 75 minutes, with the speakers alternating time at the microphone to discuss their results. The speakers focused on research they had conducted at George Mason University with both faculty and students, to identify similarities and differences in writing across disciplines.

They first discussed the results of focus groups they had conducted with GMU faculty. They asked about standards for writing, and also considered acceptable alternatives to standard discourse. Faculty members identified several components that together formed the general standards of good writing, including good research that is well supported, clarity and organization in writing, and original thinking. The speakers identified five contexts within which standards are set and writing is evaluated by instructors, and across which variation may occur. These are general academic standards, standards set by the discipline and the sub-discipline, standards pertinent to the local institution, and personal standards. The speakers also tried to assess how closely their informants actual writing assignments matched the standards they presented. They found substantial variation in the tasks and standards, and also found that the willingness of faculty members to accept alternatives to the standard academic or disciplinary discourse was very idiosyncratic, that is, it depended on the faculty member's own vision and priorities within their field. Finally, the speakers asked GMU faculty how they graded the syntax and grammar on the papers they receive from students. Most said they marked the errors and expected the students to correct their mistakes.

Table 6:
Evaluation of Workshops
"The content of this session addressed my interests and needs"

	N	Rating (Percent)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overview Workshop: What to Do If Students "Can't Write"					
All Respondents	32	40.6	43.8	9.4	6.3
DSU Faculty	31	38.7	45.2	9.7	6.5
Other	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	25	56.0	44.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday — All Respondents	16	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday — DSU Faculty	14	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday — Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Friday — All Respondents	9	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
Friday — DSU Faculty	7	71.4	28.6	0.0	0.0
Friday — Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 2: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently					
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday	23	87.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday — All Respondents	10	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday — DSU Faculty	10	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday — Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Friday — All Respondents	13	92.3	7.7	0.0	0.0
Friday — DSU Faculty	13	92.3	7.7	0.0	0.0
Friday — Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Closing Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing					
All Respondents	16	81.3	18.8	0.0	0.0
DSU Faculty	14	78.6	21.4	0.0	0.0
Other	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 7:
Evaluation of Workshops
"I will be able to apply the content of this session"

		N	Rating (Percent)			
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overview Workshop: What to Do If Students "Can't Write"						
All Respondents		32	28.1	50.0	12.5	9.4
DSU Faculty		31	25.8	51.6	12.9	9.7
Other		1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing						
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday		25	52.0	48.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday	All Respondents	16	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	14	35.7	64.3	0.0	0.0
	Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Friday	All Respondents	9	77.8	22.2	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	7	85.7	14.3	0.0	0.0
	Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 2: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently						
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday		23	78.3	21.7	0.0	0.0
Thursday	All Respondents	10	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	10	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Friday	All Respondents	13	76.9	23.1	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	13	76.9	23.1	0.0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Closing Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing						
All Respondents		16	62.5	31.3	6.3	0.0
DSU Faculty		14	64.3	28.6	7.1	0.0
Other		2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Table 8:
Evaluation of Workshops
"The application of this content will improve the quality and quantity of student writing at Delta State University"

		N	Rating (Percent)			
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overview Workshop: What to Do If Students "Can't Write"						
All Respondents		32	15.6	62.5	9.4	12.5
DSU Faculty		31	16.1	61.3	9.7	12.9
Other		1	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing						
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday		22	45.5	50.0	4.5	0.0
Thursday	All Respondents	14	35.7	57.1	7.1	0.0
	DSU Faculty	12	33.3	58.3	8.3	0.0
	Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Friday	All Respondents	8	62.5	37.5	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	6	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
	Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 2: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently						
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday		22	45.5	50.0	4.5	0.0
Thursday	All Respondents	10	30.0	70.0	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	10	30.0	70.0	0.0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Friday	All Respondents	12	58.3	33.3	8.3	0.0
	DSU Faculty	12	58.3	33.3	8.3	0.0
	Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Closing Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing						
All Respondents		15	46.7	46.7	6.7	0.0
DSU Faculty		13	46.2	46.2	7.7	0.0
Other		2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Table 9:
Evaluation of Workshops
"The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)"

		N	Rating (Percent)			
			Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Overview Workshop: What to Do If Students "Can't Write"						
All Respondents		29	20.7	69.0	3.4	6.9
DSU Faculty		28	17.9	71.4	3.6	7.1
Other		1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 1: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing						
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday		25	44.0	56.0	0.0	0.0
Thursday	All Respondents	16	31.2	68.8	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	14	28.6	71.4	0.0	0.0
	Other	2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Friday	All Respondents	9	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	7	57.1	42.9	0.0	0.0
	Other	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Workshop 2: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently						
All Respondents, Thursday & Friday		23	56.5	39.1	4.3	0.0
Thursday	All Respondents	10	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0
	DSU Faculty	10	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Friday	All Respondents	13	69.2	23.1	7.7	0.0
	DSU Faculty	13	69.2	23.1	7.7	0.0
	Other	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Closing Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing						
All Respondents		16	50.0	43.8	6.3	0.0
DSU Faculty		14	50.0	42.9	7.1	0.0
Other		2	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Next, Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki discussed results of their research with GMU students. They found substantial variation in the types of writing that faculty assigned across disciplines. Students viewed this as part of a pattern, in which they see professors as unpredictable and idiosyncratic in their assignments and expectations. Students come to expect that different professors will be different, even in the same discipline. As a result, students place high emphasis on the feedback they receive on the first paper in each class, as this gives them clues as to the expectations of the instructor. They also glean clues about expectations from the type of assignment, the course syllabus, and the instructor's manner in the classroom. For example, if a teacher is relaxed in class, students expect he or she will be a more lenient grader. The student informants also said that they tailor their writing to please the individual instructor and what they think he or she expects. They prefer it when instructors make positive comments on their paper in addition to pointing out the weaknesses, and some of the informants noted the surprise and sense of empowerment they get when a professor comments that he or she learned something from their paper.

Based on these results, the speakers developed a three stage model of how students develop as writers. Early in their student career, with few courses under their belts, students tend to believe that teachers share similar standards and that they all want the same thing. After they have received disperse feedback from a variety of teachers, they come to believe that teachers are unpredictable and difficult to please. This leads to a sense of confusion due to the perceived lack of consistency across disciplines and even within disciplines. Finally, students reach a more mature stage where they understand that instructors are different, and that this is a reflection of the different contexts mentioned above, including to some extent each instructor's individual preferences, but that there are some basic fundamental elements that most teachers look for. Through this process, students learn to tailor their writing based on the context, including the discipline and the instructor or audience. As the speakers said, everyone agrees on the terms, but they don't necessarily agree on the meaning of those terms. The researchers also found that students do credit responsive teachers for their growth as writers.

The speakers concluded their keynote address by highlighting eight practices that good writing teachers practice. These include (1) talking with colleagues about expectations, (2) emphasizing general academic principles, and distinguishing these from the standards that are driven by context, (3) defining expectations clearly for students, (4) using a variety of tools to clarify expectations for students, (5) giving useful feedback, that comments on a paper's

strengths as well as its problems and that ties problems to disciplinary and academic standards, (6) helping students find a personal passion for learning and validating students advancement to expert in the field, (7) providing opportunities to explore and understand various rhetorical environments, and (8) allowing students to reflect on their own growth as writers.

