Chapter Five

Implications for Teaching and Program Building

In this final chapter, we summarize several conclusions we have drawn from our research, particularly those that we feel make a contribution to theory on the growth of writers in and through the academy. Then we describe practices that apply to these conclusions both to the classroom and in faculty development programs.

> It's clear when you're writing something you really care about. You're impassioned, but you're also logical and you're making your point and you underscore it. When people can't find the part of their work that they care about, they just pile words and sentences together.
>
> —*Roger Lancaster, Anthropology*

The Discipline and Passion

We begin with Lancaster's observation because he speaks to one of the most important insights we've gained from our research with faculty and students: good writing, whether it adheres to established conventions or takes risks with form and structure, grows out of a writer's sense that the work he or she is doing matters, both professionally and personally. All the faculty we interviewed are deeply engaged in their scholarship, though their motives for writing, the audiences they envision, and the shapes their writing takes in response to motive and audience may vary enormously. Similarly, in teaching with writing, these faculty devise assignments that

reflect not only their sense of the kinds of writing undergraduates should be doing, but also their sense of topics and materials that will engage the students. For some of our faculty informants, what they ask students to do, as we have discussed, mirrors their own interests and passions, and they want students to be inspired as well. So important is this connection between "good writing" and individual vision that the rubrics our departments have designed to measure student writing usually include "original thinking" as a key component.

Alternative Discourses

The idea of the "alternative" in academic discourse is closely related to this idea of individual passion and intention, either the student's or the teacher's. We began this research imagining that we might identify clear "alternatives" to a recognizable academic discourse. But as the study went on, we saw more and more that the versions of the alternative we delineated in the taxonomy in Chapter One could better be understood as *variations within* academic expectations. What might be regarded as an "exception" in one teacher's view of the rhetoric of the discipline might be essential in the view of another practitioner in the same field. Further, the dynamism of disciplines that our faculty informants revealed works toward the acceptance of new methods and concepts, as well as a blurring of disciplinary borders. Hence, whatever might appear out of bounds to some members of the academy will likely show up in course syllabi and in articles in some journals, so a teacher preparing students for academic writing would be hard pressed to label any discursive practice always unacceptable. Certainly yes, both student and faculty informants cited thesis-driven essays supported by evidence as the most popular academic form, but other forms are also common; moreover, the range of purposes, audiences, contexts, and formats for these "research-based" assignments is great, and will vary significantly depending on course level and the subject of the course.

This great diversity notwithstanding, we hold to the three principles of academic writing that we described in Chapter One:

- Clear evidence in writing that the writer(s) have been persistent, open-minded, and disciplined in study
- The dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception
- An imagined reader who is coolly rational, reading for information, and intending to formulate a reasoned response

But these broad principles, while they can help teachers explain the most common rhetorical attitudes of academics, won't relieve teachers or students of the responsibility to observe the myriad ways in which disciplines, specialties, and individuals embody these principles in language and media.

Five Contexts for Writing Assignments

Our research with faculty and students has also given us insight, we think, into the reasons for misunderstanding and miscommunication about expectations for writing. We observed over and over almost all our informants—teachers and students—using the same short list of terms to describe good writing, but meaning, as we came to learn, very different things by them. Some insight into this phenomenon is offered by activity theory, which describes the ecology of the classroom as often, perhaps inevitably, revealing conflict between teachers and students in terms of their motives and objectives. Students don't give teachers what they want in writing because they perceive the tasks and goals differently. Likewise, genre theory tells us that, as writers' motives or "exigencies" differ, all aspects of the writing may differ. Further, by their very social nature, genres may differ even within communities bound by similar interests and goals (see Devitt, for example).

As we have listened to faculty and students talk about their writing and learning, we have come to a better articulated understanding of this conflict of motives—one that we hope can help teachers craft clearer assignments through their own clearer awareness of their motives and expectations. We see up to five contexts at work in a teacher's design of any assignment, and these same contexts influence how the teacher will respond to and evaluate the student's work. These contexts are

- The academic (pertaining to the broad principles described in Chapter One)
- The disciplinary (pertaining to the methods and conventions of the teacher's broad "field")
- The subdisciplinary (pertaining to the teacher's area of interest, with its own methods and conventions, within the broader discipline)
- The local or institutional (pertaining to the policies and practices of the local school or department)
- The idiosyncratic or personal (pertaining to the teacher's unique vision and combination of interests)

We have found that when teachers talk about their expectations for student writers, they will invoke one or more, usually several, of these contexts.

As we talked at length with teachers, all the contexts emerged in their reasoning. However, written assignments almost never explicitly reveal how these contexts have been blended in tasks and criteria; we suspect that few teachers, ourselves included, have been aware of the interplay of these multiple influences on their thinking. How can we teachers expect students to share our complicated sense of expectations for writing, when we have not articulated them ourselves? Later in this chapter, we describe a teaching practice that applies the "five contexts" to revision of an assignment.

Stages of Writing Development "into" a Discipline

In the previous chapter, we described "three stages" of students' development as they learned to write within a disciplinary framework. In the first stage, the student uses very limited experience in academic writing, one or two courses perhaps, to build a general picture of "what all teachers expect." If, for example, a composition teacher or textbook imposes a list of "dos and don'ts in college papers," such lessons are apt to stick, especially in the absence of contrary experiences in the first year.

In the second stage, more advanced students, such as some of those third- and fourth-year students we interviewed in our focus groups, move to a radically relativistic view ("they all want different things") after they have encountered teachers' differing methods, interests, and emphases. Students in this stage see teachers as idiosyncratic, not as conforming to disciplinary standards, and they are likely to feel confused and misled as teachers use the same terms to mean different things. Using the "five contexts" as a frame, we see such students being overwhelmed by the idiosyncratic dimension of a teacher's thinking, and so ignoring the disciplinary and even generic academic consistencies of teachers' expectations.

In the third stage, which not all students reach in their undergraduate years, the student uses the variety of courses in a major: varying methods, materials, approaches, interests, vocabularies, etc., toward building a complex, but organic sense of the structure of the discipline. Some of our focus group informants and virtually all the proficiency essay writers demonstrated this sense of coherence-within-diversity, understanding expectations as a rich mix of many ingredients, as they wrote or spoke about how individual teachers' assignments and responses had led them to this nuanced construct of the discipline.

A crucial element of this third-stage vision is the student's sense of his or her place within the disciplinary enterprise. As noted first in this chapter, the writer's passion for the subject is essential for good academic writing. All the proficiency essay writers we studied wrote with passion about specific

courses and projects. We might express the connection this way: once a student learns that the flexible principles of the discipline offer room for his or her desires, then the student can appreciate how the passions of other scholars, perhaps organized into subdisciplines, contribute to and continually shape the larger discipline. We saw this process enacted in the careers of our faculty informants, just as we saw its early flowering in the essays of the proficiency writers.

We might indeed envision fourth or higher stages in this development; for example, our faculty informants' appreciation of the influences of other disciplines, new technologies, etc., on any field, and how the individual scholar/writer can negotiate among disciplines to forge new directions—not only for him- or herself but for others and even for the field at large. Certainly we saw this cross- and interdisciplinary movement in the work of Jeanne Sorrell, Chris Jones, or Lesley Smith. We see the beginnings of this development in those of our students who had chosen double majors or who had crafted interdisciplinary majors. Indeed, we see in these students often a quicker grasp of the flexible dimensions of any field, as if by ongoing and focused comparison of fields they come to understand both a field's central principles and where it is open to alliances and mutual influence. Bright examples include our informants from New Century College and individualized studies major Melanie; their self-possession is shown in an appreciation of how each course and discipline can contribute to their goals, but whose careful comparison of fields has shown them how they must limit the influence of any one disciplinary tradition.

While passion for inquiry into a subject is one crucial virtue of the third-stage writer, the ability to analyze the goals, methods, and genres of the discipline is another. The maturing academic writer achieves that awareness of coherence-within-diversity by *writing to a variety of assignments under the guidance of a range of committed teachers.* The practices that follow demonstrate that principle. But perhaps just as important is the regular opportunity and encouragement to reflect in writing on the connections and distinctions among those many experiences. For instance, what do these assignments in major courses have in common? What principles lie at the heart of my major? How can I find a place for my goals in that structure? What other modes of inquiry attract me, and can I borrow from different fields to achieve my goals? We have seen in the New Century students and in the proficiency essay writers the results of this written reflection. It is not uncommon for these essayists to comment on the value of the written reflection toward their understanding of the writing they have already done. The NCC students in particular spontaneously credit regular critical reflection as a key to their maturity. The practices that follow demonstrate the importance of students developing an

awareness of genre as motivated, social, and situational and of themselves as active participants in shaping the genres they encounter.

