

TEACHING WITH WRITING

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Pre/Views

by Vicki Tolar Burton, WIC Director

Learning outcomes have been at the heart of University life this year. Encouraged by accreditors and by Provost Tim White, OSU departments, programs, and faculty are endeavoring to articulate exactly what learning outcomes we expect of our students and how each outcome will be demonstrated and evaluated.

Help for devising outcomes for Writing Intensive (WIC) courses is at hand in Tracy Ann Robinson's article in this issue of *TWW*. Originally prepared as a White Paper on Assessment for a graduate project, Robinson's article offers faculty a primer on assessment and outcomes. From a review of Bloom's taxonomy of critical thinking to suggestions for locating model outcomes from disciplinary sources online, this article will school us and empower us in outcomes assessment.

This article is just one of countless projects Tracy Ann has taken on during her three years as WIC TA. As she completes her thesis and her advanced degree, on behalf of all the WIC faculty and students she has helped and challenged, I want to say thank you to Tracy Ann Robinson, who has enriched and improved teaching and learning at OSU in profound ways. She is student-centered and learning-centered, and I will miss having her as a colleague in the project of improving writing at OSU.

Developing Writing Outcomes for OSU WIC Courses

by Tracy Ann Robinson, WIC GTA

Student learning is at the heart of the university mission. As an institution committed to excellence, we must continually evaluate how well we accomplish that mission—not just how well we teach and deliver services, but what our students actually learn and achieve. This process of assessment is also an important part of our accountability to external stakeholders.

Tim White,

“Assessment of Learning in [OSU] Undergraduate Programs”

Without outcomes, nothing we do makes much sense. Most of the time, our outcomes remain rather tacit, buried beneath requirements for the major. But do we really know whether our students are achieving the expected level of knowledge, ability, skill, and attitude? Can a series of courses with “pass” grades guarantee that? Can grades alone [...] predict whether our students are graduating with all the intellectual capacities we wish and demand of them? Can hastily completed course evaluations, pencilled by students in a few minutes, really tell us how effectively we're preparing them in our courses? Experience and research tell us that the answer is no.

Chris Anson,

“Conceptual Understanding of UAPR at N.C. State University”

Last January (2004), OSU Provost Tim White issued to the University's deans, chairs, and directors the memo quoted above, directing all undergraduate-degree-granting departments and programs at OSU to formulate program-level student learning outcomes by the end of the 2004-05 academic year, as part of the University's move to outcomes-based program assessment. Many of the targeted units have already completed this task and others are in the process of doing so. Once their program-level outcomes are articulated, it will be incumbent on individual faculty members to ensure that their own course curricula support those outcomes. To demonstrate and document this effort, faculty members will want to consider including course-level student learning outcomes on their syllabi. (Some OSU units and/or unit accrediting organizations have already instituted this requirement.)

Program-level learning outcomes are necessarily broad, as they are designed to reflect and measure accumulated learning experiences over many courses. For example, the Department of Sociology has designated in its Assessment

Plan the ability to “communicate sociological insights; to present and to persuade both orally and in writing” as one learning outcome for Sociology majors. The accompanying “Measurements” section of the plan cites the variety of activities through which students will demonstrate their achievement of this outcome during their college career.

In contrast to the “big picture” nature of program-level undergraduate learning outcomes, course-level learning outcomes statements need to be much more specific and explicit. They are usually grounded in individual course content, and the means by which students’ learning will be demonstrated and measured are typically included in the outcomes statements themselves. Thus, while the OSU Academic Programs’ “Assessment of Academic Programs” Web site (<<http://oregonstate.edu/admin/uap/assess/>>), whose primary function is to support the University-wide transition to outcomes assessment, provides several useful resources for identifying and writing *program-level* learning outcomes, individual faculty members may need some additional information and direction in the work of articulating *course-level* learning outcomes. This article seeks to provide some of that supplementary information.

The first part of the article reviews the definition, purpose, and construction of course-level student learning outcomes, which differ significantly from the “course goals and objectives” statements more traditionally included on college course syllabi. Although all examples included in this article are writing-related, the information in the first section is applicable to all teaching faculty regardless of WIC status and course focus.

The second part of the article is more explicitly WIC-related in that it suggests contexts and strategies for devising specifically writing-related learning outcomes in upper-level subject-matter courses. The assumption underlying this second section is that most WIC faculty will find it relatively easy to develop content-related student learning outcomes for courses within their field of expertise, but some may feel less confident about identifying and articulating writing-specific outcomes for their courses—outcomes that, according to the Baccalaureate Core criteria for these courses, are clearly needed on all WIC course syllabi.