Table 10:
Evaluation of the Keynote Address

	N	Rating (Percent)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) "The content of this session addressed my interests and needs"					
All Respondents	119	21.0	65.5	12.6	0.8
DSU Faculty	30	33.3	63.3	3.3	0.0
DSU Students	86	16.3	66.3	16.3	1.2
Other	3	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0
(2) "I will be able to apply the content of this session"					
All Respondents	119	25.2	61.3	10.9	2.5
DSU Faculty	30	43.3	46.7	10.0	0.0
DSU Students	86	18.6	66.3	11.6	3.5
Other	3	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0
(3) "The application of this content will improve the quantity and quality of student writing at DSU"					
All Respondents	114	26.3	54.4	16.7	2.6
DSU Faculty	26	34.6	53.8	11.5	0.0
DSU Students	85	21.2	56.5	18.8	3.5
Other	3	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(4) "The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions)"					
All Respondents	116	25.9	59.6	14.7	2.6
DSU Faculty	29	37.9	44.8	13.8	3.4
DSU Students	84	20.2	61.9	15.5	2.4
Other	3	66.7	33.5	0.0	0.0

Missing Values: Question (1), 1; Question (2), 1; Question (3), 6; Question (4), 4.

Results of the evaluations submitted after the keynote address are shown in Table 10. Valid questionnaires were returned by 120 of the 128 people that registered their attendance. Thirty of the respondents identified themselves as DSU faculty, 86 as DSU students, one as DSU staff, one as a community member, one as "Other," and one failed to indicate a status.

Among all attendees, over 85% agreed that the content of the keynote address met their needs and interests. This sentiment was particularly strong among the DSU faculty in attendance; 96.6% of faculty agreed or strongly agreed that the presentation addressed their interests and needs. While most students in attendance agreed that the content addressed their interests and needs, 17.5% disagreed with this statement. Overall, 13.4% of respondents disagreed.

Similarly, over 85% of all respondents agreed that they would be able to apply the content of the keynote address. Among faculty, 90% agreed they would be able to apply the content, and 43.3% indicated that they *strongly* agreed with this statement. Ten percent disagreed with this statement. Eighty-five percent of students agreed that they could apply the content of the keynote, while fifteen percent of students disagreed with this statement.

The third question on the evaluation form asked if the content of the keynote address would improve the quantity and quality of student writing at DSU, and this question generated the most diversity of opinion. Eighty percent of all respondents agreed student writing would improve, while nearly 20% disagreed. Among faculty, 34.6% strongly agreed that the keynote would improve student writing, and an additional 53.8% agreed, while 11.5% expressed disagreement with this statement. Among students, 21.2% strongly agreed that this event would improve student writing, a higher percentage than on the other evaluation questions; however, 18.8% disagreed and an additional 3.5% strongly disagreed that the event would improve student writing. These were also the highest rate of disagreement among the evaluation questions.

Over 85% of respondents agreed that the format of the seminar was effective. Both faculty and students showed strong support for the format.

Comments on the Workshops and Keynote

In addition to the closed-ended questions, participants were given two opportunities to comment on the workshops and the keynote at length. The final question on the evaluation questionnaire at each session asked respondents to comment on the session, and participants were also

asked to send reflections and comments in a follow-up e-mail sent on February 21. In addition, opinions expressed by students that attended the keynote address have been summarized.

Comments from Evaluation Questionnaires

On the evaluation forms at each session, respondents were given the opportunity to include comments, in response to the question: What suggestions do you have for content and/or format for future sessions on student writing? Responses to the comments on the various workshops are shown in Table 11. Overall, the tone of most comments was positive.

Ten of the 33 evaluations from the opening workshop on "What To Do If Students 'Can't Write'" included comments. The ten comments covered a range of topics. Some respondents expressed a concern for the physical set up, for example, one thought the room should include tables to make it easier to write, and another suggested using sound equipment as it was difficult to hear the speakers. Other comments pertained to the format of the workshop, such as a suggestion to use small group discussions before large group discussions, and a comment that the brainstorming session was very useful. Finally, some respondents summed up the entire workshop positively or negatively – one simply said "Great!" while another wondered if the workshop had a point, and yet another suggested "a good healthy dose of reality would be nice."

Ten questionnaires evaluating the workshop on "Managing the Paper Load I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing" included comments; five of the 17 from the Thursday session, and five of the nine from the Friday session. Two comments suggested more time was necessary for this workshop. Three simply praised the workshop with comments like "excellent," "excellent session, very beneficial," and "enjoyed it, some great ideas generated from this." Four respondents suggested that more information was necessary, such as ideas from experiences at other universities, more concrete ideas to improve student writing, and more hands-on opportunities to work with unfamiliar strategies. One simply noted that the overhead was difficult to see.

Eight of the evaluations from the "Managing the Paper Load II: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently" workshop included comments; three of the ten from the Thursday afternoon event and five of the thirteen from the workshop on Friday morning. Four of these noted problems with the overheads, including small print and a poor projection angle. Five included

positive comments such as "great," "excellent," "thanks, helpful," "nice job," and "thank you for doing this." One noted that more time for hands-on training would be beneficial.

The closing workshop, "Defining Standards for Student Writing" generated a total of nine comments. Most were short comments that expressed a general opinion of the event, such as "well done," "thank you," and "fun and helpful, thanks." One noted the use of examples and discussion was good, while another noted a difficulty reading the overheads. Two commented that the workshops were more beneficial than the keynote event. One found the session positive because participants presented a wide variety of standards.

The comments on the evaluations turned in at the keynote address are shown in Table 12. Forty of the 120 evaluations submitted at the keynote address included comments. Thirteen of the comments were on forms completed by DSU faculty and 27 were from DSU students. Comments focused on substantive, format, style and logistical issues.

Among the substantive-oriented comments, several emphasized that the audience included both faculty and students, and questioned whether the address was appropriate for both groups. Interestingly, these concerns were expressed by both faculty and students. Some of the students also commented that the results of the research that were presented were at odds with their opinions of DSU professors. Many of the comments praised the presenters and the address.

Faculty comments that emphasized format issues were generally negative, and suggested changing the format, such as shortening the time of the event, reducing the amount of material covered, or dropping the keynote altogether. Student comments were more positive, and three suggested that more examples would be useful.

Five comments – two from faculty and three from students – addressed style issues. Four of the five found the presentation too bland, while the fifth suggested changes in the way the overheads were prepared.

Finally, three instructors and five students included comments on logistics. Several of these suggested that PowerPoint slides would improve the presentation. The speakers initially planned to bring PowerPoint slides, but opted for overheads when the BPAC staff expressed some difficulties in setting up a PowerPoint projector. Overheads are also more reliable for visiting speakers. Only two respondents commented on the popping sounds the microphone

made during Dr. Zawacki's presentation. Two respondents also suggested a smaller room; one noted this would facilitate personal interaction, particularly during the question-answer session.

Table 11:
Comments from Evaluations of the Workshops

What suggestions do you have for content and/or format for future sessions on student writing?