Tension Between Individual Desire and Academic Convention

The practices we will suggest imply what we consider a productive tension between the student—a passionate individual with interests to cultivate and express—and an academy that imposes expectations on individuals, even though that academy is made up of dynamic and diverse disciplines and areas of interest. To illustrate, the departmental rubrics in Chapter Three emphasize both "original thinking" and conventions of form and method. This tension means that the teacher needs always to guide students with respect for both exigencies: thus, the teacher helps students to identify and express their passions for learning and teaches conventions of the academy.

Inevitably, however, if teachers enact the former successfully, students will sometimes write in ways that run counter to academic convention. For example, our second principle of academic writing is that reason controls both emotion and sensation; but a student writing enthusiastically about a favorite subject—as teachers often want students to write—will come across as more passionate than analytic. The writer will also likely ignore Principle 3—to address a reader who is by training skeptical—and so never think of objections such a reader might raise. How can the teacher help guide this student?

As our recommended practices will show, we prefer that teachers respect and encourage both passion and discipline. To apply what we see as this balanced perspective, we suggest that our taxonomy of alternatives (see Chapter One) and writers' motives in using them can help teachers productively respond to student writing. For example, the student in the first-year course who writes passionately but not analytically may, as the taxonomy of alternatives suggests, be ignorant of academic convention—but should teachers presume such ignorance? We encountered students in all three research samples (survey, focus groups, proficiency essays), albeit not many, who claimed a high level of self-possession even as they entered college, whose writing choices were informed and deliberate, and who complained about teachers' failure to imagine that the students knew teacher objectives and had carefully thought about what they were doing. A premise of this chapter is that students learn about expectations and options in the "five contexts" ethnographically, not by rote, and that individual variations are an indispensable component of the progress of disciplines. We feel that teachers can adapt this ethnographic perspective to their reading of student prose. Rather than the teacher's assuming that an alternative format, arrangement, voice, etc.,

represents either ignorance or merely a failed effort, we'd recommend a more flexible, investigative attitude.

Practices for Teachers

In this section, we describe 12 practices that apply the conclusions described above and other findings from the research. The first seven of these are intended for college teachers of courses across disciplines. Although all seven can be adapted to a range of disciplinary environments, the latter three may be more applicable to the composition classroom, where the teacher's primary focus is the students' writing. The final five practices are intended for faculty development workshops and seminars, either in the cross-disciplinary environment of the most common WAC/WID workshop or in discipline-specific workshops. These practices are intended to add to the already considerable literature of exemplary practice contained in WAC/WID pedagogy texts[1] and online at the WAC Clearinghouse (wac.colostate.edu).

Practice 1: Define expectations clearly and place them in the context of the discipline or in other contexts meaningful to you.

Our study of both faculty and student behavior has revealed to us the difficulty that almost all faculty, including composition faculty, have in articulating more than the "generic academic" expectations for student writing. The rubrics that our departments at Mason have created as part of our state-mandated writing assessment, described in Chapter Three, characteristically reiterate, with varying emphasis, the same twenty or so terms. The departmental faculty committees making these judgments understand the discipline-specific connotations and exigencies of a term such as "research" because they are insiders to these connotations; but students—largely through painful trial and error, usually manifested in low grades—come to see that "research" in one context can be very different from "research" in another. These findings have been replicated in other workshop settings with faculty, when we have asked faculty to articulate their expectations.

Conversely, when teachers do articulate more precise criteria and procedures in their assignments, or in their responses to student papers, students

[1]For a good explanation of a variety of WAC "how-to's," see John Bean's *Engaging Writers: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom;* Barbara Walvoord and Virginia Anderson's *Effective Grading;* and Christopher Thaiss's and Art Young's guides to teaching and writing across the curriculum.

often do not see the criteria as inspired by the discipline or by a subdiscipline within the larger concept; rather, they see these specific criteria as merely idiosyncratic. A significant minority of our survey respondents and focus group members expressed this interpretation of differences among faculty. The first-stage writers—the least experienced among the informants—expected all teachers in the discipline to operate by the same standards and saw differences as mere aberrations; second-stage writers had enough experience of difference to see idiosyncracy—"they're all different"—as the explanation for a mainly unpredictable experience. Our histories in faculty development give us many examples of faculty who contribute to this confusion by explaining their expectations in purely personal terms: "This is what I want" or even "I don't care what you did in your other classes—this is what you do in mine."

We don't wish to imply that students can't succeed as writers in fields without a better-contextualized explanation by all faculty. Nevertheless, we do have the impressive evidence of our proficiency essayists, who have learned a nuanced, inclusive understanding of the discipline—and who credit the care by some of their teachers to explain their expectations in terms of the particular mode of thought that identifies the field.

Given the difficulty faculty have in articulating criteria, our merely saying "define expectations clearly and place them in the disciplinary context" may not help. Then again, the mere challenge of explaining *why* you are requiring "research" to consist of certain operations and certain types of data will surely help students understand both what to do and how your expectations relate to those of other teachers. We found in our interviews with faculty that the more we asked about their careers as writers and teachers—what they did and why—the richer and better articulated their portraits of their disciplines became.

To go beyond the mere imperative to be *clear* and *contextual*, we suggest the usefulness of the framework of contexts we introduced early in Chapter Three:

- Generic academic
- Disciplinary
- Subdisciplinary (area of interest)
- Local or institutional
- Idiosyncratic

We suggest that, in designing assignments, teachers can clarify expectations for themselves and students by analyzing how their procedures and criteria draw from each of these contexts. Whether or not this thinking ever makes its way into an assignment description, the exercise can help teachers in the

design process and in explaining criteria to students. This analysis can be done as quickly or as thoroughly as one wishes. In the following example, Chris considers one of his own assignments for an advanced composition course in business writing.

Sample Assignment: "White Paper" Based on Team Field Research

In the course of your team field research on the writing culture of a business organization, each team member will identify a communication issue or problem at the company/agency/business that will form the basis of a "white paper" (i.e., a position statement or formal recommendation). The white paper is an important form of business report that is used in both university courses and the workplace.

Each member of the team will write a separate white paper on a separate issue. I must approve topics. Your white paper should be addressed to a relevant manager with the firm (though whether you indeed deliver the white paper is up to you!), rather than to me as an interested outsider. Your white paper will need to

1. Succinctly describe the issue or problem, including any relevant background the reader needs;
2. State your position on the issue and/or make recommendations toward solving the problem;
3. Support your position and/or recommendations with all relevant data and sources;
4. Cite sources using APA style.

Source material may include your own relevant experience and observation and that of others whom you can accurately and specifically cite; sources may also include print or online articles or product specifications that you must accurately cite and document. Databases may come in handy in this project. A table (e.g., of data, options, or pros and cons) must be included somewhere in the document, as appropriate to your subject.

As customary in this course, use standard memo format for the heading. Your final draft should be between 1200 and 1500 words. Include your first draft, critique sheets, and a change memo in the final packet.

Chris's thinking-out-loud analysis of the assignment using the contexts listed above:

Generic academic: "Even if students haven't had other business courses (most of them take this course as rising juniors), they should have written papers that required them to support a position with evidence. They'll have done so earlier in this course. But they may have trouble knowing what

(*continues*)

constitutes evidence in a business environment. They should also know that teachers require correct use of standard edited American English—do I need to include this in criteria? I'll include it on the critique sheet that the groups use, but I wonder if I can assume that they know the requirement is an academic standard, not just the preoccupation of an English teacher."

Disciplinary: "I need to be clear that the primary context here is not an academic business environment but the workplace itself. Memo formatting is one aspect of that. Sure, the actual audience of the writing will be me, an academic, but I really intend this assignment to test their close observation of the research site and their sense of the manager they'll be addressing. Students have used this assignment in the past to propose actual changes in their workplaces, and I want them to entertain that as a serious possibility. I'll also make it clear that the APA documentation is a nod to business school practice, not to workplace practice. And my requirement of a table is just to give them practice in presenting data that way, because the business discipline expects it."

