



Introduction: Working With Wac

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To Instructors Working with Writing Fellows About the Writing Fellows Program

The success of the program depends heavily on the enthusiasm and cooperation of the instructors who have requested Fellows. As you know, the program involves a Writing Fellow acting as first reader for papers submitted in the course. On the basis of written comments and a follow-up conference with the Fellow, students have an opportunity to write a revised version of each paper. Both the original version with the Fellow's comments and the revised version will be handed in to the instructor for final evaluation and comments.

We have found that both Writing Fellows and class students benefit most when the instructor makes clear her or his support for the program and, in addition, makes an effort to give the Fellows some sense of the expectations about writing that are important to the class and its goals. Several particular steps are important both logistically and in the spirit of the program:

- 1) Clarify the expectation that all members of the class will participate, given that this is a program for writers at all levels of skill development.
- 2) Inform your class that conferences on at least two papers are mandatory. We believe conferences are often more effective than written comments.
- 3) Assign at least two and preferably three papers or other substantial writing assignments, with at least one of these in the first half of the semester.
- 4) Arrange for all papers to be handed in to you in the first instance for distribution to the Fellow(s) and publish a clear policy for handling of late papers.
- 5) Give Writing Fellows a few minutes of class time to introduce themselves and the program before the first paper is assigned.
- 6) Cooperate in the distribution and collection of evaluative questionnaires at the end of the semester (and complete the instructor's questionnaire).

We hope you will be able to schedule a meeting with your Writing Fellow(s) before classes begin (or soon thereafter). You are also encouraged to provide feedback to the Fellows during the semester, and to consult them about student responses to writing assignments.

We believe that the work of the Writing Fellows may result in papers that you will find more satisfying and less onerous to read. Writing Fellows will normally be able to complete their work with writers no later than a week after receiving a batch of papers. Any of us associated with the program will be glad to discuss with you any aspect of the program or its procedures.

Joe Essid
Writing Center Director

Lee Carleton
Assistant Director, Writing Center

To Writing Fellows

About the Writing Fellows Program

PURPOSE

The Writing Fellows share with their fellow students and with the faculty the central challenges of learning and of communicating the discovery and mastery of what has been learned. Neither teachers nor tutors in the traditional senses, Writing Fellows ideally participate in collaborative learning with their peers. They provide responses not distanced by age or status, but informed by careful thinking about the writing process and the ways in which attention to that process can foster better thinking and more productive writing.

PROCEDURES

At the heart of the Writing Fellow's role is her or his personal interaction with fellow student writers. Your approach to writers should be collaborative, sympathetic, non-judgmental, careful, and knowledgeable. This ideal requires, first and foremost, clear respect for writers' authority over their own work and a firm commitment to read that work for comprehension of the shape and focus of ideas (even, and perhaps especially, when that shape or focus may not be readily graspable). You should also remember that "non-judgmental" applies to positive as well as negative conclusions: it is one thing to tell a writer that you enjoyed her or his work, or that a piece of writing worked for you, but quite another to imply that the work has universal merit or is sure to be judged similarly by the instructor.

In commentary and conference your aim is to engage in a dialog that will discover means to improve the comprehension of both reader and writer. Revision at this level is often equivalent to a rethinking of the paper as a whole. As writers see the difficult necessity of seeking new evidence or fresh arguments and face the sometimes painful abandoning of large chunks of hard-won prose, the support and understanding of the Writing Fellow are crucial. It is here that your careful perceptions, knowledge of the possibilities of organization, and skill with the conventions of language can work to encourage writers to re-see and rewrite in ways that go beyond mechanical face-lifting.

Despite the lower priority this approach assigns to revision for correctness in such matters as syntax and spelling, you are also responsible for precise knowledge in those areas. Most of the work in defining and correcting mechanical errors should fall to the writer, but Fellows must become experts at recognizing and, as necessary, naming the problems. The best practical approach involves an initial decision about the point at which such errors should be considered when other aspects of the paper may require priority attention. You might say to a writer that you notice quite a few mechanical errors but want to talk first about subject and thesis. There may be little point in dwelling on mechanical errors in portions of a paper that need radical rewriting.