Opening Workshop: **What To Do If Students "Can't Write"**
I don't know enough to respond, because they will get specific in subsequent sessions – Bravo!
Have tables if we are going to write.
Great!
(1) Use some sound equipment, very hard to hear the consultants and the audience. (2) Don't have us sign a roll sheet, this is insulting.
Love the brainstorming! Great to see different faculty members' expectations and beliefs about "good" writing.
I would have liked to hear more ideas from the speaker at the keynote. I think getting participants to share and think is great, but expected more from the speaker in the keynote. This is a format, not content suggestion/comment. This topic is such a worthy one – it is of concern to many of us.
Was there a point to this?
Concern about how the students learned the material assuming I am grading an exam. Assuming that my exam is testing the most important concepts, student responses will say something about how successful the presentation of the material was and about how well students interpreted that material. Their writing expresses the teacher/student connection. Enjoy when I can't tell that the student has taken the assignment seriously and <u>wants</u> to express a fascination with some concept, not just trying to get the right answer. Or when student comes up with own insight I have not thought of.
Small group sharing before whole group sharing.
A good healthy dose of reality would be nice.
Managing the Paper Load I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing **Thursday**
Great ideas! Are there differences based on different types of writing projects (e.g. papers vs. essay questions vs. short answers)? I'm still struggling with how to implement all of these ideas!
Excellent.
The workshop leader is rather bland; <u>he</u> could use more energy. More concrete ideas for improving student writing would be useful.
The overhead is difficult to see.
A longer session with more hands-on opportunities to work with the strategies that the university faculty is unfamiliar with – double-entry and dialogue journals, for example.

Table 11 continued

Managing the Paper Load I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing **Friday**
This session needs more time.
Rephrase statement #3 above. Excellent session, very beneficial.
Discuss examples from other teachers and universities. Resources available.
Great! Thanks. I feel good about my writing assignments because I already do much of what you suggest, but I have also learned many things to incorporate in my classes.
Enjoyed it! Some great ideas generated from this.
Managing the Paper Load II: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently **Thursday**
Great.
Use larger/bolder size fonts on transparencies. Thanks, helpful.
Larger print on transparencies.
Managing the Paper Load II: Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently **Friday**
Thank you for doing this.
Larger fonts on overheads; great info on how to correct grammar and what is fixable vs. not.
Excellent! Hard to see projection angle on the screen.
Keynote more appropriate for faculty only.
We need more time – the speaker was excellent. It would be good to have more time for examples and hands-on training. Nice job, given the time frame!
Closing Workshop: **Defining Standards for Student Writing**
Good use of examples and discussion!
Engaging faculty and implementing WID courses.
Loved this session – I knew faculty emphasized different things, but there really are huge differences in terms of standards. Only a few things are common across all faculty!
Thank you!
Evening was not very helpful, but hands-on workshops were <u>very</u> helpful.
Hard to read projections on the screen.
Let's focus on practical workshops. Zawacki's and final session were excellent!
Fun and helpful, thanks.
Well done!

Table 12:
Comments from Evaluations of the Keynote Address
"Writing Well in School: What We've Learned from Teachers and Students"

What suggestions do you have for content and/or format for future sessions on student writing?

Comments from DSU Faculty:
Substantive Issues:
I loved the three stages of writers – how do we help students move through these stages in the fastest and least painful way possible? How do we know if our expectations are developmentally appropriate in terms of their development as writers?
Developing WID courses.
The research findings were probably not as interesting to students.
This session didn't seem appropriate for the kind of mixed audience of students and faculty that was in attendance.
Examples of good writing/poor writing, anecdotal information demonstrating what is done and how expectations in different disciplines.
Format Issues:
Drop keynote, substitute something more interactive for broader appeal and application.
Too complex and large a topic to cover in such a short time. One part in depth would have been better.
Have both speakers initially say something so one doesn't look like Vanna White.
I received more benefit from the workshops than from the keynote. Keynote presentation was too long (1 hour) – I think more questions would have been asked if presentation had been shorter.
Style Issues:
The presentation was rather bland and humorless, but it was good for me to see research and data that supports concepts I have thought to be true for many years.
Presenters should never use visuals that have their presentation written on them – wordy and boring – why listen when you can read it?
Logistical Issues:
Larger font on overheads – perhaps PowerPoint? Everything was well-explained, well-developed and very informative. Thank you!
Smaller room, hard to see transparencies, troublesome mike.
The environment posed difficult during the question/answer session (hearing the question) and the presenters being able to make eye contact with the person posing the question).

Table 12 continued

Comments from DSU Students:
Substantive Issues:
Continue addressing writing on the collegiate level, but also refer to writing on the high school level.
Be more specific. Just giving research of your findings does not help individuals to be more professional in writing.
Pick some interesting topics for students, not teachers. Ask the teachers to be specific when they want students to write and give their papers back.
The presentation was well presented; however, I am skeptical about professors actually changing their tactics in order to aid students.
Teachers need to collaborate with each other to help the students because there are so many styles and methods of teaching. There is no set way to write, so knowing what other teachers expect would not lose the students in the classroom. Students should be helped every year throughout the year, not only for present classes, but for future classes.
Good seminar! Enjoyed it!
Great class!
Great seminar.
I would suggest a little more student-geared discussion.
They can give some copies of the steps we can follow to be a better writer, because I'm a foreign student and I would like to have more ideas (systematic) of how to do this. But I think this that you shared with us is great and I think will help me very much.
As a foreign student, with difficulties in the English language, I would like more help and patience from the teachers. Since "meanings are in the minds," not in words, teachers should talk with students to understand him, and make sure that instruction given to him has the same meanings as he has in his mind.
I liked the discussion of the different points and I would include more of that.
As a student, you did not tell me anything new. I am a senior level student, and write my own ideas but still professors in my discipline require us to write their ideas.
Make material more understandable.
To keep giving feedback and doing more research on what students thing and what teachers expectations are.
The session was very nice and understandable. I enjoyed the session.

Table 12 continued

Format Issues:
I enjoyed the format that it is in now.
Possibly some direct examples of writing styles.
This session was fine, but they should have given more examples on how to write better.
Very well presented so that anyone could understand the context of your research.
The speaker should give examples and pause to explain instead of reading the speech.
I thought it was organized and very thorough. I really enjoyed it. Great job!
Style Issues:
Make the session seminar more up-beat, but overall I learned a lot of what is expected by the teacher and student.
Perhaps a more animated speech!
Make the content more student-oriented, in a fun manner, so as to attract more students to this topic. Make it fun and you will have a much better turnout.
Logistical Issues:
Power Point.
The speaker being popped continuously is annoying!
Using PowerPoint would improve the presentation.
More interesting methods of presentation of data such as PowerPoint presentation.
It might be more appealing if you were to put your information on PowerPoint, which might be more convenient and more colorful.

Comments from DSU Faculty

Six faculty responded to the February 21 e-mail with reflections on the event. The comments received were thoughtful and expressed a variety of opinions. Some respondents commented that the sessions were valuable and that we need to schedule more sessions like this at DSU. Some noted particular lessons they learned from the workshops and the keynote. Others expressed the opinion that the sessions were perhaps helpful, but not applicable to DSU's circumstances.

Some of the reflections stressed the value of these events to the respondent and the need to continue faculty training of this sort at DSU. One respondent said:

I enjoyed being able to hear ways other faculty used writing in their classrooms. It sparked ideas for me as how I could use their ideas and adapt them in my own classroom. We need more share time like this. It was very beneficial to me.

Another commented:

My conversations with faculty after the event indicate that they found this very helpful, and that they would like to see more of this type of development.

One of the respondents noted:

I found this workshop to be very valuable and I am glad we were able to invite such accomplished academicians to Delta State to share their expertise in writing across the curriculum.

Some of the respondents also commented on particular lessons they learned from the workshops and keynote, and how they can incorporate these lessons in their teaching. One said:

I picked up good ideas from the participants – requiring students to maintain a journal. I plan to require my students in class to maintain a semester-long journal on news along with their reactions. This requirement will promote writing as well as help them keep abreast with the news, which is essential for my class. In addition, the discussions on the student essays proved helpful to me. I learned what other professors look for in student writing.

Another stated:

I liked the things about having students write impressions before a discussion. That is a good way to get them thinking.