Subdisciplinary: "Business writing classes straddle the shifting line between academic management study, which is a social science field, and workplace practice. I know I don't address this specifically enough with my classes. Some of my assignments, methods, and criteria are fully academic in nature—e.g., the news analysis and the entire research project—while the formal memo writing and the online short reports and approvals characterize 'our' workplace. The 'subdiscipline' of business communication seems to be a strange amalgam of academic analysis and pragmatic business practice. One thing I like about the 'white paper' assignment, as I've constructed it, is that it gives students practice in a flexible form that straddles that same border."

Local or institutional: "I realize that my syllabus could be much clearer about the connections between my sections and the objectives of the advanced comp program at Mason. I include a link on my syllabus to the program's description of the course, but I should include the objectives in my course description itself. In addition, my expectations are local—appropriate for this community—because almost all the students have jobs and commute to school; therefore, it's relatively easy for me to set up a business-writing course that takes advantage of their familiarity with workplaces and their mobility to perform on-site research. That this type of requirement is part of a number of sections is something they should also know—just as they should also know that case studies and ethnography are part of social science practice. They also need to know that my requirement of APA style is part of social science practice, not a requirement of our business school. Indeed, our business faculty have no policy on documentation in student writing, and the required course that follows this one uses MLA—only because most of the students have had it in some English classes."

(*continues*)

Idiosyncratic: "Students get lots of reinforcement of the individuality of their teachers in their interactions with them, and a lot of what students perceive as idiosyncrasy the teacher is probably not aware of—body language, conversational turns, and the like. Am I naive to think that my assignments and criteria derive wholly from the contexts I've described above and not from just me? Of course, I put those various influences together in a way that's somewhat different from other teachers, so that's the idiosyncrasy. But it's important for students to know that I just didn't 'make them up.' I can surely do a better job of communicating that interplay of contexts clearly."

We have already defined the growth from the second to the third stage by students as a shift from their dominant expectation of the idiosyncratic to their understanding of the disciplinary contexts in which individual classes and assignments occur. Surely, teachers in any discipline can aid this process of growth by showing students that what appears to be uniqueness, even caprice, by teachers is largely a deliberate blending of influences and demands from the academy, the discipline, the area of interest, and the local/ institutional communities.

This articulation of contexts can occur anywhere in a course, not just in the syllabus or in the assignment description. For example, we suggest that teachers make the methods and discourses visible in the readings they assign, as, for example, environmental scientist Chris Jones does in his comparisons of "newspaper science" and the explanations in the textbook. When exigencies are truly personal or when an assignment privileges one vision of the discipline over another, as in Sorrell's paradigm cases for her writing-intensive course, teachers should let the students know.

Practice 2: Reflect on your own developing career as a scholar/writer and as a teacher.

Chris's exploration of the "five contexts" in relation to his business writing assignment, in the preceding box, illustrates one kind of reflective teaching. But what we are suggesting here is a broader, less specific consideration modeled on the core questions we asked our faculty informants (see chapters Two and Three). This model relies on the experiential link between one's growth and practice as a scholar/writer and the values and expectations one communicates to students. Our interviews with faculty and the teaching materials we reviewed showed us clear connections between a faculty member's priorities in scholarship and priorities in teaching—even though some of our informants seemed not to be aware of this parallel. For example, as we describe in Chapter Three, several claimed that their goal in undergraduate teaching was not to inculcate the specific values of their disciplines, but to teach a broader "good" thinking or writing. But as they talked, particularly about assignments,

we could see that their descriptions of objectives matched those of their fields and interest areas, not of the generic academy.

While one goal of this broader, blended reflection would be general self-awareness, our specific goal for the teacher would be to clarify and articulate expectations for students. A possible rubric for this reflection might include:

- How would you describe the expectations for good writing in your discipline? How do these compare with the expectations for good writing in your area(s) of interest in this field? How did you learn them? Who and what have been the most important influences on your learning of these expectations?
- Looking at your career as a scholar and writer, how have your own values and preferences as a scholar and writer compared with the expectations you described above? Have you ever done work you'd consider "alternative" to the mainstream? Why or why not? What risks has this "alternative work" entailed for you? How do you see your field changing over the years to accommodate or exclude different ways of thinking and writing?
- What are your expectations for students as scholars and writers? How do these vary from course to course, level to level? What links or divergences do you see between your values and preferences in your own scholarly writing and those you have for students? How do you describe your expectations to students, or carry out a process in your teaching, so that students can understand and meet these expectations?

Not only will this kind of reflection on writing and teaching-with-writing practices help the teacher achieve greater clarity in what students are told up front—in the syllabus, in assignment directions and accompanying evaluation rubrics, and in class discussions—it will also save time when responding to student papers. Perhaps more importantly, students will have a context for interpreting the feedback the teacher gives on their papers.

Practice 3: Provide students with contextualized feedback on their writing, especially early in a course.

That students rely heavily on teacher feedback, particularly on their first paper in the course, was one of the more dramatic findings from our focus groups. As WAC program leaders, we were gratified to learn that students had come, by experience, to expect their teachers in disciplinary courses to give them an articulated response even though they also expected that the feedback they received would be different from that given by a composition

teacher.[2] While, as we describe in the previous chapter, students are adept at picking up clues about teacher expectations even from minimal feedback—e.g., a crossed-out word, a brief note of approval in the margin of a draft—they especially appreciate those teachers who give them detailed feedback. Student after student in the proficiency exam essays, for example, readily credited their understanding of the rhetorics of their fields to teachers who took the time to respond in detail to their writing.

At the same time that we are pointing out the importance of detailed, nuanced feedback, we also realize the time commitment that this kind of feedback requires, particularly for those teachers who give writing assignments in all their courses and/or who teach large numbers of students. As we've noted, the WAC literature is filled with advice on how teachers can give effective feedback while managing their paper load, among other useful practices, so we want to focus here on the benefits that accrue to students when teachers talk with one another about their expectations for student writers. Teachers who understand where their feedback practices are situated—in the discipline or subdiscipline, in the seemingly generic academic, in personal preferences, or in some combination of all of these—are better able, we think, to give effective advice to students, both prior to the assignment and in their evaluative commentary. In turn, students will gain a clearer understanding of why and how their teachers' expectations may differ, as well as a greater appreciation for the central role of the reader in the construction of a piece of writing. As we explain in the latter half of this chapter on practices for program development, WAC workshops (e.g., the assessment workshops described in Chapter Three) offer one of the best venues for faculty to talk with groups of colleagues about how they use and evaluate writing in their courses, an experience they generally find, often to their surprise, both enlightening and enjoyable.

Based on what we hear from faculty across the campus, we think it's safe to say that faculty generally do not talk about their expectations for student writing, other than to note how poorly students are writing or, conversely, to praise an exceptional writer. Faculty often come to us, in fact, with questions about what their colleagues or those in the field might expect when it comes to, say, the use of first person or a preferred documentation style. A teacher in

[2] They expected composition teachers to be more attuned to syntax and mechanics (yes, they do expect this from English teachers), and also more conscious of the student as a "writer" (as in "wordsmith") than as a student of the discipline. This is not to say that some of our faculty informants from different fields are not as conscious of student creativity and rhetorical/stylistic choice as this stereotypical English teacher, not to mention as "picky" about grammar and commas, but students expect these types of feedback from the composition teacher. They expect the feedback from their disciplinary teachers to concern types of evidence, methods of argument, and appropriate terms.

biology, for example, asked Terry whether she thought it was okay to tell students that they could use "I" in their experimental reports. Would he be misguiding students, the teacher wondered, if he allowed "I" and his colleagues did not, even though there is clearly a move in the professional literature to the use of first person? In response, Terry asked whether he explained to students the way first person is functioning in the literature and how they should similarly position the "I" in their writing; she suggested that he might share with them reservations about how his colleagues might react when they see students writing in first person. She also recommended that he talk with his colleagues about their preferences.

In another instance, an undergraduate associate dean inquired of both of us what documentation style is preferred in business schools, since faculty differed in the styles they were assigning and students were often confused. In this case, too, we suggested that the best way to determine a preferred style is to have faculty talk together about the styles they recommend to students, why they preferred one style over another, and the epistemological differences the preferred styles might represent.