Learning Outcomes Statements: What They Are and How To Write Them

The University of Western Australia’s Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, whose “Basic Guide for Writing Student Learning Outcomes Statements” can be accessed at <<http://www.catl.osds.uwa.edu.au/obe/outcomes/>>, defines learning outcomes as “statement[s] of what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of a learning process.” More specific to post-secondary education is the following definition, proposed by Chris Anson, North Carolina State’s Campus Writing and Speaking Program Director:

Outcomes are teachable, measurable characteristics—abilities, skills, knowledge, and attitudes that students are supposed to acquire to be considered fully educated both as undergraduate students generally and as majors in their fields.

A third definition, offered by Wisconsin’s Alverno College—a U.S. pathfinder institution in outcomes-based learning and teaching—reminds teaching faculty that academic learning outcomes can, and should, extend beyond academia into all aspects of the learners’ lives:

[A learning outcome] describes what a student will be able to do with what she knows in personal, professional, and/or academic contexts as a result of a set of learning experiences.

For OSU WIC courses, whose multi-faceted teaching mission includes a focus not just on academic writing in the discipline but also on familiarizing students with workplace writing in their intended career fields and on writing as a tool for critical thinking, outcomes that link students’ learning experiences to professional and personal as well as academic contexts are particularly apropos.

How Do Learning Outcomes Differ from “Course Goals and Objectives”?

Cantor clarifies the distinction between the course goals and objectives traditionally included on course syllabi and true student learning outcomes (which he calls “instructional objectives”) by defining the former as “general statements about the purposes of a course or a given lesson” and the latter as “precise statement[s] of what your learner[s] will be able to do at the end of the instruction, stated in behavioral terms” (63). By behavioral, Cantor means performable; that is, in some way measurable and quantifiable. Thus, while the statements that “In this course students will improve their proofreading skills” and “Students will develop greater audience awareness as writers” certainly constitute valid course goals, neither is a learning outcome. (What do “improve” and “greater” mean and how is students’ progress in these areas to be demonstrated/measured?) On the other hand, “By the end of the term, students’ polished drafts will contain no more than three grammatical errors,” and “Students will write audience-appropriate summaries of their research projects for three different readerships” are quantifiable writing outcomes, through which students’ achievement of the more generally stated goals can be explicitly demonstrated and evaluated.

As Anson’s statement quoted at the beginning of this article suggests, learning outcomes do more than just explicate the skills, knowledge, and attitudes students are expected to gain in individual courses. Huba and Freed note in *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning* that learning outcomes provide the basis for assessing not just student learning but also course, program, and institutional effectiveness; and they give direction to, and inform students about,

instructional activities and faculty intentions (94).

To provide this direction and information, both program and course learning outcomes statements must:

- be student-focused rather than instructor-focused.
- focus on the learning resulting from an activity rather than the activity itself.
- reflect the institution’s mission and the values it represents.
- be in alignment at the course, academic program, and institutional levels.
- focus on important, non-trivial aspects of learning that are credible to the public.
- focus on skills and abilities central to the discipline and based on professional standards of excellence.
- be general enough to capture important learning but clear and specific enough to be measurable.
- focus on aspects of learning that will develop and endure but that can be assessed in some form now. (Huba and Freed 98-117)

How Do You Write Course Learning Outcomes?

Composing effective and measurable learning outcomes is not always easy, especially in courses where the focus is on knowledge and/or attitudinal development as opposed to skills development. The most basic type of outcomes statement is a three-part statement describing what the

learner will be able to do, the conditions in which the learning will be demonstrated, and how the learning will be assessed. (Note that this information is all stated in future tense.) The verb that describes the learner’s behavior must describe a *specific and measurable* action on the learner’s part—for example, “...the student will list and describe the four key assumptions of the economic principle” as opposed to “...the student will understand the economic principle.” As many sources point out, the terminology associated with Bloom’s Taxonomy is a fruitful source of learning-outcomes vocabulary (see inset below).

Romiszowski’s four-part construct is a slightly more detailed approach to articulating learning outcomes and can be applied to all types of learning. Outcomes that adhere to this construct include the following information:

- the necessary external conditions for demonstrating the learned skill or behavior
- The skill or behavior that will be demonstrated, using as specific a behavioral, or “action,” verb as is possible.
- The criterion against which the skill or behavior will be assessed
- The test instrument or method through which the skill or behavior will be assessed. (For writing-related outcomes, this will normally be writing assignments.)