Rarely, if ever, should you take pen in hand and correct the error for the writer. Most often it should be enough to underline or otherwise mark the errors you note, tell the writer that those marks indicate places where you see errors, and send the writer off to check in an appropriate handbook. This strategy should be supplemented by the offer to try to explain errors which the writer does not understand. You might find it useful to keep a record of errors

that are repeated from paper to paper.

PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS

Writing Fellows in a course should meet at least once with the instructor. They should also introduce themselves at the appropriate class meeting.

Remember that conferences are required on at least two written exercises in every class. Be sure conference sign-up sheets are available when papers are handed in. Be sure all students in the class know what to do with papers and where and when to get in touch with you.

Return papers to students before conference.

Meet all scheduled conferences promptly and without fail. Keep careful note of any conferences missed by writers. Let instructors know about late papers and missed appointments.

Do not discuss the students you work with nor their papers with anyone in a way that would permit them to be identified.

Keep a brief log of progress and problems for each writer.

When in doubt consult as appropriate the course instructor or one of the program directors.

To Students Enrolled in a Class Where Writing Fellows Have Been Assigned About the Writing Fellows Program

The Writing Fellows Program views writing as a process that may be ended, but never really finished. We also assume that every writer, no matter how accomplished, can write better if attention is paid to that process. Finally, we believe that collaboration among student peers is an especially effective mode of learning. Writing Fellows are not tutors; they are writers and readers engaged as you are in making the most of learning at the University of Richmond. Often the Writing Fellow will not be an expert in the material you are writing about, but she or he will be able to share with you insights into the writing process and the ways in which you can use it to enhance both the quality of your learning and the excellence of your written product.

Writing Fellows are your fellow students, members of the sophomore, junior and senior classes. Each spring students are selected from those nominated by faculty and students or through their own expression of interest. These students then participate in a fall course called *Composition Theory and Pedagogy*. While taking this course, they will also be involved as Writing Fellows (in training) with three or four students in selected courses. In the following semesters they will each work with up to fifteen fellow writers.

In courses where Fellows have been assigned, your instructor will usually list two due dates for each piece of writing. You will get the most from the Writing Fellows program if you treat the first due date as a final deadline and produce the best paper you can at that point. This first version, however, will be given by the instructor to your Writing Fellow. When you hand in the paper you will probably also be asked to sign up for a conference time with the Fellow. A day or so before the conference you should receive from the Writing Fellow your paper with some comments and suggestions on it or appended to it. Styles differ among Writing Fellows: some will give you very extensive written comments; others will be more sparing with the expectation that noted points can be followed up in conference.

The conference gives you and your Writing Fellow a chance for an extended conversation about your paper. At the end of the conference we hope you will have worked out some ways to re-enter the writing process and come out with a superior revision to submit to the instructor (along with your first version) by the final due date. Though putting your paper and yourself through this process are part of the requirements for the course you are in, you are always free to make your own choices about how much and what sort of revision you finally want to do.

Our research of other institutions like ours that have developed this version of Writing-Across-the-Curriculum has shown us such collaboration among students is productive. If you have any questions about the program, don't hesitate to ask Joe Essid (WAC & Writing Center Director) at 289-8935, or the Lee Carleton (Assistant Director, Writing Center) at 289-8304.

The Writing Center

Even at the height of this program's development, not every course will have a Writing Fellow assigned to it. To meet the needs of writers who would like assistance but are not currently working with a Writing Fellow, the university has established a Writing Center, located in the Academic Computing building next to Boatwright Library. Joe Essid is the Writing Center Director. The Center is staffed by undergraduates--Writing Fellows in training, Writing Tutors, and program assistants. All staff members are required to enroll in English 383, *Composition Theory and Pedagogy*.

The Writing Center welcomes writing of all sorts and at all stages of the writing process, from the search for a topic or a way around temporary block, to a final sharing to check on coherence and mechanical accuracy. The Center operates on a drop-in basis, by appointment (use our Web page to schedule a tutorial), and by instructor referral. Writing Center hours are posted at the start of each semester in the lobby of the Writing Center and on the Center's web page.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING FELLOWS

I've enrolled you in the Blackboard course I've set up for all my Core students. It covers both my Core sections and includes the course handouts. Please go to Blackboard, Course Documents, and read over the handouts headed: Master Syllabus (all new this year!), Section Syllabus (for your section), Sample Thesis and Argument, and Getting Ready to Read *Fountain and Tomb*.