Bringing faculty together for these kinds of conversations can be difficult, we realize, so it's useful to think about alternatives to face-to-face encounters. Some of these might be, for example:

- Brief queries on departmental listservs asking faculty to respond to questions like "What documentation style do you require your students to use? Why?" Or "Do you allow students to use first person? What directions do you give them for using 'I'?" Faculty can also be invited to paste in syllabi or assignment instructions related to the queries.
- Online writing guides for students, such as those we feature on the George Mason WAC website (http://wac.gmu.edu), which include interviews with faculty about their preferences, pet peeves, and "do and don't" writing tips. The writing guides may also include a sample paper with several teachers' commentaries on what the student has done well in terms of the assignment and the discipline.
- Lists of writing guides that individual faculty have created. Many of our faculty, we've discovered, have created their own writing guides for students. A number of them have also posted their guides on their websites. Yet, as we've also found, they typically have not shared their writing advice with others on the faculty, whether out of a sense that others will think they're being immodest or will be critical of the advice. We tend to find out about the work they've done in offhand conversations during WAC workshops, for example, which they see as sanctioned places for exchanging teaching advice.

However the sharing among colleagues occurs, it needs to be translated by the teacher into feedback for students that gives them a clearer sense of the discipline, of the area of interest represented by the course, of institutional requirements, and of the teacher's individual goals.

In the three practices described thus far, we focused on how teachers can better understand and articulate for students the contexts that influence their teaching-with-writing practices through reflecting on their assignments and expectations and talking about these with their colleagues, both informally and in more structured settings. Now we turn to another kind of reflective practice, which, based on our research findings, we think will help teachers in guiding students to become third-stage writers.

Practice 4: Help students find their own "passions" in learning and to realize their passions in your discipline. Seek ways to validate the student as "expert"—as potential contributor to the field.

One of the things that impressed us the most about the students we're calling third-stage writers was their sense of passion for the material they were studying and the confidence with which they spoke about themselves as writers, even as they also sometimes described the difficult learning process they went through to gain that confidence. In focus groups and proficiency exam essays, these students frequently credited teachers for helping them understand what it means to be original and how to make rhetorical choices that reflect their own interests and ideas and not simply what they think the teacher wants. As we explained in the previous chapter, when teachers trusted them to express interesting ideas and/or made them feel that they had some expertise to share, the student writers learned to trust themselves as well, even to break the rules if their writing goals seemed to demand alternative expressions. When they glimpsed a teacher's passion behind the scholarly prose—by reading a teacher's writing, through commentary on their texts, in conversation—they understood that academic writing doesn't rule out passion, but rather gives it a disciplined voice.

Based on these findings, we recommend that faculty consider ways that their teaching will help students to see the discipline not only as a system of terms, texts, expectations, and procedures, but also as a dynamic realm that can accommodate and nurture different personalities, passions, and visions. In practices 1 and 2 above, we've given systematic sets of questions that teachers can use to examine and reflect on their work with student writers. Now we turn to questions that might help teachers think about how their teaching-with-writing practices facilitate such growth and investment for students. We also recommend some methods teachers might use to help students articulate and reflect on their investment in the course and the field.

When students in the focus groups and in their proficiency essays mentioned teachers who helped them understand how to be passionately engaged and, at the same time, controlled writers, they usually gave the names of one or two teachers; never did they indicate that their teachers routinely made their scholarly passions explicit to students. We think it might be useful, then, for teachers to ask themselves the following questions as a sort of self-check on their practice and also a reminder of the importance of the practices we detail in the questions:

- Do you talk in classes about your own decisions to concentrate in your field—your earlier interests, the influences of teachers, turning points, etc.?
- Do you share examples of your writing with students and have them ask questions about your research?
- If one of the goals of your teaching is to inspire students to become majors in your field, how do you try to achieve that goal? How do you balance in your teaching the need to teach conformity to method and to standards of precision with appreciation/cultivation of your students' interests and professional desires—even if those seem at odds with the standards?
- How do you tend to talk about your field—more as a system of rules and accepted practices or more as a community of passionate scholars who are attempting to shape the future? How do you think your students see you? How do you want them to see you?
- How do your answers to these questions translate into your uses of writing in your teaching—to the assignments you write and your objectives for those assignments, to the instructions you give, to your grading criteria, to the feedback you give writers?

Like teachers, students bring to the course their own goals, objectives, and prior learning experiences. We think it is important, then, for teachers to give them a similar opportunity to reflect on how the course fits with their goals. In the first week of the semester, teachers might invite students to write about the course objectives, the knowledges they already have related to these objectives, and, perhaps most importantly, what their own goals are for learning and writing about the course material, which may well extend outside of the academy and even the workplace. We showed, for example, in Chapter Two on faculty as writers and in Chapter Four on students as writers, that many of our informants have writing goals related to self-discovery and to the relationship of the self and/or the discipline to larger social issues.

Further, we think there is great value in giving students the opportunity at one or more points in their college experience to reflect on their writing during a course, an entire major, and their college careers. We saw this point borne out, to give one example, in the essays students wrote to accompany the portfolios they submitted for proficiency credit in advanced composition. Many noted that they had never been asked to write about themselves as writers in their field(s) and, at first, felt intimidated by the prospect. As they wrote the essay, however, they discovered, to their surprise, the ways they had successfully assimilated and applied to their writing the implicit lessons learned from teachers' lectures, assigned reading and writing, and responses to papers. To give another example, the focus group informants from New Century College, as reported in Chapter Four, impressed us with their insights on the importance of the reflective writing they do at the end of each year, which culminates in a reflective capstone portfolio. Before we leave the topic of portfolio reflection, we want to mention the potential of electronic eportfolios, which allow students to create a dynamic portrait of themselves as writers in college and to reflect not only on the writing they have included but also on the format itself as a vehicle for conveying their hypertextual identity.

Each of the preceding practices above focuses on ways teachers can examine and reflect on their own teaching-with-writing practices and motivate students to similarly question and reflect. Now we turn to a set of practices to help students better understand writing and themselves as writers, in disciplines, in the workplaces they want to enter, and in other, more personal, venues. Because each of these practices requires more time and attention than might be available in courses outside of English composition, we see practices 5, 6, and 7 as working best in composition courses where adequate time can be given for students to reflect on themselves as writers, to investigate the expectations of teachers in courses inside and outside of their major, and to report on the results. Teachers in any course, however, may find that they can incorporate aspects of these inquiries to the degree that time allows.

Practice 5: Give students opportunities for reflecting on their own growth as writers and rhetors, in the academy and as related to the workplaces they will enter.

Far from presuming the student a tabula rasa in knowledge of written rhetoric, asking students to think systematically about how they have changed and matured as writers respects their experience not only in prior schooling but also in any other context—family, workplace, community—in which they may have not only written but also been affected by the written rhetoric of others. It presumes that they have a history as writers: that they've developed assumptions about tasks, readers, and processes that can either help them in

future situations or limit their understanding and performance. The assignment itself can be expressed several ways, among others:

- It may be constructed as a form of "literacy narrative," a single assignment early in the semester that asks students to respond in an autobiographical essay to a range of questions about their past (or past, present, and future) as writers, such as the kinds of writing that have come most easily; the turning points, major lessons, minor lessons, foolish misconceptions that have been outgrown; the advice these writers would give to others in their field; the challenges encountered in writing in new courses; the writing they imagine doing in five years. This kind of self-reflection might also be useful in preparing students for other courses. While writing about the self might be an "alternative" assignment in most disciplines, we saw among our 14 faculty informants five who consistently asked students to reflect on their learning and their relationship to the field—Lancaster in anthropology, Bergoffen in philosophy, Rader in sociology, Sorrell in nursing, and Lesley Smith in new technologies;
- It may be an ongoing log or journal that, perhaps, asks the writer to analyze current rhetorical tasks in the context of relevant challenges of the writer's past. Melanie, the individualized studies major described in Chapter Four, for example, already had a great deal of experience writing motivational texts for her female clients. She often resisted writing assignments if she was unable to see the relevance of the assignment in helping her fulfill the rhetorical demands of her work space.
- It may be part of an electronic forum in which the class responds to a series of prompts about rhetorical issues by writing about relevant current and past experience.
- It may be a blog, a website, or an eportfolio in which writers not only post their writing but add links, attachments, or images, and reflect on all these elements to create a fuller, more dynamic picture of the writer.
- It may ask writers to reflect on the ways in which typical rhetorical tasks of the discipline are manifested in the workplaces and social spaces they may enter. The NCC students, for example, frequently mentioned the value of their reflective writing for helping them connect their academic work with their career goals and sense of the field they wanted to enter. As noted in Chapter Four, these students were deeply invested in their projects and saw them not as academic exercises but as opportunities to prepare for the workplace.