BLOOM’S TAXONOMY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Category*	Critical Thinking Focus	Behavioral Verbs Often Linked with This Level
KNOWLEDGE	Remembering and reciting information <i>Example: The student will list the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives in ascending order.</i>	Identify, list, label, name, recall, define, locate, recognize, match, reproduce.
COMPREHENSION	Relating and organizing previously learned information. <i>Example: The student will explain Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives in his or her own words.</i>	Explain, relate, generalize, predict, summarize, paraphrase, restate, convert, demonstrate.
APPLICATION	Applying information according to a rule or principle in a specific situation. <i>Example: The student will construct six learning objectives, one from each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives.</i>	Solve, choose, interpret, make, put together, apply, change, produce, translate, construct.
ANALYSIS	Considering parts and their functionality in the whole. <i>Example: The student will distinguish which level of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives is implied in a list of ten learning objectives.</i>	Analyze, compare, categorize, take apart, differentiate, examine, subdivide, distinguish, contrast.
SYNTHESIS	Putting parts together to form a new and original whole. <i>Example: The student will create a lesson plan in which Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives are taught.</i>	Invent, create, combine, hypothesize, plan, add to, originate, imagine, forecast.
EVALUATION	Valuing and making judgments based upon information. <i>Example: The student will critique an instructor’s questioning behavior for critical thinking elements.</i>	Assess, recommend, critique, evaluate, criticize, weigh, value.

*Listed from lowest-order to highest-order cognitive process **Source:** Wakefield 1998

To write learning outcomes based on this construct, Romiszowski suggests using the following “fill in the blanks” template:

*Given the following external conditions _____,
the student will _____
to the following standard _____,
as measured by the following method _____.*

Note that while this precise sequence may not always work for writing-related learning outcomes statements, it does identify all of the information, including the type or genre of writing that will be used to measure the writing behavior or skill, that such statements should specify.

Examples

§ Given the body of an article from *The Journal of _____*, the student will compose an abstract for the article that (a) accurately summarizes the article contents and (b) conforms to the journal’s current style guidelines.

§ The student’s final draft of his or her technical report, generated following peer, instructor, and proofreading review cycles, will be 100% free of all eight writing errors specifically addressed in the “grammar briefings” presented throughout the term.

§ Drawing from the pedagogical strategies and resources presented in this class, the student will devise an annotated 45-minute lesson plan for eighth grade students, addressing one skill area included in the ODE *Writing Scoring Guide*.

Developing WIC Course Writing Outcomes: Recommendations and Resources

As Baccalaureate Core courses with specific writing requirements, all WIC courses should include writing outcomes. But while WIC instructors presumably will find it relatively easy to identify appropriate subject-matter learning outcomes, some may feel less confident about determining appropriate writing-related instructional objectives for their students. This section briefly discusses seven sources of guidance and information to which WIC instructors may turn when identifying and articulating course writing outcomes.

1. Department/Program Student Learning Outcomes

All course-level learning outcomes should reflect and align with the associated unit’s learning outcomes. Thus, in articulating writing outcomes for their courses, WIC faculty will want first of all to review the communications-related outcomes that exist for their department or program.

For example, faculty in the OSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (one of four pilot departments selected to develop assessment plans for their units in 2003-04) could draw from at least the following three of their department’s six

Learner Outcome Assessment Statement’s skill area descriptions when determining their course writing outcomes:

Communication skills—Students graduating from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife will meet communication skills competencies. Specifically, students should be able to: 1) effectively use diverse forms of communication (oral, written, visual, symbolic); 2) engage in constructive dialog with diverse publics (both explain complex technical phenomena and understand comments of nontechnical persons); and 3) effectively communicate ideas and technical information in formal and professional formats.

Leadership and team building skills—Students graduating from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife will meet leadership and team building skills competencies. Specifically, students should be able to: 1) constructively provide criticism to peers and to accept criticism from peers; 2) lead a peer-group to develop collective solutions that exceed the individual contributions; 3) work with people of disparate social, political and educational backgrounds to build consensus and resolve conflicts while maintaining personal integrity.

Critical thinking skills—Students graduating from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife will meet critical thinking skills competencies. Specifically, students should be able to: 1) recognize biases and assumptions their own work and the work of others; and 2) use logic and reasoning, analysis and synthesis to arrive at defensible conclusions.

(OSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Assessment Plan)

A simple strategy for maximizing alignment of individual course outcomes with departmental outcomes is to include the department outcomes statement in the course materials, highlighting the outcomes to be addressed in the current course and then explicitly describing *how* these outcomes are to be addressed and measured. This approach serves the triple purpose of simplifying the instructor’s task of identifying/articulating course outcomes, establishing a clear alignment between the course goals and departmental learning objectives, and communicating departmental as well as individual course outcomes to students.

2. Accrediting Institution Outcomes and Standards

In units whose undergraduate curricula are tied to accreditation requirements, WIC faculty should factor any communications-related standards named by their accreditor into their course writing outcomes. In some cases, such standards are too broad to be very helpful; ABET, for example, states only that engineering graduates must have “the ability to communicate effectively.” Other institutions, however, do cite the specific types of communications skills expected of graduates of accredited programs. The Institute of Food Technologists, for example, specifies “writing technical reports, letters, and memos; communicating technical information to a non-technical audience; [and] making formal and informal presentations” as necessary success skills.

3. Information from Local Employers

Another source of ideas for writing-related course outcomes is local employers in your field, who can inform you about the types of writing their employees do and any specific weaknesses they have identified in employees' writing skills. Another possibility would be to consult with recently graduated majors who have secured employment in the field about the kinds of workplace writing they're doing and any writing-related challenges they have encountered as new employees.

Generating subject-matter-course writing outcomes based on information from professionals in the field not only makes good practical sense; it also communicates to students their instructor's strong commitment to helping prepare them for success in their future careers.

Example

(generated from conversation with Joseph Danko, PE, CH2M Hill Vice President of Energy and Industrial Systems Business, who cited summarizing, concise writing, and presentation skills as being of high importance for CH2M Hill employees)

§ After reviewing a professionally prepared engineering feasibility report, the student will summarize the report's key points and deliver the summary orally as a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation, adhering to the "Presentation Guidelines" practiced in this course.

4. Learning Outcomes for Comparable Courses at Other Institutions

Another effective and possibly time-saving strategy for developing writing-related outcomes in subject-matter courses is to use a Web search engine to locate published outcomes for similar courses at other colleges and universities around the country. As two examples of this approach,

- A recent Google™ search on "Engineering + Writing + Learning Outcomes" yielded (among many other resources), a list of "Performance Outcomes for University of Washington Engineering Writing" developed by UW Engineering and Technical Communications faculty, students, and engineers from industry (<<http://www.uwtc.washington.edu/resources/eiwc/PerformanceOutcomes.htm>>). The learning outcomes for the USC Engineering Writing Program's "Advanced Writing for Engineers" course (at <<http://engrwp.usc.edu/writ340.htm>>) also showed up in this search. Both of these lists contain potential models for Engineering WIC course writing outcomes.
- A Google™ search on "Microbiology Course + Written Communication + Learning Outcomes" yielded a list of writing and speaking components for 400-level microbiology courses at Utah's Weber State University (<http://programs.weber.edu/assessment/participants/results_of_assessment/microbiology20022003results.htm>). Also of potential use was the Learning Outcomes document

for a 300-level microbiology course at Ripon State in Wisconsin (<<http://www.ripon.edu/faculty/wallacer/WhatLearn.html>>), which includes six "Special Writing Knowledge/Skills" outcomes that could be adapted for Biology WIC courses at OSU.

Example

The following writing outcome, found on the microbiology course Web site mentioned above, could be adapted for use in many OSU WIC courses.

§ [Students will] identify a variety of technological & database resources to gather information (e.g., library, WWW), use appropriate steps in completing research using these resources, & synthesize information gathered from a variety of sources to create & to communicate a written text (electronically generated) conforming to a standard format of scientific writing.

Source:

<<http://www.ripon.edu/faculty/wallacer/WhatLearn.html>>

5. State of Oregon Writing Scoring Guide

The Oregon Department of Education *Official Writing Scoring Guide* has been used (with some revision) since 1996 to assess student work samples for the K-12 benchmarks, including the high-school-level Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery (CIM and CAM). Thus, most traditional-age OSU undergraduates are familiar with its terminology and assessment categories, which include "Ideas and Content," "Organization," "Voice," "Word Choice," "Sentence Fluency," "Conventions," and "Citing Sources." The inset on page 6 shows the highest competency level standards for six of these seven areas ("Voice" is not included as it typically is not assessed at CIM levels and beyond)—standards that some WIC faculty members have ruefully noted as seemingly beyond the reach of many of their own students. Perhaps such an observation renders these standards all the more relevant as guides for identifying and articulating student writing outcomes in OSU's undergraduate subject-matter courses.