Our first essay assignment will be on *Fountain and Tomb*. I won't post it on Blackboard until it goes out to students on Thursday, September 4. Students should start contacting you then for help. If they don't, please contact them—I need you to help me get them started gathering their evidence in *advance* of the night before the first stage of the assignment is due.

As you'll see on your Section Syllabus, I give them two preliminary shots at running a proposed thesis and argument by me for comments. I'll have their second submissions back to them on Tuesday, Sept. 24. They'll then have about ten days until the full final essay will be due on Thursday, Oct. 3. That's the time when you can be of most help to them.

As you'll see from the assignment, they'll all have been told that you're not to evaluate their interpretations of the text—only to help them express *their* ideas in language that's correct, clear and coherent. You can help me most if you get them to give me essays that are clear, coherent and free of mechanical errors, so I can focus on their problems of reading and interpretation.

Here are some specific things I'd like you to focus on:

- Make sure each understands what I mean by writing *only on the text*. Some high school teachers will have taught them to begin with sweeping generalizations about people throughout history. Emphasize that such statements are inappropriate for the kind of writing we're doing here, because they can't be supported with evidence from the text.
- Stress thesis and argument (i.e., organization and coherence). Make sure they understand that a single sentence is not a thesis for this course. If they don't have a thesis paragraph like the one in the model and at least a minimal argument, help them develop these. *Please head off any plot summaries!* Show students how to replace them with arguments.
- Make sure each student understands what constitutes a claim (or point) and what constitutes supporting evidence for that claim.
- Students have been told to buy copies of Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*. Key your written comments to Hacker as much as possible. Refer them to specific sections as needed. Let me know if you don't have a copy.
- Ask if they'd like you to go over how to integrate quotations in the full essay. If so, use the Hacker section so they'll be able to refer to it as they revise. Work with them on correct MLA form for page references.
- For those who need it, counsel them to use the literary present and active voice as much as possible.
- As you encounter their problems with mechanics, concentrate on eradicating the most egregious ones: I don't want to see run-on sentences, sentence fragments, erratic tense shifts, apostrophe mistakes, dangling modifiers and agreement errors.
- Remind them that they're expected to use spell and grammar checks, but be aware that these are imperfect tools. Make sure they know where to go for computer help and for Writing Center tutorials if they need work on mechanics. Encourage them to look at the examples of past prize essays by Core students on the Web.
- Remember not to tell them that what they have is "good." Well-meaning encouragement can leave them feeling misled when they don't get the grade they hope for. Remind them that what we're after will take time.

Ideas for Working with Writing Fellows: “Batting Around” Your Assignments

I usually send my Fellows early drafts of my writing assignments. By doing this, I get a student's “take” on the strengths of the work and “traps” that await their peers. After all, faculty cannot have both a professor's and a student's perspective of a writing assignment. The exchange of ideas gives me a critical distance from the work that I would otherwise lack. The following exchange, for a proposed assignment about Naguib Mahfouz's *Fountain and Tomb*, took place through several e-mail messages between me and Meredith Hafer, who assisted me with my Core 101-102 class.

Joe Essid: This is just a draft, but I'm concerned that the question is too broad as written, even with the caveats about “traps” for writers. After all, Mustafa Al-Dashoory proposes at least two ideas: that we live in a Deistic universe and that people are going to be inherently noble and valiant in such a place.

Draft Assignment: In Mahfouz's *Fountain & Tomb*, the schoolteacher Mustafa Al-Dashoory tells the narrator's father that he cannot believe Allah is involved in human affairs and has left us “to our own devices.” In response the narrator's father calls Al-Dashoory's deist beliefs “dangerous blasphemy.” Yet the teacher replies that the world seems to him “a ship without a captain on a sea without a shore in a time without beginning or end. Heroism and nobility and sacrifice will never die.”

Your question: In your opinion, do the events in the book support Al-Dashoory's claim? If so or if not, why? Support your answer with a few good examples, in an essay of at least 6 pages, double-spaced.