Practice 6: Give students opportunities for exploring and understanding the variety of rhetorical environments they'll encounter in college and the workplace.

Many of the responses to our survey and some in the focus groups showed inexperienced writers putting together surmises about writing in the major from skimpy evidence: one or two courses, minimal feedback from a few teachers, hearsay, the style of a textbook. Even the more advanced students in the focus groups often revealed a cumulative sense of the field that, while slightly more sophisticated, was still based on accretion of partial and unreliable evidence. To help students acquire a better and more reliable sense of disciplinary conventions and teacher preferences, we suggest they investigate the field by questioning the "experts"—faculty, advanced students, and workplace professionals—and analyzing the documents that articulate the field to others—textbooks, journal articles, and course materials. Such a study is meant to take the student beyond the first stage we described in the previous chapter, wherein writers identify the disciplines with a few vague generalizations they assume will apply to all courses. "You can't use 'I' in science" is one example; "only English teachers care about good grammar" is another. The inquiry should actually begin to move the student to the third stage, wherein the writer sees the discipline as maintaining some consistent principles of method and rhetoric—but also accommodating a range of subdisciplines and areas of interest, local and institutional variations, and preferences particular to the given teacher/scholar. The boxed questions suggest some areas that the inquiry might explore.

A. Questions students can ask professors

- What is your discipline and how would you describe it?
- What is your subdiscipline or areas of interest in your field and how would you describe them?
- What kinds of writing do you do in your work in this discipline?
- What would you say are the characteristics of good writing in your discipline? What do editors of journals expect?
- How is the writing you do in your area of interest different from the writing that others do in your discipline?
- Is there any other kind of writing that you do? Does it relate to the writing you do in your field or is it different?
- Have you ever done writing in your area of interest that you thought took a risk? Was it in a way that you thought was alternative to what editors usually expect?
- How do you think your discipline is changing in terms of how people are writing within it?

(*continues*)

- What is the most exciting thing for you about working in your discipline?
- How do you express this excitement in your writing?
- May I see examples of your writing in your field? May I see examples of writing by others that you think is typical of your field?

B. Text Analysis Questions

- *Journal article:* Who are the readers of this journal? To understand and use this article, what would the reader already have to know? (For example, look for key terms the reader would have to understand.) How is the article organized? If you look at more than one article, do you see characteristics of organization that are standard? How does the article reflect what the professor told you about the discipline and its expectations? Differ from what he or she said? Can you tell why readers of this article might find it important?
- *Course syllabus:* What does the syllabus tell you about the goals of the course? The most important methods you'll learn? How do these relate to what the professor told you about the discipline? About his or her area of interest? How does the teacher convey a sense of what he or she finds important and exciting about this subject? How does the syllabus help you understand the expectations for writing that (1) your professor has, and (2) that the discipline has?
- *Written assignment:* What does the assignment convey to you about the professor's expectations for research, thinking, and writing? How do these expectations reflect or relate to (1) what the professor said about the discipline or area of interest, (2) the goals and methods described in the syllabus, (3) the characteristics of the journal article?
- *Workplace documents:* What do sample documents from workplaces you already inhabit or hope to enter tell you about the culture of writing in that space? (See Chris's sample assignment earlier in this chapter.)

Practice 7: Teach students, through guided practice, the "generic academic" principles that all majors share and how to distinguish between these principles and the variations that derive from the five rhetorical contexts we also described: generic academic, disciplines, subdisciplines, local institutions, and individual teachers and courses.

If you have students conduct systematic inquiries such as the ones recommended in the box, they will enact the "disciplined study" identified as the first principle of academic writing in Chapter One. They will also move toward understanding the expectations of their majors. We also recommend that students be explicitly presented the five contexts as a framework for interpreting the assignments and teaching methods they encounter in different classes—including yours. For example, knowing that they can count on their teachers, regardless of the course, to appreciate the three broad principles of academic writing described in Chapter One can help them see the kernel of consistency in academic work amid the variety of exigencies, formats, and methods they will encounter.

Similarly, students can more readily understand the "generic academic" if the teacher presents the list of common terms gleaned from the departmental assessment rubrics summarized in Chapter Three. These 20-plus common terms not only show the values consistent across the academy but will also alert students to probe for the variations that are in play in a specific class. What, for example, does "research" mean in an introductory psychology course? In an introductory literature course? What does "original thinking" mean in those two courses?

Unlike Practice 6, which probes detailed features of specific teachers' attitudes and practices, this inquiry asks students to look for similarities across courses and teachers. Students might be asked to collect the assignments for research and/or writing in all the courses they are taking (including those in your course) and look for the following:

- Certainly there are many differences among these assignments, but in what ways are they similar? For example, in the kinds of things students are asked to study closely? In the attitude they are supposed to take toward the material? In how the paper will be graded?
- What terms do the assignments have in common or that seem to be closely related? In what way do these terms seem to be used in the same way across courses?
- Based on the similarities you've detected, how would you define "writing in college"?

Practices for Faculty and Program Development

All the practices described above should be and can be developed and adapted in a cooperative faculty environment. There are a plethora of materials available for starting or enhancing faculty development according to WAC and WID principles (see, for example, McLeod and Soven; McLeod, Miraglia,

Soven, and Thaiss; and Yancey and Huot). In addition to the thoughtful advice in these many sources, we have used our methods and findings to suggest the following models and practices.

Practice 8: Workshops for teachers should ask them to talk/write about their values/growth/passion as writers as well as their values/growth/passion as teachers.

We describe this method in detail as an individual exercise for teachers in Practice 3. In a workshop setting, an opportunity for teachers to hear one another's stories and reflections can be mutually exhilarating and enlightening, as the writing and reading open up the academy's richness as a community of dedicated, imaginative scholars/writers/teachers.

Valuing workshop participants as writers and scholars, as well as teachers, can be extended by workshop organizers through such activities as planned time for participants to write about their current scholarly or creative projects. These writings can then be shared in small groups or summarized by each writer for the entire group. Alternatively, workshop participants might be asked to bring with them a piece of work-in-progress to read to the cross-disciplinary workshop group. Such workshop activities can be structured to emulate the peer response groups that are a staple of process-based composition classes. This mingling of attention to faculty writing and attention to student writing harks back to many of the first programs in WAC faculty development, influenced as many of them were by the principles of the National Writing Project, as Chris has written about elsewhere (Thaiss, 2006).

Indeed, when cross-curricular faculty development in writing began at Mason in 1978, the first program was named the Faculty Writing Program, to recognize the relationship between faculty as writers and as guides for their students in learning the discourses of their disciplines. Faculty from diverse fields would bring to workshops pieces of work in progress that they would read to other participants in small groups. In addition to giving each scholar/writer a new and different audience for their writing, these group sessions had the further effect of requiring writer/teachers to explain to colleagues from other fields enough background of research, methods, and terms to enable these audiences to understand their work. In other words, the sessions became another teaching context that depended on each professional's ability to articulate features of their disciplines that they did not need to articulate when writing or speaking to colleagues in their research areas. So the writing groups reinforced the goal of the teaching workshop to make faculty better able to articulate expectations to an unfamiliar audience, whether student or fellow scholar.

Practice 9: Teachers should regularly engage in group assessment of sample papers as a faculty development technique.

A typical feature of WAC workshops is the group-grading exercise, in which one or more sample student essays are evaluated and teachers' criteria discussed. Usually the main purpose is to help teachers discover useful practices for themselves in assessing student writing, as the teachers discuss options with peers and hear advice from the workshop leader. A significant by-product of the interaction is that academics come to see that they do not all share the same standards and expectations—that disciplines and individuals differ in their definitions of "good" writing.

We see other purposes for the exercise as well. In the creation of department-based rubrics that facilitate formal assessment of student writing in the major, such group evaluation of sample student work can efficiently help faculty identify points of consensus and points of difference. The differences lead to fruitful discussions of options within a major, and they often help faculties articulate expectations for students, as we've already explained in the section on classroom practices. We have conducted such "consensus-building" workshops for many years with our English Department writing faculty, but when we adapted the model to departments across the university several years ago, we saw that the give-and-take served not only the immediate practical purposes but also (1) led teachers to learn about and appreciate one another's commitment to student learning, and (2) led faculty to consider department-wide changes in policy, requirements, and services. In other words, the exercise served both basic and advanced purposes of faculty development.