A third commented:

The main things that I have learned to incorporate from this experience are first, to be clear about the audience, and second, to provide my students with a good example of what I expect.

Finally, another respondent noted:

The thing that I enjoyed the most was the concept of the '3 stages in the development of a writer.' This is the idea that students first think that all professors want the same thing when they assign a written assignment. Then, as students gain more experience with the writing process, they begin to think that all professors are idiosyncratic and unpredictable in their marking and thus students feel they have no ability to target their papers effectively. Finally, as students mature, they should reach the third stage of development where they

have mastered the concept that there are similarities in what professors are looking for in 'good writing,' but the definition of what is considered 'good writing' varies greatly depending on the context of the writing.

Respondents also noted that they had already begun to apply some of the lessons from the workshops. One said:

I think the point about reading our students' papers with a positive outlook and look for the good in their papers will help me be more positive in my comments and be selective in the negative issues I point out. In fact, I am currently grading a set of essays and have already begun to put this in place. Thus far, I have found that grading the essays with this frame of mind puts a much more positive slant on them and I have enjoyed reading them much more.

Another noted:

I am already incorporating [the information] into my teaching. In fact, the students who attended the open forum smiled in class the other day, and mentioned to me afterward, 'I see you are incorporating what the speakers covered! Thanks so much!' I believe that the benefits of being able to interact with these consultants will have a positive impact on my teaching for some time.

Two respondents believed the seminar did not address important issues. One said:

I must in all candor say that I did not find [the workshop] too helpful. The instructors were well-intentioned, but I think they have had very little experience dealing with the type of student writing we are compelled to read and evaluate. It is impossible to write an essay on a subject one has not bothered to learn and that's frequently the case so far as DSU students are concerned. Unfortunately, all too often the students have tried to learn the material but still lack the necessary skill and experience to relate what they 'know' in writing.

Another commented:

I thought the seminars were ok. It was a good 'pedestrian' job, but overall a little something was missing. I might have preferred to look at examples of good writing. Good reading precedes good writing and we seem to be neglecting this area.

The faculty members who took time to share these reflections clearly care about improving writing at DSU, and overall seemed to appreciate the contribution these workshops made towards that goal.

Comments from DSU Students

The following comments were gleaned from students who attended the seminar and turned in papers for extra credit. The students who are quoted here gave the author verbal permission to present their ideas in this evaluation. In their reflections on the keynote address, the theme that seemed to spark the most interest from students was grading and feedback. Several students indicated that they agreed with the researchers' informants that professors' comments are often more confusing than helpful. Students wanted clearer feedback, although many framed this as the professor "correcting" their work or the professor being clearer about what the student "did wrong." Others indicated that they did not receive enough assistance on *how* to write a paper, particularly in unfamiliar disciplines. One student said:

> The best advice I heard during this presentation concerned feedback. Both speakers explained to the audience that professors should give the students more feedback and direction in our writing. Whenever we receive a paper back, some professors don't explain certain marks on the paper or why it is incorrect. I feel as if the professors should explain exactly what they feel whenever they make a correction. They should take the time to express what we can do better in our papers and help us to make better grades.

Another said:

> A lot of students know what to write but don't know how to write. Most teachers help their students write, but teachers need to help students write in their field of study. Because students in college come from different backgrounds on how to write, the teacher has to see where the students are coming from.

Another student noted:

> Students pick up cues from discussions in class and hand-outs to find out what the teacher wants on a paper. Students do want to satisfy their teachers, but some just don't know how. When teachers say "explain yourself" on a paper, the students say to themselves "well, explain yourself, what do you want from me?"

This quotation also raises another common comment in student reflections, which pertained to the issue of writing to meet the professor's expectations. Students believed that trying to be creative or expressing their own ideas was a risky strategy, as it would likely result in a lower grade. Virtually all of the students that discussed this seemed to believe that "giving the professor what he/she wants" was the best way to write a paper. One student wrote:

Another good point that was introduced by the two speakers was when they talked about how the students should write to fit the professor's way of grading papers. This means that students should figure out the grading methods and then write on how they grade it. It will help the students to receive a better grade and help us to learn an assortment of different writing skills.

Another said:

Students want to be original, but they are unsure of their teacher's definition of originality. How the teachers present themselves to the students is important. The teacher can make himself/herself appear to be formal or loose, which tells the students a lot about their teacher.

Another commented:

I found cluster number 2 most interesting, because most students saw their professors as unpredictable in their expectations. I certainly agree because a lot of students do not know what to expect from professors. Sometimes we are allowed to give our opinions, while in other cases we are not. Most of the focus group students in the research write to please their teacher, which is what I do.

Another student noted:

I found the study concerning the students most interesting mainly because I could relate to the responses the students gave in the study. Students wanted to add originality to their writing assignments, but didn't because of fear of a bad grade. I think most students at this university could relate to that response.

The speakers discussed how students know what a professor's expectations are, and some of the respondents commented on this point. One said:

The students feel that teachers often "lead the way" on how a student writes in general. For example, if a student has a teacher that is "formal" in his or her style of writing the syllabus, then the teacher may expect the student to write papers that are "formal." There are also "cues" that a student can take from a teacher. For example, if a teacher discusses information in a "formal" way or if the teacher presents information to the student in a "formal" way, then the teacher may expect "formal" writing from the student.

Another commented:

I found this conference very useful to students and professors. It suggested to professors to encourage originality from their students because it would help their students grow as efficient writers. It also suggested that most importantly

professors should provide feedback to their students to help the students understand what is expected from them.

Not all students saw writing as simply trying to please the instructor. Some students found the keynote address useful because it gave them a different perspective on the relationship between teachers and students, or at least on the perspective of teachers. One student noted:

Being that I am a student thinking of becoming a teacher one day, I thought about the information presented in two different ways. I enjoyed how they presented their findings by going back and forth among the teachers' and the students' point of view. It was interesting to hear that most teachers, once students themselves, found a lot of the students' comments intriguing and foreign. For example, students view adequate feedback as essential when learning how to write for a new teacher.

Another said:

I felt that this presentation was more directed to the academic faculty, but I was glad to be there because I had the opportunity to realize and analyze the teacher's side.

Comments like these illustrate the value of events like this at increasing student engagement. By helping students bridge the gap between themselves and faculty, and by reminding faculty how the world looks from the perspective of a student, these events open up the possibility of greater communication between at least some students and their teachers, one of the fundamental bases of increasing student engagement.

DISCUSSION

As noted, the evaluations of the workshops and keynote address were very positive. It appears that participants found the workshops useful, and will be able to apply some of the lessons from these events in their classroom teaching.

While those in attendance benefited from the writing events, and attendance at most events was good, the keynote address did not draw as many participants as we'd hoped and anticipated. This issue requires some attention.

Attendance

Attendance at the various events was generally good. Many members of the various committees attended the consultancies on Thursday morning. The workshops on Thursday afternoon were well-attended but not too large. Attendance dropped off at the Friday morning workshops, but wasn't disappointing. Given the many demands on faculty time at DSU, and the admirable unwillingness on the part of instructors to miss class, the numbers of participants at these events was good. Attendance at the keynote address on Thursday evening was lower than expected, perhaps in part due to problems with publicity, discussed below. The large number of DSU students at the keynote address appeared to reflect a commitment by many DSU instructors to get students to the event, by advertising the event in classes, and even in some cases by offering students extra credit for attending.