Meredith Hafer: I think that most students won't read this as a question of whether or not the narrator's world is a Deistic world; I think that, instead, they would respond to the question of whether or not humans can act “nobly” in a world in which Allah is not immediately present. Which question would you like to stress? I think that the more defensible question is the question of how the characters in the story behave when they perceive themselves to be “in a ship without a captain.” (i.e. Do they need to believe in a god who is involved in human affairs in order to be valiant?)

Joe Essid: Over the weekend I reworked the question in this very direction. Take a look at my revision, attached.

In Mahfouz's *Fountain & Tomb*, the schoolteacher Mustafa Al-Dashoory tells the narrator's father that he cannot believe Allah is involved in human affairs and has left us “to our own devices.” In response the narrator's father calls Al-Dashoory's deist beliefs “dangerous blasphemy.” Yet the teacher replies that the world seems to him “a ship without a captain on a sea without a shore in a time without beginning or end.”

Your question: (this part left unchanged)

Meredith Hafer: On a purely stylistic note, I had a bit of trouble reading this sentence at first: “In Mahfouz's *Fountain & Tomb*, the schoolteacher Mustafa Al-Dashoory tells the narrator's father that he cannot believe Allah is involved in human affairs and has left us “to our own devices.” The problem lies in the way that “he cannot believe Allah...” seems to refer to both “is involved in human affairs” and “has left us “to our own devices.” (As in, he cannot believe that Allah has left us to our own devices.) Which do you mean to say?

Joe Essid: Good advice here, too. I mean to say that the teacher does not believe that Allah takes action. I'll re-word to make it even clearer!

Final version of assignment: In Mahfouz's *Fountain & Tomb*, the schoolteacher Mustafa Al-Dashoory states that Allah does not interfere in human events and has left us “to our own devices.” In response the narrator's father calls Al-Dashoory's deist beliefs “dangerous blasphemy.” Yet the teacher replies that the world seems to him “a ship without a captain on a sea without a shore in a time without beginning or end.”

Your question: (unchanged)

Ideas for Working with Writing Fellows: Where is my Writing Fellow?

Writers often get confused about where to meet the Writing Fellow, and they can use this as an excuse for **not** meeting a Fellow at all! I require my Fellows to create a sign-up sheet for each round of conferences, and I ask students to sign up shortly before I collect their first drafts. Fellows have a bulletin board in the hallway of the Writing Center for posting these sheets; I keep another copy in my office. Those who miss an appointment with the Fellow lose a partial letter grade for the paper. For instance:

Sign-Up Sheet: Paper #1

Meredith Hafer

1. Meet at the Westhampton hanging lounge.
2. Be on time (the schedule doesn't allow for delays).
3. If you need to get in touch with me, call me at home (804-290-8811) or on my cell phone (610-812-7909). I will keep my cell phone with me during meeting hours.

(name)	(phone number)
Saturday, September 28	
2:00 _____	_____
2:30 _____	_____
Sunday, September 29	
12:00 _____	_____
12:30 _____	_____
1:00 _____	_____
1:30 _____	_____
2:00 _____	_____
2:30 _____	_____
3:00 _____	_____
3:30 _____	_____
Monday, September 30	
11:00 _____	_____
11:30 _____	_____
12:00 _____	_____
12:30 _____	_____
1:00 _____	_____

**One Department's Approach To WAC
Biology at University of Richmond**

TO: Biology 198 Instructors and Writing Fellows:
FROM: W. John Hayden
DATE: September 5, 1994
RE: Pilot program for Biology 198

Enclosed is an outline of the pilot program for involvement of Writing Fellows in Biology 198 for the Fall 1994 semester.

As explained in the outline, the first formal involvement for fellows should be a brief introduction during the labs scheduled for the week of Sept. 12, the second lab of the semester.

Several Fellows have already contacted the faculty member with whom they will be working; it would probably be best for Fellows and faculty to meet sometime before the second lab. This meeting should be arranged individually for each lab "team."

Lets all keep in mind that this is a pilot program and some flexibility and adjustments may be necessary as we go. Let's do our best to help our students learn through writing!