We have used assessment of sample papers with cross-disciplinary groups of faculty and with members of the same department. The cross-disciplinary assessment workshops have occurred both at George Mason and at other colleges where we have consulted. At Mason, one forum for these assessment procedures has been what we call the "training of trainers" workshop, because we expect those who participate to return to their departments to teach this assessment method, or a modified version, to colleagues.

For the exercise, we use a set of four sample essays written to the same assignment in an advanced composition course. We preselect the sample papers to represent what we judge to be a range of proficiency and approaches; but we want the samples to be close enough in quality to test the ability of the participants to articulate their priorities and criteria in evaluation. Then we ask the group to read two of the four and judge which is the "better" of the two; we give participants the chance for an extended discussion of their reasons for preferring one to another. As the discussion proceeds, the workshop leader records (on board or overhead) every criterion that is named.

Once this part of the exercise is completed, we repeat the process with the other two essays, and ask the participants to add to the list of criteria already recorded. Then we ask them to rate all four against one another and to elucidate any criteria not previously mentioned.

As a final act, we have the group review all criteria that have been named and to vote, by show of hands, for the criteria that they regard as "important." In this part of the exercise, some criteria that had been named in the discussion fall out for lack of group support.

Always, the exercise produces a long and relatively nuanced list of criteria. Since the group is cross-disciplinary, the consensus reached represents what we termed in Chapter Three the "generic academic" expectations for student writing. However, by taking part in the discussion, each faculty member can see where and how the predilections of the specific disciplines vary from one another and from the generic.

As we described earlier in this chapter, when we conducted the same process in individual departments, it has produced both a disciplinary consensus and an articulation of differences that play out across disciplinary subspecialties.

Indeed, the benefits of this exercise for faculty development can be so great that program builders might think of it as one starting point—an initial draw—for WAC/WID workshops. Faculty who might be resistant to or skeptical of workshops based on less formal "writing to learn" techniques are often drawn to workshops that promise immediate aid in evaluating student work and in affirming formal standards. Addressing these faculty's concerns, as this workshop structure does, may encourage future participation in workshops on other uses of writing in teaching. Even if it does not lead to further participation by some, the rubric-building exercise will still have the effects noted above. Detailed information on the assessment process can be found at: http://wac.gmu.edu/program/assessing/phase4.html.

Practice 10: Enhance the effects of Practice 9 by considering the "five contexts."

If the collaborative rubric-building workshop can help teachers become more articulate in explaining expectations to students, an exercise that applies the "five contexts" (academic, disciplinary, subdisciplinary, local, and idiosyncratic) can enhance this articulation. The exercise can be conducted individually, with each teacher practicing on a favorite assignment, as illustrated in Practice 1. The results can be discussed in small or large groups.

But the exercise can also be structured collaboratively, with, for example, a sample assignment (hypothetical or real) as the material for the entire group to discuss. As a further option, the five contexts can be used by small groups as a matrix for design of a new assignment. (See Figure 5–1.) In such

Generic academic	For instance, thesis supported by evidence, original thinking, correct use of English grammar
Disciplinary	
Subdisciplinary	
Local/institutional	
My preferences	

Figure 5–1. *Grid of criteria representing the "five contexts" for an assignment*

an exercise, group members would describe expectations for students that fell into each of the five categories.

Practice 11: Consider how to spark and nurture students' desires/passions in their disciplines—helping students achieve the third stage.

Based on our research, we advocate a faculty development structure that keeps in participants' minds the individual student's goals and intellectual passions, even as faculty also tackle the clearer articulation of their expectations for students. A workshop that uses versions of both Practices 1 and 2 (or 1, 2, and 3) can begin to achieve this balanced emphasis on the individual and the discipline. But we also recommend that Practice 4 be adapted to the group setting. Faculty can benefit from explicit discussion of the role of passion in learning, and ponder ways that their teaching does or could help students to see the discipline not only as a system of terms, texts, expectations, and procedures, but also as a dynamic realm that can accommodate and nurture different personalities and visions. We are beginning to share with colleagues in workshop settings the idea of the third stage of student growth through writing in disciplines, and we are finding it a powerful image of the productive coming together of individual passion and disciplinary standards.

Practice 12: Create unified program development in writing that coordinates goals of the composition course(s) with those of courses in majors.

The first section of this chapter describes practices for teachers without regard to the specific discipline and without distinction between courses that focus primarily on the craft of writing (e.g., English composition) and those that ask students to write as part of their learning the methods and materials of fields. In fact, an early draft of this chapter separated practices for English composition courses from practices for all other undergraduate courses, but so much of what applied to one context applied to the other that we melded

the two sections. Nevertheless, here we want to revisit the distinction, because for most of us, at least in the United States, who are charged with building college and university writing programs, the distinction is a fact of life administratively and in terms of faculty assumptions about curriculum.

Too little has indeed been written about the active relationship of the English composition course(s) and the teaching of writing that occurs explicitly and implicitly in courses across the curriculum. Administration of the composition courses is usually, though not always, separate from that of WAC and WID programs—even if the administrators both come from the English department, as is often the case—and while the composition administrator most often reports to the English chair, the WAC/WID coordinator usually reports to a dean or a provost/vice president. If there is a concerted effort at a school to create a unified vision for both programs, it happens because of the mutual good will of the directors, via a committee structure that enables such collaboration (as we have at George Mason).

In this chapter we are not concerned with the mechanics of the administrative relationship. Rather, we want to focus on the relevance of our research to the de facto relationship between composition and all other courses that exists for every student who moves through the curriculum. We repeatedly saw in the survey responses, the focus groups, and (to a limited extent) the proficiency essays that students build their visions of writing in the academy from all their course experiences. Unaware of and not concerned with the administrative separation of composition from courses in the major, they tend to see, depending on their experience, either (1) a complementarity between required writing courses and writing in their majors or (2) a disjunction, which they attribute to the differences between "English" as a field and their major discipline. Some of our respondents are mystified by the disjunction and complain, while some relish the opportunity to do something different in "English" from what they do in usually more advanced courses in the major discipline. But there is no doubt that students juxtapose the experiences and see them all as influential. Thus, there is reason for program leaders—as well as individual teachers—to consider the de facto link a reason to plan collaboratively and toward a unified vision of writing in the institution. We'll briefly project three models of what that relationship might be.[3]

Model 1: Composition as "Generic Academic"

This most common model of the composition course, reified in most composition texts, has as its mission the preparation of students for the tasks of

[3] For a good overview of major composition pedagogies, see Tate, Rupiper, and Schick's *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies.*

academic writing they will face in later coursework. Its objectives are captured in the list of common terms that we gleaned in Chapter Three from the departmental assessment rubrics and that were matched by the consensus criteria from the student survey (Chapter Four). Most basically according to this model, student prose should observe the principles of academic writing we presented in Chapter One:

- Demonstrating disciplined study
- Privileging reason over emotion and sensation
- Projecting an informed reader who will make an analytical response

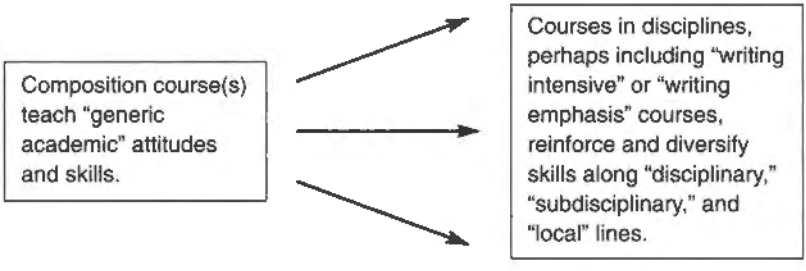
The dedicated composition course has a great opportunity to affect expertise in development of these generic academic writing characteristics because written rhetoric is the focus of the course. Recall, from the previous chapter, the students in focus groups who credited this rhetorical centeredness of the advanced composition course for a significant part of their understanding of writing expectations in the major.