Of course, attendance at the various events was voluntary and self-selected, so participants generally represented faculty with the most interest in the topic, and the most concern with student writing. Following the first workshop, a few participants complained that they did not understand the purpose of the workshops; however, this was not the case with most participants. Given the widespread publicity of the event on campus, those that did not understand the purpose of the event probably were not paying close attention.

Apparently, there was also concern following the consultancy with the deans and department chairs that participants did not fully understand the purpose of this event. The speakers also commented that the participants did not seem as engaged as the other groups. Perhaps a greater effort could have been made to prepare the deans and chairs for this event. For example, the Student Engagement Steering Committee met on the Monday before this event to discuss how this committee could best utilize the experience of the consultants and to develop

questions to ask them. A similar effort by deans and chairs, or at a minimum some e-mail communication to develop issues of interest, may have increased the utility of the time spent with the consultants.

Publicity

The workshops were widely publicized on campus, with the assistance of the Office of Academic Affairs, and the attendance showed that many people were aware of these events. Apparently, however, there were problems with publicity for the keynote address. While the keynote was also widely advertised on the DSU campus, through e-mails from the provost's office, flyers sent to faculty mailboxes, posters in all the buildings on campus, and word-of-mouth, word did not seem to reach the wider community as we had hoped. An effort was made to publicize the event around the Delta, particularly to secondary school teachers; however, it appears that these efforts failed for reasons that are not clear.

A press release was prepared and sent to the DSU Office of University Relations (See Appendix C). The Office of University Relations was undergoing a personnel change at this time, and it is unclear whether this press release ever went out. According to their records, the press release was sent to local news outlets on February 7, 2005; however, to our knowledge, the event was not publicized in the *Delta Statement*, nor in the *Bolivar Commercial*. An attempt was made to place advertisements in the Cleveland, Greenville, Greenwood and Clarksdale newspapers as well; however, the IHL Board would not approve funds for this purpose from the STEP budget.

In addition, an attempt was made to publicize the event at Delta High Schools, in order to attract teachers to the keynote address. A message was sent out through the College of Education to high school administrators, and DSU instructors were encouraged to use contacts at Delta schools to publicize the event. It appeared that this system did not work, however, as informal reports suggested high school teachers were not made aware of this event. No high school teachers registered their attendance at the keynote address.

Other colleges were contacted through two channels. An e-mail was sent on February 4, 2005 to members of the National Writing Project in the State of Mississippi (Ole Miss, Mississippi Valley State University, Mississippi State University, University of Southern Mississippi, Alcorn State University). In addition, community colleges in the Delta were contacted through the DSU Office of Academic Affairs. The attendance sheets suggest that these contacts brought some people to the workshops and keynote.

The problems with publicity and in contacting high school teachers surely reduced attendance at the keynote address. It is recommended that organizers of future events pay close attention to the publicity, and in particular, to contacts at local high schools. Apparently it is risky to trust high school administrators to publicize events of this nature, so additional avenues are necessary. Following up with local newspapers to ensure they have received press releases is also advisable.

Long Term Effects

The speakers came to DSU for two reasons. One was to assist individual instructors, through workshops on designing and grading writing and on setting writing standards, and by helping instructors understand the student perspective on writing, one of the important messages from the research they reported at the keynote address. It appears these efforts will have lasting effects, as professors adopt the techniques discussed in their classroom teaching. The second purpose of their visit was to help DSU faculty and administrators advance in developing a viable Writing Across the Curriculum program. Whether the messages that Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki brought pertaining to a systematic WAC program will have long-term effects remains to be seen.

One point that the consultants made at the meeting with the Student Engagement Committee can provide us with a starting point for developing a WAC program on campus. Dr. Thaiss noted that at George Mason, their WAC program began as an initiative to get faculty together to discuss their own writing. Over time, this grew into a broader, campus-wide effort, that later incorporated student writing. While not all DSU faculty regularly engage in writing, it may be worthwhile to create opportunities for faculty to share their writing efforts with colleagues in other disciplines. These may be formal readings, followed by discussions, or they may be informal working groups, where faculty can develop papers and get feedback from peers. Short-term goals would be to encourage more faculty writing, and the long-term objective would be to create a "culture of writing" on campus that would transfer initially into the classroom, and eventually would spawn a more structured writing initiative across campus.

Making something like this happen requires leadership, and the Writing Across the Curriculum committee or the Student Engagement Champions would be logical entities to take on a project of this nature, perhaps in collaboration with other groups. Although the STEP project is ending this Spring, funds from similar groups that are available in the future could be productively

applied to this effort. A clear message that emerged from the workshops and keynote address is that faculty cannot expect students to become good writers on their own. Students need help from faculty in order to improve their writing skills, and there are a variety of ways that faculty can assist students without dramatically increasing their own workload. And the more attention that faculty pay to their own writing, the better equipped they will be to help students become better writers.

APPENDIX A:
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS, FEBRUARY WRITING SEMINAR

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

3:06 pm   Dr. Thaiss & Dr. Zawacki arrive at Memphis Airport

6:30 pm   Dinner at Madidi Restaurant, Clarksdale

Thursday, February 17, 2005, Morning

7:45 am   Breakfast at DSU Cafeteria

8:30 am   Consulting on a WAC program at DSU
                 309 Union

    8:30–9:15   Student Engagement Champions & Steering Committee
    9:45–10:30   WAC committee, Librarians, Understanding Thru Literacy committee, Writing
                     Center staff, Academic Support Lab staff
    11:00–11:45 Deans, Department/Division chairs

12:00 noon   Lunch at Warehouse Restaurant

1:00 pm   Workshops with Faculty, Ewing Hall

    1:00–1:45   Overview: What to do if Students "Can't" Write, Delta Room
    2:00–3:30   Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing, Delta Room
                     Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently, Ewing 329

5:00 pm   Dinner at Pickled Okra

7:30 pm   Keynote Address, Bologna Performing Arts Center
                 Writing Well in School: What We've Learned from Faculty & Students

Friday, February 18, 2005

8:30 am   Breakfast at DSU Union

9:30 am   Workshops with Faculty, Union

    9:30–11:00   Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing, Union 309
                     Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently, Union 302A
    11:15–12:30 Concluding Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing,
                     Union 302A

12:45 pm   Lunch at KCs Restaurant

2:00 pm   Meeting with Dr. John Thornell, Office of Academic Affairs, Kent Wyatt Hall

6:00 pm   Flight leaves Memphis

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Education

Ph.D., English, Northwestern (1975)
M.A., English, Northwestern (1971)
B.A., English, University of Virginia (1970)

Positions

Professor of English, George Mason University, 1994-
Director, English Composition, George Mason University, 1979-84;1988-89; 1990-1998; 2003-2004
Chair, English, George Mason University, 1998-2002
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum, George Mason, 1979-84;1991-1998
Associate Dean, the Graduate School, George Mason, 1989-90
Director, Plan for Alternative General Education, GMU, 1984-87
Associate Professor of English, George Mason, 1981-94
Assistant Professor of English, George Mason, 1976-81

Other Teaching and Administration at George Mason

Associate Director, Northern Virginia Writing Project, 1978-
Director, University Writing Center, 1979-84
Many University, College, and University Committees
Undergraduate, Masters, and Doctoral Courses Taught for English Department, Foreign Languages and Literature Department, Plan for Alternative General Education, Bachelor of Individualized Studies Program, Ph.D. in Education, and Doctor of Arts in Community College Education

State and National Boards

Coordinator, National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs, 1981-
Editorial Board*, Journal of Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, 1993-
Editorial Board, *academic.writing* (online journal), 1999-
Editorial Board, *Inventio* (online journal), 1999-
Nat'l Ccl. of Teachers of English Committee on Language and Learning Across the Curriculum, 1989-94