Example

Articulating expectations for conventions using the familiar language of the Oregon Scoring Guide may improve mechanics in student writing.

§ In his or her formal writing, the student will demonstrate strong control of the following conventions of Standard Written English:

- Effective and accurate use of punctuation and grammar
- Correct spelling, even of difficult words
- Paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure
- Little or no need for editing

LEVEL 6 (HIGHEST) STUDENT WRITING STANDARDS
from THE OREGON DEPT. OF EDUCATION *OFFICIAL WRITING SCORING GUIDE**

IDEAS AND CONTENT

(Communicating knowledge of the topic, including relevant examples, facts, anecdotes and details)

The writing is exceptionally clear, focused, and interesting. It holds the reader's attention throughout. Main ideas stand out and are developed by strong support and rich details suitable to audience and purpose. The writing has:

- clarity, focus, and control.
- main idea(s) that stand out.
- supporting, relevant, carefully selected details;
- when appropriate, use of resources provides strong, accurate, credible support.
- a thorough, balanced, in-depth explanation or exploration of the topic; the writing makes connections and shares insights.
- content and selected details that are well suited to audience and purpose.

ORGANIZATION

(Structuring information in logical sequence, making connections and transitions among ideas, sentences and paragraphs)

The organization helps to communicate the central idea(s) and its development. The order and structure are compelling and move the reader through the text easily. The writing has

- effective or creative sequencing; the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow.
- a strong, inviting beginning that draws the reader in and a strong, satisfying sense of resolution or closure.
- smooth, effective transitions among all elements (sentence, paragraphs, ideas).
- details that fit where placed.

WORD CHOICE

(Selecting functional, precise and descriptive words appropriate for audience and purpose)

Words convey the intended message in an exceptionally interesting, precise, and natural way. The writer employs a rich, broad range of words which have been carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed for impact. The writing has

- fresh, original expression; slang, if used, seems purposeful and is effective.
- vocabulary that is striking and varied, but that is natural and not overdone.
- ordinary words used in an unusual way.
- words that evoke strong images; figurative language may be used.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

(Developing flow and rhythm of sentences)

The writing has an effective flow and rhythm. Sentences show a high degree of craftsmanship, with

consistently strong and varied structure. Expressive oral reading is easy and enjoyable. The writing has

- a natural, fluent sound; it glides along with one sentence flowing effortlessly into the next.
- extensive variation in sentence structure, length, and beginnings that add interest to the text.
- sentence structure that helps meaning by drawing attention to key ideas.
- varied sentence patterns that create an effective combination of power and grace.
- strong control over sentence structure; fragments, if used at all, work well.
- control of style; dialogue, if used, sounds natural.

CONVENTIONS

(Demonstrating knowledge of spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, usage, paragraphing)

The writing demonstrates strong control of standard conventions and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Errors are so few and so minor that the reader can easily skim right over them. The writing has

- strong control of conventions; unusual usage of conventions may occur for stylistic effect.
- strong, effective use of punctuation that guides the reader through the text.
- correct spelling, even of more difficult words.
- paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure.
- skill in using a wide range of conventions in a sufficiently long and complex piece.
- little or no need for editing.

CITING SOURCES

Indicating the sources of information presented, including all ideas, statements, quotes and statistics that are taken from sources and that are not common knowledge

The writing demonstrates exceptionally strong commitment to the quality and significance of research and the accuracy of the written document. Documentation is used to avoid plagiarism and to enable the reader to judge how believable or important a piece of information is by checking the source. The writer has

- acknowledged borrowed material by introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority.
- punctuated all quoted materials; errors, if any, are minor.
- paraphrased material by rewriting it using writer's style and language.
- provided specific in-text documentation for each borrowed item.
- provided a bibliography page listing every source cited in the paper; omitted sources that were consulted but not used.

* "VOICE" category not shown

Source: <<http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/scoring/guides/student/hswrtg.pdf>>

6. Writing Program Administrators' First-Year-Writing Outcomes Statement

Incorporating student writing-skills outcomes into WIC courses does more than support department or program communications-related learning outcomes. It also situates OSU within a nation-wide effort to forge connections between college students' first-year writing experience and the subsequent writing they do within their majors—a connection whose apparent absence on this campus many WIC faculty have been heard to lament.