Our study supports a definite role for the stand-alone composition course, whether first-year or advanced. The findings suggest that the writing course can be important in the student's development in the academy if it attends to some specific practices, including:

- Providing opportunities for students to observe their own writing/rhetorical development, to write reflectively about the different rhetorical situations they face and how they have changed as writers
- Giving them tools for exploring and understanding new rhetorical environments, especially the different genres they'll encounter in their studies
- Helping them to understand, through guided practice, the "generic academic" principles that all majors share, and to distinguish between the common principles of academic writing and the local variations, emphases, and adaptations that define the rhetorics of disciplines, subdisciplines, and individual teachers and courses
- Encouraging them to identify their "passions" for learning and how those might be nourished and refined in academic study
- Guiding and evaluating them based on an understanding of the varieties of the "alternative."
- Educating them to the variety of evaluative criteria that apply to academic writing

Each time a student enrolls in a dedicated academic writing course, from the "developmental" (pre-101) to the upper-division, these principles should apply. When they do, students will learn over time, through a complementary structure of courses, the discursive rhetoric of the academy and the fields within it.

The students in our focus groups most frequently portrayed the English composition course as serving this complementary function in relation to their courses in the major, especially in their expectations for teacher feedback. The composition professor attends to particular features of academic prose: syntax and mechanics, thesis and support, search tools and documentation, etc., some knowledge of which all disciplines expect students to bring with them into more advanced courses. Graphically represented, the basic relationship might look something like this:



Of course, WAC theory assumes that this model of the composition course only succeeds within a framework that acknowledges the limitations of the composition course. A unified vision of writing in college, one implicitly corroborated by our proficiency essayists, includes the practices in the first section of this chapter, as enacted by teachers in all fields at all levels; these courses build on the emphases of the composition course. The comp course teaches the "generic academic" attitudes and skills; courses across disciplines modify, refine, and interpret the "generic academic" in a multitude of ways that enable the student to achieve versatility and a complex awareness of possibilities. At some schools, this role of writing in disciplines is embodied in designated "writing intensive" or "writing emphasis" courses in diverse fields (Townsend 2001); such courses ask teachers to go beyond the practices described in the first section of the chapter in order to pay increased attention to providing instruction in disciplinary writing, commenting in detail on student work, and promoting revision. These courses do not replace the

composition course (as our students' comments illustrated), but they are meant to play a special role in the major.

Model 2: WID- or Interdisciplines-Focused Composition

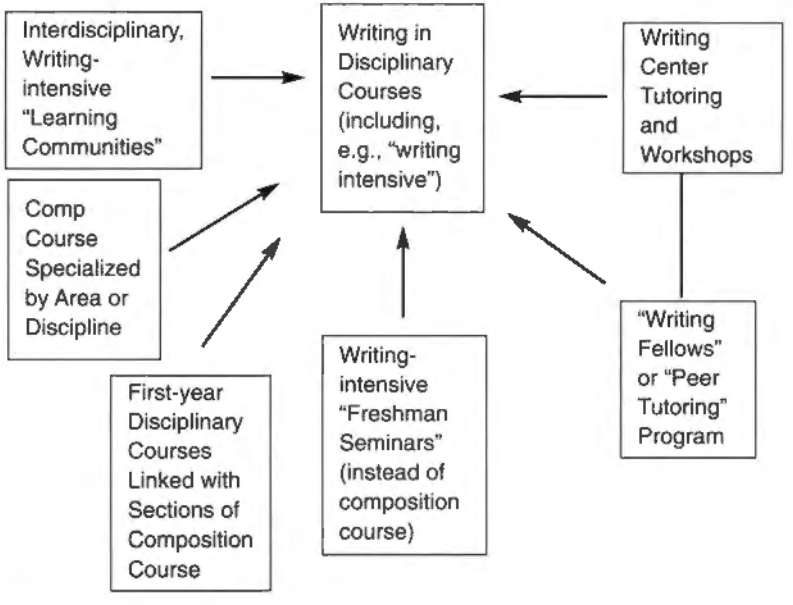
A different vision of the college/university writing program stresses the discipline, broadly or narrowly conceived, as the locus of writing development. In this model, which has many variations, the English composition course, if it exists at all, becomes subdivided into "versions" (the term we use at Mason) or "tracks" that serve the expectations of areas (e.g., humanities), disciplines (e.g., history), or sub- or interdisciplines (e.g., Western civilization). For example, our advanced composition course, divided into sections for business, arts/humanities, social sciences, natural and physical sciences, and technology fields, illustrates division by area. Special sections of this course that we offer for history, music, nursing, and law enforcement majors illustrate division by discipline, and so on.

Some programs eliminate separate first-year composition and teach writing in "freshman seminars" housed in disciplines or gathered administratively into a disciplinarily diverse first-year writing program. The Cornell program is the best known of these; it features pedagogy courses for instructors similar to those for graduate teaching assistants in many composition programs (see Monroe, for example). A variation is what Chris has called the "pure WAC" model (Thaiss 1992), in which writing is taught to first-year students within interdisciplinary sets of courses, such as the "learning communities" that make up George Mason's New Century College, about which Terry has written (Zawacki and Williams 2001). Another variation, really a hybrid between the WID and generic models, links sections of first-year composition with introductory sections of courses in other fields (Zawacki and Williams 2001; Graham 1992). At Mason, our Mason Topics Program demonstrates this model for some first- and second-year students (masontopics.gmu.edu).

Within the WID- or interdisciplines-focused model, a school's writing center often plays a pivotal role (Mullin). It provides individual tutoring for student writers; runs frequent, brief workshops on academic writing topics (e.g., editing, research paper design); it can also train undergraduate "peer tutors" or "writing fellows" to assist disciplinary faculty (Soven). By these functions, the writing center provides essential support for faculty across fields who cannot give the concentrated attention to student writing that the composition courses often provide. Certainly, even in a college/university curriculum that includes the comp courses, the writing center is important as support for all courses that ask students to write. (For additional information

on the "writing fellows" variant, check the *WAC Clearinghouse* website, at wac.colostate.edu, under "Writing Fellows.")

The WID Focus and Its Variants



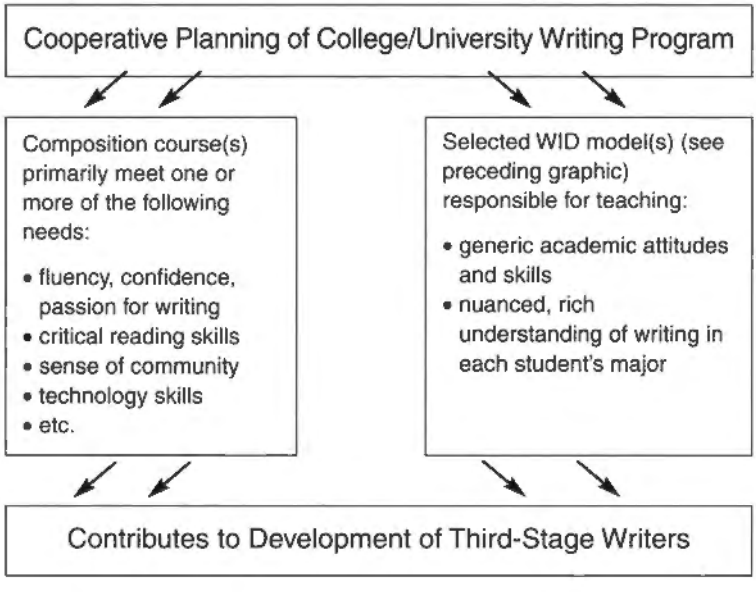
Model 3: Composition as Independent of WID

A school that places full responsibility for academic writing skills in disciplinary courses (Model 2) may choose not to eliminate the freestanding composition course, but to reconceive it to meet objectives not met elsewhere in the curriculum, and that all agree are important. These other forms of the course might include

- A required or elective first-year course that emphasizes student creativity with language: regular writing, much of it informal and experimental, and open-ended assignments that validate student life experience and opinion (See Elbow, for example.)
- A required or elective course that links the college with the larger community through service-learning projects or political-action projects, with some writing assignments (e.g., news articles, brochures) that serve the project and some that have students reflect on values, people, and issues (on service-learning, see Jolliffe 2001 and Adler-Kassner 1997, for example; on critical pedagogy, see the Hurlbert and Blitz collection and Bizzell and Herzberg).