Honors and Awards

Danforth Foundation Faculty Associateship for Teaching Excellence
Danforth Foundation/Kent Fellowship
George Mason University President's Recognition for Contributions to Writing across the
Curriculum

Books

*WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Program in Writing across the
Curriculum*
   (co-edited with Susan McLeod, Margot Soven), NCTE, 2001
Writing for Psychology (with James Sanford), Allyn and Bacon, 2000
Writing about Theater (with Rick Davis), Allyn and Bacon, 1999
Writing for Law Enforcement (with John E. Hess), Allyn and Bacon, 1999
The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum, 1998
A Sense of Value: A Thematic Reader (with A. J. Thaiss), Mayfield, 1994
Write to the Limit, Harcourt Brace, 1991
Language Across the Curriculum in the Elementary Grades, National
        Council of Teachers of English, 1986
*Speaking and Writing, K-12: Classroom Strategies and the New
        Research*, ed. with Charles Suhor, NCTE 1984
*Writing to Learn: Essays and Reflections of Writing Across the
        Curriculum*, ed., Kendall/Hunt, 1983

Book Chapters

In *ALT DIS: Alternative Discourses and the Academy* (eds. Bizzell, Fox, Schroeder),
Heinemann, 2002 (with T.
        Zawacki
In *The WAC Casebook* (ed. Chris Anson), Oxford, 2002
In *WAC for the New Millennium* (eds. McLeod, Soven, Thaiss), NCTE, 2001
In *Coming of Age: Advanced Writing Programs*, eds. Shamoon, Howard, Jamieson, Schwegler;
        Heinemann, 2000 (with R. Fischer).
In *Theorizing Composition: a Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Kennedy, Greenwood, 1998
in *Assessing WAC Programs*, ed. Huot and Yancey, Ablex, 1997 (with T. Zawacki)
in *Programs and Practices: Writing Across the Secondary School Curriculum*, ed. Gere,
        Young, and Farrell-Childers, Heinemann, 1994 (with B. Glaze)
in *Process and Portfolios in Writing Instruction*, ed. Gill, NCTE, 1993 (with L. Brady)
in *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs*, ed. McLeod and Soven,
Sage, 1992
in *Programs That Work: Models and Methods in Writing Across the Curriculum*, ed. Fulwiler and
Young, Heinemann, 1990
in *Strengthening Programs for Writing Across the Curriculum*, ed. McLeod, Jossey-Bass, 1988
in *The Journal Book*, ed. Fulwiler, Heinemann, 1987
in *Shakespeare in the South*, ed. Kolin, U. of Mississippi, 1982
in *New Directions in Teaching: Writing in the Disciplines*, ed. Griffin, Jossey-Bass, 1982

<u>Articles</u>

in *College Composition and Communication, The Shakespeare Quarterly, The Critical Survey of Drama, The Critical Survey of Long Fiction, The Critical Survey of Continental Fiction, The Critical Survey of Poetry, The Critical Survey of Short Fiction, The National Writing Project Quarterly, The Writing Center Journal, The Composition Chronicle, Inventio*, etc.

<u>Works in Progress</u>

Book, *Alternative Discourses: Reports from the Disciplines* (with Terry Zawacki), under contract to Heinemann
Book, an introduction to theory and practice in WAC, under contract to Wadsworth /Thomson/Heinle

<u>Consultancies and Workshops on Writing, the Teaching of Writing, and Writing Across the Curriculum</u>

More than 150 regionally and nationally since 1985

Terry Myers Zawacki

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Education

D.A. Higher Education Program. George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
M.A. Communication. New York Institute of Technology. Old Westbury, NY
B.A. English. Southern Illinois University. Carbondale, IL

Publications:

- *Alternative Discourses in the Disciplines: Reports from the Fields,* with co-author Chris Thaiss, under contract to Heinemann. Awarded a research grant for this project from the national organization of Writing Program Administrators.
- "Questioning Alternative Discourses: Reports from the Disciplines." Co-authored with Chris Thaiss. In *Alt Dis: Alternative Discourses and the Academy.* Eds. Schroeder, Fox, and Bizzell. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook/Heinemann, 2002.
- "Is It Still WAC? Writing in Learning Communities." Co-authored with Ashley Williams. In *WAC for the New Millennium.* Eds. McLeod, Thaiss, Miraglia. Urbana, IL: NCTE. 2001.
- "Telling Stories: The Subject Is Never Just Me." In *Questioning Authority: Stories Told in School.* Eds. Adler-Kassner and Harrington. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.
- "How Portfolios for Proficiency Help to Shape a WAC Program." Co-authored with Chris Thaiss. In *WAC and Program Assessment.* Eds. Yancey and Huot. Greenwich, CT: Ablex, 1997.
- "Recomposing as a Woman—An Essay in Different Voices." *College Composition and Communication* 43 (February 1992): 32-8. Reprinted in *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook.* Eds. Kirsch et al. Bedford/St. Martin's and NCTE. Boston: 2003.

Teaching and Administrative Experience at George Mason University:

Assistant Professor, English. 2004-Present
Term Assistant Professor, English. 1990-2004
Faculty, Women's Studies. 1992-Present

Director, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program. 1998-Present
    Responsible for all activities related to writing across the curriculum at the university in collaboration with the Faculty Senate Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, including oversight of budget, administration and review of writing-intensive (WI) courses, assessment of departmental compliance with the WI requirement, faculty development workshops on writing topics, and editing the WAC website and semesterly publication *Writing @ Center*, a writing center/WAC newsletter.

Chair, Writing Assessment Group. 2001-Present
    Responsible for leading all academic units in a state-mandated assessment of student writing competence in partnership with the Office of Institutional Assessment and the Writing Assessment Group comprised of faculty appointees from every college in the university that enrolls undergraduates.

Director, University Writing Center (UWC). 1997-Present
   Responsible for day-to-day operations of the Writing Center, including overseeing budgets, training tutors and office staff, working with faculty and administrators across the university, and publicizing the Center to faculty, students, and incoming students and their parents at Orientations and Admissions events.

Director, **CAS Linked Courses Program.** 1994-1998.
   Developed, promoted, staffed, and oversaw this general education program.

Associate Director of Composition. 1988-1995

Most Recent Professional Presentations:

   Conference on College Composition and Communication and NCTE
   - March 2004: "Students Talk Back: Implications of Focus Group Research across the Disciplines." CCCC. San Antonio.
   - March 2003: "Processes for Assessing Writing in the Disciplines." New York.
   - March 2002: "Alternative to What? Questioning Assumptions of Disciplinary Conformity and the Necessity of Resistance." CCCC. Chicago.
   - November 2001: "*WAC for the New Millennium:* Strategies for Continuing Writing Across the Curriculum Programs." Invited speaker on panel presentation at the National Conference of Teachers of English in Baltimore.
   - April 2001. "Follow the Money: Repositioning WAC Programs in Response to Well-funded Technology Initiatives" (paper) and "Learning Communities as New Institutional Contexts for Writing Instruction" (half-day workshop). CCCC Denver.

   Writing Across the Curriculum
   - April 2002. Invited Speaker on alternative discourses and the disciplines. The Campus Writing and Speaking Program. North Carolina State University.
   - March 2002: "Responding to a State Mandate for University-wide Writing Assessment." Sixth National Writing Across the Curriculum Conference in Houston.
   - June 1999. "A Learning Community Program in Transition: Multiple Possibilities for WAC." Panel presentation at Fourth National Conference of Writing Across the Curriculum. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

   International Writing Center Association Conferences
   - October 2003: "Strategies for Tutoring ESL Writers." With panel of tutors presented at Conference of the International Writing Center Association and the National Peer Tutor Association.
   - October 2000. "Combining Forces and Resources: Creating Online Writing Center Workshops as Instructional Tools for WAC Faculty." Panel presentation with peer tutors at the National Writing Center Association Conference in Baltimore, MD.