**WAC-BIO Pilot Program for Biology 198
*Who's involved***

Faculty	Writing Fellows	Lab Sections
Brad Goodner x 8661	Jon Meade Stacy Ostapko	10, Thurs 3:40-5:35
Sheila Hayden x 8232	Kerrian Mross Amy Skorupa	7, Thurs 1:35-3:30
John Hayden x 8232	Eric Crouch Jane Currie	1, Tues 9:45-11:40
Lisa Muehlstein x 8239	Brian Barnes Jill Doran	4, Wed 1:35-3:30

cc: Dona Hickey
Joe Essid

WAC-BIO Pilot Program for Biology 198

What's involved

The Writing Fellows will assist in preparing lab reports for the two multi-week projects that will run for much of the duration of the semester, i.e., the “Wisconsin Fast Plants” experiment in genetics and the experiment involving hormones or mineral nutrition or seedling transpiration. The Fellows should introduce themselves to the lab section for which they are assigned, provide the students (and faculty!) their phone numbers or some other means of contact, and be available as needed to assist the students with their writing (including charts, tables, graphs, etc.). As outlined below, Writing Fellows will read various drafts of student papers and schedule at least one or two individual meetings with students to provide constructive criticism on organization, grammar, style, graphics, etc. Fellows will also meet with their assigned faculty to coordinate and fine-tune implementation of the program.

When Things Should Happen

DATE	EVENT
Sept 5	Faculty & Writing Fellows meet individually and discuss their mutual expectations for the program.
Sept 12	Faculty introduce the genetics problem; students initiate the experiment; Writing Fellows introduce themselves to the class, briefly outline their roles, and provide phone numbers, etc.
(as needed)	Writing Fellows meet and assist students.
Oct 3	Partial (first) draft of genetics paper due (Introduction and Materials & Methods section only); Fellows expeditiously read papers, comment, and schedule conferences with students.
(as needed)	Writing Fellows continue to meet and assist writers, and, over several days immediately before the due date, read and comment on full draft of genetics papers, returning them so students can revise by the due date; hormone, nutrition, and transpiration experiments are initiated.
Oct 31	Genetics paper due; students in sections with Writing Fellows submit their full drafts (with their Fellow's comments) and a revised final draft.
(as needed)	Writing Fellows continue to meet and assist writers, and, over several days immediately before the due date, read and comment on full draft of hormone, nutrition, and transpiration papers, returning them so students can revise by the due date.
Nov 14	Hormone, nutrition, and transpiration papers due; students in sections with Writing Fellows submit their full drafts (with their Fellow's comments) and a revised final draft.

Please note

Human nature being what it is, many students will likely procrastinate and submit papers to Writing Fellows shortly before the deadline. Fellows and Faculty should, at every opportunity, urge their students to submit drafts to Fellows as soon as progress of the experiment permits. Faculty may find it necessary to extend deadlines for final drafts by a few days for those sections which have Writing Fellows because of the extra “turn around time” inherent in the program.

Students in lab sections without Writing Fellows should be made aware of the existence of the Writing Center. The Writing Center schedule will include times when a number of biology students will be available for assistance in writing about biology. The Writing Center’s fall schedule should be announced soon.

One Professor's Response To Write-to-Learn Activities
Comments regarding use of 4 x 6 cards in Biology 101
Ivan Palmblad

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I began the quarter with some skepticism: how much time would it take? Would the students think it was busy work? How do I handle the logistics? Would it improve writing and thinking?

LATER REALIZATIONS

I ended the quarter with a very positive reaction, as did the students. From the standard university evaluation form 83% of those commenting on the 4 x 6 cards were positive.

- a) "helped me keep up with the material"
- b) "good way to review my notes"
- c) "forced me to read the text"
- d) "index cards were so great—they made me go over my notes"
- e) "I liked having to write a card every day. It helped me to master at least one topic a day."

STUDENT OUTCOMES

- a) Writing did improve during the quarter. However, I should have given samples of good and poor cards earlier.
- b) Class attendance was better than previous years.
- c) Only about 1 minute of class time was used to collect cards; about 30 to 45 minutes per day for grading.

FRINGE BENEFITS

- a) By reading some 30 cards, I received immediate feedback on any misconception that I had conveyed in the previous day's lecture.
- b) The drop rate of students doing poorly increased. Since many of these had failed to hand in cards, I suspect that their perception of "being behind and not doing well in the class" was reinforced. In previous years despite 3 to 5 failing scores on exams and quizzes, many students would not withdraw.