CHAPTER 2

WRITING IN HIGH SCHOOL, WRITING IN COLLEGE

As detailed in the previous chapter, we find it interesting that measuring literacy growth remains such a conundrum for the United States. It has proven elusive enough that yearly tests of writing were not required under NCLB, long-term trends from NAEP show few significant gains, and the SAT plans to drop its required essay test. This has created significant openings for private testing companies and well-endowed private foundations to exert significant control over our public school system. If we look beyond the results of standardized tests, we see that this has also motivated significant research and evidence-based recommendations. Despite the sometimes contradictory and puzzling results, we find the turn toward this type of research both reaffirming and, at times, a cause for further alarm. Our goal in this chapter is to identify some of the most promising and problematic trends that persist across studies in order to better articulate what we know about literacy practices in high schools and colleges. Such articulations can be vitally important checks on an overreliance on standardized tests as we work to improve our ability to provide greater access to literacy across a variety of contexts.

While this overview is not exhaustive, it is representative and highlights emerging trends in large-scale writing research primarily over the past decade. In addition to discussing the research of others, we will also present the results of our own Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) funded research, bringing the results of these major projects into conversation with one another as we set our sights on the future.

WRITING IN HIGH SCHOOL, WRITING IN COLLEGE

The research we have been conducting is supported by a grant from the CCCC, which describes the project's purpose as the creation of "an empirically-based description of student writing in high school and college settings." Our research is different from other similar studies in that we are gathering both direct and indirect evidence of how high school and college students and faculty experience writing instruction across the curriculum. Using a variety of measures, we strive to describe writing based on the experiences of both students and teachers by gathering evidence from a sample of schools and colleges that represent a diverse

spectrum of educational institutions in the United States. To this end, our research includes three high schools and seven colleges/universities: one suburban public high school in a relatively affluent neighborhood (27 percent free/reduced lunch and 7 percent drop-out rate), one urban high school in a relatively poor neighborhood (63 percent free/reduced lunch and 26 percent drop-out rate), and one private, all-girls Catholic high school (free/reduced lunch and drop-out rate not tracked), as well as two community colleges, two four-year public institutions, one four-year private institution, one public master's-granting institution, and one doctorate-granting flagship institution.

We began with a survey of both faculty and students from across the curriculum (see Appendix A). The survey items were rooted in evidence-based best practices in writing instruction across the curriculum and reviewed by the CCCC's executive committee as part of their Research Initiative grant program. Doing survey research was the best option available for gathering information from a large number of participants across a broad spectrum of educational institutions in diverse geographical locations. Conducting survey research also allowed us to compare responses to the same questions across faculty and students from different types of institutions, as well as between faculty and students at the same and different institutions. Survey questions were designed to measure both the practice of writing by students and the teaching of writing practices by faculty. The questions were also designed to elicit multiple aspects of student and faculty perceptions about writing in college. Survey participants included 544 faculty and 1,412 students. The majors/departments of faculty and students ranged from industrial technology and religious studies to business and psychology. We then asked for volunteers among the survey participants to continue with us by completing an additional questionnaire and submitting a portfolio of all writing assigned or completed during the course of the semester. Twenty-one faculty and fourteen students from various institutions and departments participated in this phase. The response to this part of our research was not as high as we had hoped, and we plan to expand this phase in order to gather more direct evidence. In short, however, our research selects for a diversity of institutions, collects both direct and indirect evidence, includes an in-depth survey instrument, and compares answers to the same questions from both students and teachers in high school and college. Initial results from our research both confirm and complicate the findings of other large-scale projects.

CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING IN COLLEGE

One of the most important developments in large-scale writing research for our field is the recent partnership between the Council of Writing Program Ad-

ministrators and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Since 2000, NSSE has been offered as an alternative to popular rankings of colleges (e.g., the annual *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings). The primary goal of NSSE is to help faculty and students improve the undergraduate experience. As described on NSSE's homepage: "Survey items on The National Survey of Student Engagement represent empirically confirmed 'good practices' in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college." Institutions that elect to participate in NSSE can use this survey of best practices to measure their own practices against similar institutions, as well as benchmarks established by NSSE. In 2007, the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Council of Writing Program Administrators entered into a formal collaboration. The most recent published results of that collaboration, which includes the twenty-seven questions on writing they developed, give us new cause to argue for the value of what faculty and students are doing in our writing classrooms. These questions were given to 23,000 students across the country and are rooted in research on best practices in writing instruction.[1]