   Assessment, Learning Communities
   - November 2001: "Processes and Strategies for Assessing Student Writing." Presentation at the 15th Annual Conference on Student Assessment in Virginia in Virginia Beach.
   - May 1999. "Is It WAC? Is It WID? Re-inventing Writing Across the Curriculum in Learning Community Programs." Panel presentation at the Annual Conference of the

Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education in Seattle, WA.

- March 1998. "An E-Mail Mentoring Program Linking Advanced Psychology Student Mentors and Freshman Majors." Paper/panel presented at 12th Annual Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology: Ideas and Innovations. SUNY Farmingdale, NY.

Other Professional Work

- Editorial consultant and free lance writer, *The Bedford Handbook*, 7th Edition, forthcoming 2005 from Bedford/St. Martins Press.
- Consultant. Hampton University, 2003. Setting up a WAC program.
- Jean MacGregor, Director, Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, on new edition of *Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines* and another book forthcoming on learning communities. Spring 2002.
- Consultant. LaSalle University. Fall 2000. Building Learning Communities.
- Reviewer for Southern Illinois University Press; Addison, Wesley, Longman; St. Martins; Houghton Mifflin; Mayfield. 1995-present.

Professional Organizations

National Council of Teachers of English
Conference on College Composition and Communication
International Writing Center Association.
Teacher Consultant, Northern Virginia Writing Project.

Press Release sent out February 7, 2005.

Nationally Known Experts on Teaching Writing Will
Speak at Delta State University on February 17, 2005

Dr. Christopher Thaiss and Dr. Therese Zawacki of George Mason University in Virginia will
visit Delta State University on February 17 and 18, 2005. Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki are
nationally known experts on teaching writing and on developing writing skills across disciplines
in the university. They will offer a keynote address on Thursday, February 17, 2005 at 7:30 pm
in the Bologna Performing Arts Center on the Delta State campus in Cleveland, MS. The title of
the program is "Writing Well in School: What We've Learned from Faculty and Students." The
address is open to the general public and will be of particular interest to college and secondary
school teachers and students.

Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki are professors in the English Department at George Mason
University. Both have been directors of the university's Writing Across the Curriculum
program, considered among the very best programs in the nation. Dr. Zawacki currently directs
George Mason's University Writing Center. Dr. Thaiss is currently the director of the National
Network of Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs.

Both Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki have published several articles on the importance of writing in
an overall educational strategy. Together, they authored the forthcoming book *Alternative
Discourses and the Academy: Reports from the Field*.

The visit by Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki is part of a year-long initiative at Delta State to increase
opportunities for students to develop better writing skills.

The visit is sponsored by the Standards-Based Teacher Education Project. Co-sponsors include
the DSU Student Engagement Champions and the DSU Writing Across the Curriculum
Committee.

For more information on this program, contact Dr. Alan Barton at (662) 846-4097 or visit the
webpage at http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/writing.htm.

Quotes from **Dr. Alan Barton**, DSU faculty member (Social Sciences) and coordinator of the
writing events on campus this academic year:

"We are very fortunate to have Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki visit us at Delta State to share their
experiences in teaching writing to college students. Both are nationally known experts in the
field of writing, and their talk should be a very valuable event for teachers and students in the
Mississippi Delta."

"Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki bring a tremendous amount of knowledge about writing that derives
not only from their extensive research with faculty and students but also from their very practical

experience working directly with students at the George Mason Writing Center and with faculty in administering the well-known Writing Across the Curriculum Program at George Mason. I think their presentation will be very interesting and valuable to college and secondary teachers and students from all over the Delta."

Quotes from **Collier Parker**, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at DSU:

"An important contribution that high school teachers offer their students is knowledge of what is necessary to succeed in college. This event will help high school teachers understand the expectations that college faculty have for writing and what level they need to address to prepare their students for college. By attending this event, both teachers and students can become more aware of what the writing issues and problems are, what the expectations are for college writing, and how we can all better serve our students."

"For their part, students will understand what the expectations are, and they can then prepare to excel as college students. For students, this is a great opportunity to ask questions of these speakers."

Quotes from **Dr. Susan Allen Ford**, DSU faculty (English) and Coordinator for the university's Writing Center

"When we write, we are also searching. We attempt to give a shape to ideas that we don't yet fully control. When we work with writers, we attempt to help them discover that shape, to discover some kind of control. The presentation by Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki should give both those who must write and the teachers who work with them greater insight into writing processes."

"One of the most difficult parts of teaching is designing assignments that help students learn and grow. I look forward to the presentation by Dr. Thaiss and Dr. Zawacki and to what it can teach me about constructing more effective assignments."

Quote from **Dr. Karen G. Bell**, DSU faculty member (English) and Chair of the university's Writing Across the Curriculum committee

"Members of the Writing Across the Curriculum committee are looking forward to the visit, keynote address and workshops by Drs. Thaiss and Zawacki. The committee will build upon its ongoing work with information and advice gleaned by these distinguished experts and help Delta State University establish a Writing Across the Curriculum program."

Delta State University

Writing Workshops for DSU Faculty

Guest Speakers and Workshop Facilitators
Dr. Christopher Thaiss and Dr. Terry Zawacki
George Mason University

What To Do If Students "Can't" Write

- **Managing the Paper Load Part I:**
  Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing

- **Managing the Paper Load Part II:**
  Responding Effectively and Grading Efficiently

- **Defining Standards for Student Writing**
  (Includes Holistic Reading of Student Papers)

Thursday, Feb. 17, 2005
1:00 pm to **3:30 pm**

and

Friday, Feb. 18, 2005
9:30 am to **12:30 pm**

See schedule on reverse

Sponsors:

STEP		WAC
Standards-Based Teacher Education Project	Student Engagement Champions	Writing Across the Curriculum Committee

For more information:
http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/writing.htm

Workshop Schedule:		
Thursday, February 17, 2005		
1:00 pm – 1:45 pm	Overview: What To Do If Students "Can't" Write	Delta Room (1st Floor Ewing)
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	• Managing the Paper Load Part I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing	Delta Room
	• Managing the Paper Load Part II: Responding Effectively & Grading Efficiently	Ewing 329
Friday, February 18, 2005		
9:30 am – 11:00 am	• Managing the Paper Load Part I: Designing Assignments to Produce Better Writing	Union 309
	• Managing the Paper Load Part II: Responding Effectively & Grading Efficiently	Union 302A
11:15 am – 12:30 pm	Concluding Workshop: Defining Standards for Student Writing (Includes a Practical Exercise: Holistic Reading of Student Papers)	Union 302A

Please attend all or any part of any workshop!

Delta State University

Public Address on Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing Well in School:
What We've Learned
from Faculty and Students

Speakers:

Dr. Christopher Thaiss
Dr. Terry Zawacki
George Mason University

Thursday, February 17, 2005
7:30 p.m.
Bologna Performing Arts Center
Delta State University
Cleveland, MS

Dr. Thaiss is coordinator of the National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs and co-editor of *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Programs in Writing across the Curriculum*

Dr. Zawacki directs the George Mason University Writing Center as well as their nationally recognized Writing Across the Curriculum program

For more information:
http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/writing.htm

APPENDIX D:
WORKSHOP HANDOUTS

The following were handouts distributed at the workshops.