In 2000, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) adopted an "Outcomes Statement for First-Year Writing Programs." This statement, which has been adopted by numerous post-secondary institutions throughout the United States, lists first-year-writing outcomes for four skills areas: Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing; Processes; and Knowledge of Conventions.

The most relevant feature of the WPA statement in terms of WIC writing outcomes development is that each category includes suggestions for ways departments and programs across the curriculum can reinforce and build upon students' first-year-writing preparation. These suggestions are shown below. WIC instructors might consider using these suggestions as the basis for developing writing outcomes for their own courses.

An important observation regarding the WPA recommen-

dations for writing in discipline-specific courses is that they are meant for *all* courses within a given department or program—not just its designated writing-intensive courses. Incorporating writing-skills development strategies in lower-division undergraduate courses (as the College of Agricultural Sciences is already doing with its implementation of 200- and 300-level "WIC Lite" courses) not only increases the likelihood of achieving program-level communications outcomes; such a move also acknowledges and addresses the frustration that many WIC instructors experience in trying to maintain appropriately high writing standards in their upper-division content courses when their students don't always seem capable of meeting those standards.

Example

The following writing outcome is based on the WPA recommendations for rhetorical knowledge development across the curriculum.

- § The student will demonstrate rhetorical knowledge of writing in his or her field by composing (1) a polished writing sample appropriate for inclusion with an application for employment in his or her intended career and (2) a cover letter citing the individuals and resources consulted during the document planning and writing process.

WAC Portion of WPA Writing Outcomes

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on students' first-year-writing preparation by helping them learn:

Rhetorical Knowledge

- The main features of writing in their fields
- The main uses of writing in their fields
- The expectations of readers in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

- The uses of writing as a critical thinking method
- The interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
- The relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields

Processes

- To build final results in stages
- To review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing
- To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process
- To apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields

Knowledge of Conventions

- The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
- Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved

Source:

<<http://www.wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>>

7. Students' Own Writing and Career Goals

A number of the 20-some WIC faculty who participated in a recent WIC research study (Robinson) have expressed interest in the concept of jointly developing writing-related course outcomes with their students. These outcomes would be based on students' self-identified writing strengths, weaknesses, and goals; their specific career goals; and other information reported on a start-of-term WIC writing questionnaire.

The benefits, in terms of engagement, motivation, and performance, of including learners in the outcomes-setting process has been reported in the literature on both academic and workplace assessment (Huba and Freed, Cantor, Fenwick and Parsons). For faculty whose curricular agenda includes preparing students for the expectations and demands of adult work environments, assigning students co-responsibility for developing WIC course writing outcomes and performing to jointly agreed-on standards is entirely appropriate.

Examples

The following writing outcomes are based on students' interest in improving their technology-related communications skills.

- § After reviewing the last three years' worth of issues of the assigned peer-reviewed professional journal, students will use Adobe® Illustrator® to prepare a presentation-quality double-sided brochure describing the journal.
- § Students will compose concise, grammatically correct, and workplace-appropriate memos, emails, and PowerPoint presentations.

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Fall 2004 WIC Faculty Seminar: Call for Participants

Faculty interested in the fall 2004 Introductory WIC Faculty Seminar should ask their department chair to send an email nomination to WIC Program Director Vicki Tolar Burton (vicki.tolarburton@oregonstate.edu).

The seminar, designed both for faculty who plan to teach WIC courses and for those who want to learn to use writing in non-WIC courses, will meet five Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 5 pm: October 13, 20, and 27, and November 10 and 17. Faculty who complete the seminar receive a \$250 honorarium. The seminar generally fills quickly, so early nominations are advised.

About *Teaching With Writing*

Editor: Vicki Tolar Burton

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Teaching With Writing is the newsletter of the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. As part of the Baccalaureate Core, all OSU students are required to take an upper-division writing-intensive course in their major.

The content of WIC courses ranges from radiation safety (for Nuclear Engineering majors) to golf courses design (a Horticulture option). While subject matter differs by department, all WIC courses share certain commonalities defined by the Faculty Senate:

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

For complete information on WIC guidelines, contact Vicki Tolar Burton by email at vicki.tolarburton@oregonstate.edu, visit the WIC web site at <<<http://wic.oregonstate.edu>>>, or consult the OSU Curricular Procedures Handbook.