- A required or elective course that uses writing primarily to improve students' critical/analytical reading ability (See Bartholomae and Petrosky).
- A required or elective course that uses writing primarily to improve and diversify students' abilities to use new technologies (for examples and applications, see the Wysocki et al. collection).
- Elective courses in technical writing, business writing, poetry/fiction/memoir writing, etc., any one of which might fulfill a requirement

The list of possible emphases is limited only by the curriculum planners' sense of the students' needs. But the basic concept is this: if curriculum planners feel that writing in disciplines is sufficiently developed at a school so that disciplinary courses teach the *generic and more specific* academic writing skills and attitudes, then the composition course can be reconceived to meet other needs. Graphically, the relationship looks something like this:



For example, those students in our focus groups who relished the opportunities in their English composition experiences to write more creatively and personally than in their major courses were expressing this sense of other needs that a required writing course might meet. Their vision of such a course parallels that of Peter Elbow in his well-known debate with David Bartholomae about the aims of composition in the college curriculum (1995). Bartholomae prioritizes teaching the attitudes and skills that we characterize as the generic

academic; Elbow stresses student self-expression, the growth of fluency and confidence through regular writing that validates student experience outside the classroom. Both are worthy aims that can claim status as "basic" in the development of writers, as could others that we've listed above.

We want to emphasize that making such choices can most usefully occur when planners work cooperatively in awareness of the entire college curriculum. This position seems obvious, but our experience as consultants and readers shows that relatively few institutions enact it administratively, either through a centralized writing program administration or through an integrative committee structure. Conversely, the listservs regularly include cases of noncommunication between central administrations and composition programs and even between composition directors and WAC directors. A clash of teaching philosophies can certainly occur even in a cooperative environment, but all too often the composition program, whether or not it is part of an English department, enacts its own vision of student development while a WAC/WID committee enacts its vision. Only later, in an atmosphere of student or faculty complaint, does each painfully learn that their visions are incompatible, then blames the other for not having been consultative.

Again, we are not advocating one vision of the composition course above another; we are not, as our diverse options at George Mason illustrate, even advocating that the separate composition course exist at all. But we are firmly advocating that, based on our study findings from both faculty and student informants, all institutions need to ensure structures of faculty practice that will help students grow toward that third stage of writing development. We advocate integrative, mutually consultative planning of a college or university writing curriculum, with all stakeholders regularly involved, in an atmosphere informed by study and ongoing review.

Directions for Future Research

We conclude by offering suggestions for future research. Just as our study has profited from the work of countless others, many of whom we have cited, so we hope that others can use our methods and findings as springboards to their own research. The suggestions that follow include part of our own "wish list" for work that we and colleagues want to continue at George Mason, as schedules and funding allow.

Replication of Current Methods, with Additions to Data

We would like to see our methods used (modified as necessary) at other institutions, especially those with different demographics and missions. We devote

parts of every chapter to descriptions of the methods we have used in the diverse facets of our research for this book, and elaboration is provided on the GMU WAC homepage (wac.gmu.edu, "Assessing WAC/WID"). Keep in mind that when we began our project in 2000, our intent was merely to interview faculty, and our first publication of the research (Thaiss and Zawacki 2002) came out of the first set of those interviews. The research model became more elaborate as time went on and other sources of data came available. We believe that the findings become richer and more meaningful as sources of data multiply, but certainly replication of any portion of our model can provide useful results. (For ongoing or recent studies using interviews and focus groups to explore students' acquisition of disciplinary discourses, see Sommers and Saltz, Herrington and Curtis; Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh.)

Effects of New Media on Learning to Write in Disciplines

One limitation of our research, acknowledged in several places in the book, is its lack of emphasis on technology. When our informants made reference to technologies, we noted them, and certainly our lengthy analysis of the work of new media specialist Lesley Smith centers the impacts of technologies on her research and teaching. But for most of our study, "writing," "teaching," and other key concepts are treated as technology independent. Indeed, it surprised us that neither student nor faculty informants made more explicit references to, say, electronic research tools, blogs, message boards, downloading, Web design, multimedia. Nevertheless, in our own teaching we've seen a profound impact on, for example, student writing fluency brought about by the ubiquity of email and our uses of electronic discussion forums; so to treat "learning to write in disciplines" as if the choice of technologies is incidental is to miss an opportunity, to say the least. (See, for example, Yancey on new writing technologies contributing to the creation of new genres and literacies; Selber on multiliteracies students need to possess in a digital age; and Miller and Shepherd on the rhetorical work that blogs perform.)

As our research continues, one direction surely will be to talk with faculty across fields about their adaptations of technology in research, writing, and teaching. We could ask them to describe and evaluate the influences of these choices according to the categories we explore in the book. A possible model we might follow is to reinterview our faculty informants, asking them to consider their earlier responses to our questions in terms of the technologies they have chosen and that are now available. Given that our WAC program in the past seven years has grown up in collaboration with our TAC (Technology Across the Curriculum) program, another model would select

those on the technological front lines, like L. Smith, and use our question clusters (see Chapters One and Two) as the interview frame.

Genre Theory, Activity Theory, Complexity Theory: Frames for Further Analysis

As evident, we have been influenced in our design and analysis by discipline and genre theorists (e.g., Toulmin, Miller, Devitt) and activity theorists (e.g., Russell "Rethinking" and "Big Picture" and Bazerman and Russell *Writing Selves*, among others), as well as, of course, by numerous WAC/WID theorists and practitioners. We feel that we have only begun to think about not only the applications of these frames to our data and findings, but also the explicit use of these frames to focus research and teaching. We are particularly interested in questions Miller has raised about genre and activity systems, for example, can students acquire genre knowledge without participating in the larger activity system and, conversely, to what extent can we teach an activity system by teaching its genres, like the lab report in biology, for example? If genres are always part of larger systems and "genre ecologies," what problems are caused for teaching when workplace genres are embedded in academic disciplines (Miller, personal correspondence)?

We are also intrigued by the possibilities of "complexity theory," as it is being worked out by our colleague Byron Hawk, for thinking about the "tipping point" that third-stage writers reach, when they understand that there is a disciplinary coherence among even the most diverse practices. In Hawk's formulation, a tipping point occurs when the interactions among the individual parts of a complex adaptive system—such as rhetoric, text, audience—produce a "qualitative change at the level of the whole." Further, he notes, the more interaction there is among diverse components of a complex system, the more the system will move "from linearity and stability to recursiveness and complexity." We saw how this process had occurred for many of the students whose proficiency exams we read, particularly those with double majors, when they reflected on their maturation as writers who had successfully negotiated the expectations of a variety of teachers and courses. We can imagine further research with students—interviews, focus groups, reflective essays—that probes key tipping points in their development as writers in and across disciplines.

Learning to Write for Academia and for the Workplace

Though our study focused on learning to write in the academy and the disciplines that comprise it, writing for the workplace—as well as for other

nonacademic venues—kept appearing in all sources of data. A surprising number of our faculty informants wrote or imagined writing for nonacademic readers (including Sorrell, Trefil, Rader, Williams, Jones, both Smiths); several focus-group students spoke in detail about conflicts or connections between writing in school and writing on the job; a few proficiency essayists, particularly those from political science, wrote about the priority in that field of learning to persuade political stakeholders. As Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré have pointed out, there are basic differences between writing on the job and writing for a teacher, and surely we should question any assumption that academic writing prepares a student to write in a nonacademic career. But our informants' considered remarks indicate that the relationship is not simple, that there may be a closer connection than some would wish to grant, and that writing for readers both inside and outside the academy can affect all that a writer does and thinks. Focusing research on the nexus among these tasks and readers is needed to illuminate what we can mean by "learning to write," on the roles of teachers, and on the shape of curricula. (For related research see Henry's *Writing Workplace Cultures* in which he analyzes students' investigations of writing and learning to write in a workplace along with their reflections on their ethnographic processes.) Moreover, focusing on this nexus between writing in schools and writing in the workplace is needed to shed light—not just generate heat—on the ever more contested issue of the roles that education plays in the community it purports to serve.

Similarly, more research is needed on the relationship, if any, that exists in regard to writing values and practices among the various schools that make up a "community." The university is not a closed ecology; neither is the community college nor the high school. To what extent, for example, might there be continuity between what a student learns about writing in history in high school and what that student will be asked to practice in an upper-level course in college? In our research, we've shown that disciplines are dynamic, responsive to the desires of engaged practitioners, who in turn convey their vision of the discipline and their goals for writers to the students they teach. To develop an even fuller picture of how students come into their disciplines, we need to look at the progression from school to school as well as what occurs within the university itself.