Note: The consultants have requested that their handouts not be circulated outside of Delta State University. Please contact the principal investigator for copies of the handouts.

Delta State University

Keynote Address

Writing Well in School:
What We've Learned from Faculty
& Students

Dr. Christopher Thaiss
Dr. Terry Myers Zawacki
George Mason University

February 17, 2005
7:30 p.m.
Bologna Performing Arts Center
Delta State University

Welcome to the DSU Writing Seminar
Keynote Address!

This evening's keynote address is part of a year-long effort to examine the role of writing in DSU classrooms. Tonight's event features two distinguished speakers who are visiting DSU to help us implement a Writing Across the Curriculum Program. During this visit, the speakers are leading workshops for faculty on design and evaluation of writing assignments. Tonight's address is aimed at a broad audience of teachers, students, and administrators to help us gain an enhanced understanding of teaching writing at the university level.

This series began with a Faculty Writing Forum held in November, 2004. The series continues with another writing seminar in April, 2005, which will focus on Writing in the Disciplines.

__Dr. Bill Spencer__, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of English, is the moderator for tonight's keynote address.

Tonight's program was made possible by a grant from the Standards-Based Teacher Education Project (STEP), coordinated at DSU by __Dr. Hines Cronin__. Co-sponsors and organizers of this event are the DSU Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, chaired by __Dr. Karen Bell__, and the DSU Student Engagement Champions, chaired by __Dr. Darlene Crone-Todd__. __Dr. Alan Barton__ has coordinated this writing seminar and tonight's keynote address.

Thanks to the staff of the Bologna Performing Arts Center for their hard work and to the student assistants who helped out with this event.

Delta State University and Cleveland welcome our distinguished speakers to the Mississippi Delta.

Tonight's keynote address is entitled "Writing Well in School: What We've Learned from Faculty and Students."

Dr. Christopher Thaiss *is a graduate of the University of Virginia in English, with an M.A. and Ph.D. in English from Northwestern University. He has been a professor of English at George Mason University since 1976. He developed and directed the Writing Across the Curriculum Program at GMU, and also served as director of composition. Dr. Thaiss has been the coordinator of the National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs since 1981. He is on the editorial board of the* ***Journal of Language and Learning Across the Disciplines****. He has authored or edited ten books, including* ***WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Programs in Writing Across the Curriculum*** *(2001),* ***The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum*** *(1998), and* ***Writing to Learn: Essays and Reflections on Writing Across the Curriculum*** *(1983). He has authored numerous scholarly articles and is currently working on two books, including* ***Alternative Discourses: Reports from the Disciplines*** *with co-author Dr. Zawacki.*

Dr. Terry Zawacki *has a B.A. in English from Southern Illinois University, an M.A. in Communication from the New York Institute of Technology, and a D.A. in Higher Education from George Mason University. She has been on the faculty at GMU since 1990 and holds appointments in English and Women's Studies. In 1995, she developed and directed the Linked Courses Program, a cross-curricular learning community initiative. She has been the director of the University Writing Center at GMU since 1997, and since 1998 she has directed their well-known Writing Across the Curriculum Program. She has authored several scholarly essays on Writing Across the Curriculum and has given numerous lectures and public presentations on WAC. She has consulted with several universities on developing writing programs, and is a section editor for the National WAC Clearinghouse site.*

The 3x5 card that you received with this program is to register your attendance. Please write your name and organizational affiliation on the card and drop it in the box near the exit.

We would like your opinion of this program to assist us in planning future events. Please fill out the brief evaluation form and drop it in the box near the exit.

Thank you for joining us at tonight's event!

DSU Writing Seminar Sponsors:

STEP	WAC	Student Engagement
Standards-Based Teacher Education Project (STEP)	Writing Across the Curriculum Committee	Student Engagement Champions

Writing Across the Curriculum Evaluation Form
February 2005

Check One: ____ DSU Faculty   ____ DSU Student   ____ DSU Staff

____ Other _____

Directions: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements
by circling the appropriate number

1. The content of this session addressed my interests and needs.

    4 = strongly agree   2 = disagree
    3 = agree   1 = strongly disagree

2. I will be able to apply the content of this session.

    4 = strongly agree   2 = disagree
    3 = agree   1 = strongly disagree

3. The application of this content will improve the quality and quantity of student
    writing at Delta State University.

    4 = strongly agree   2 = disagree
    3 = agree   1 = strongly disagree

4. The format of the writing seminar was effective (keynote plus workshop sessions).

    4 = strongly agree   2 = disagree
    3 = agree   1 = strongly disagree

5. What suggestions do you have for content and/or format for further sessions on student
    writing?

APPENDIX G:
FEBRUARY 2005 WRITING SEMINAR SPONSORS

The Standards-based Teacher Education Project (STEP)

The STEP project was developed by the American Association of College for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the now-defunct Council for Basic Education (CBE). The mission of the STEP project is to enhance accountability in institutions that prepare K–12 teachers. STEP helps teacher-training institutions assess teacher preparedness, in accordance with academic content standards.

Dr. Hines Cronin is the STEP coordinator for the DSU campus.

The STEP project provided funding and coordination for the DSU Faculty Writing Forum.

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Committee

Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives have surfaced on campuses across the country in the past twenty years as a strategy to incorporate more varied writing experiences into college classrooms. WAC is based on the premise that writing is a valuable learning tool that encourages students to develop higher-order thinking skills, including the ability to synthesize, analyze and apply information. To date, DSU has encouraged WAC on a voluntary basis. Recently, a new WAC committee was formed to promote WAC efforts and to increase the profile of writing in the disciplines across campus.

Dr. Karen Bell, Assistant Professor of German, is the chair of the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee. Other members of the committee include Dr. Marilyn Schultz, Assistant Professor of English; Dr. Maud Kuykendall, Assistant Professor of Special Education; Dr. Bobby Moore, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice; Dr. Greg Hospodor, Assistant Professor of History; Dr. Vicki Hartley, Associate Professor of Special Education; Mr. Ron Pedro, Assistant Professor of Commercial Aviation; Dr. Jenetta Waddell, Assistant Professor of Education; Ms. Lisa Oswalt, Instructor in Nursing; Mr. Charles Metcalf, Instructor in Commercial Aviation; Mr. Tim Colbert, Instructor in Health, Physical Education and Recreation; and Dr. Milton Wilder, Professor of Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

The WAC committee assisted in the planning, preparation and execution of the Faculty Writing Forum.

The Student Engagement Champions (SEC)

DSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) of 2003, part of the university's on-going accreditation process, focuses on the concept of student engagement as the core objective over the next evaluation period. The Student Engagement Champions were created to oversee initiatives to increase student engagement in all aspects of the university. Five SECs were appointed early in 2004 to serve during the 2004-05 academic year. Over the subsequent four years, five new SECs will be appointed each year. Each group of SECs will represent the university's three colleges and one professional school.

Dr. Darlene Crone-Todd, Assistant Professor of Psychology, is the chair of the 2004-05 Student Engagement Champions. Other SECs include Ms. Jan Cooper, Instructor of CIS and Business Education; Dr. Luther Brown, the Director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning and Professor of Biology; Dr. Alan Barton, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Community Development; and Ms. Catherine Hayes, Instructor in Nursing.

The Student Engagement Champions assisted in the planning, preparation, organization, execution and evaluation of the Faculty Writing Forum.

Comments or questions on this report are welcome.

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