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WRITING

One of the most widely circulated research efforts comes from the National Commission on Writing (NCW), which was created by the College Board in 2002. As the College Board explains on the NCW website, while the commission was created in part because of College Board's plans to offer a writing assessment as part of the new SAT in 2005, "the larger motivation lay in the growing concern within the education, business, and policy-making communities that the level of writing instruction in the United States is not what it should be. Although there is much good work taking place in our classrooms, the quality of writing must be improved if students are to succeed in college and in life" (*The Neglected 'R'* 7). Among the many reports issued by the National Commission on Writing, we are primarily concerned with the results published in *Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . or a Ticket Out* and *Writing, Technology and Teens* (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, and Macgill). For the former report, the NCW sent a survey to the human resource directors of 120 major U.S. corporations affiliated with Business Roundtable. Combined, these corporations employ nearly eight million people. Survey results revealed that two-thirds of salaried employees in large U.S. companies have some writing responsibility, inadequate writing skills are a barrier to promotion, certain types of writing are commonly required, and an estimated $3 billion is spent each year training employees to write. The report *Writing, Technology and Teens* is a joint venture between the commission and

the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Through telephone interviews and focus groups, this research seeks to understand the role writing plays in the lives of U.S. teens, and gathers their input on ways to improve school-based writing instruction.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM SURVEY

An organization similar to the College Board, ACT, Inc., administers the National Curriculum Survey every three to five years. This survey is far narrower in scope than those conducted by College Board. The National Curriculum Survey is sent to middle and high school teachers as well as college instructors who primarily teach introductory college-level courses. The goal of the survey is to collect information on what writing, reading, science, and math skills are expected of entering college students. Importantly, this research is also used to update common academic standards as well as ACT assessments, such as PLAN for tenth graders and the ACT for eleventh and twelfth graders.

INSTITUTIONALLY BASED RESEARCH

Although institutionally bound and currently limited to a very small range of institutions, longitudinal research on how students develop as writers at a single institution still has much to teach us. In particular we are referring to the Harvard Study of Writing (begun in 1997), the Stanford Study of Writing (begun in 2001), and the Longitudinal Study of Writing at the University of Denver (begun 2007). These studies trace large numbers of students over their academic careers, and sometimes beyond, providing very valuable local knowledge while also expanding knowledge in our discipline. For example, the Stanford Study of Writing "is a five-year longitudinal study investigating the writing practices and development of Stanford students during their undergraduate years and their first year beyond college in professional environments or graduate programs" ("About the Study"). Using a series of questionnaires over this five-year period, as well as interviews with a subgroup of students, researchers at Stanford hope not only to improve writing instruction at their local site, but also to make important contributions to longitudinal studies of writing development and writing across the curriculum.

The widely varying parameters of each of these studies and lack of access to raw data make it difficult to assert strong conclusions across all studies except in a few cases. Nonetheless, placing these studies in conversation with one another does allow us to draw valid inferences upon which to base ongoing research and plans for the future. In the following section we compare research

results across the large-scale studies outlined above as we move toward articulating the trends, promises, and puzzles found not only in the results but in the research itself.

DEEP LEARNING AND WRITING INSTRUCTION

At its core, the National Survey of Student Engagement measures the extent to which institutions engage in practices that lead to high levels of student engagement. The results produced by NSSE have been used to establish a set of benchmarks for good educational practice at the college level. When the Council of Writing Program administrators joined forces with NSSE, they were seeking not only more information on writing instruction in the United States, but also an understanding of the extent to which engaging in certain types of writing instruction measures up to NSSE's benchmarks. Thus, the first set of responses to the writing-specific questions was used both to establish five scales that describe the quality of undergraduate writing and to establish that certain types of writing are "substantially related to NSSE's deep learning subscales,[2] especially higher-order thinking and integrative learning. . . . Taken together, these findings provide further support for the movement to infuse quality writing experiences throughout the curriculum" (22). The five scales are:

1. Pre-Writing Activities: How much feedback students received from faculty and others about their writing ideas and drafts.
2. Clear Expectations: How well instructors provided clear explanations of the goals and criteria of the writing assignments.
3. Higher-Order Writing: How often students wrote assignments involving summarization, analysis, and argument.
4. Good Instructor Practices: How much students collaborated with classmates, reviewed sample writing, and how often they were assigned practice writing tasks.
5. Integrated Media: How often students included numerical data, multimedia, and visual content in their writing. (22)

Table 2.1 displays how students responded to questions upon which the scales were built. It is no surprise to many that the five scales defined by NSSE are substantially related to their deep-learning subscales. What is important here is empirical confirmation by an independent organization of the value of much we already do.

Table 2.1 NSSE Results

From NSSE Table 9: Percent Responding "Some," "Most," or "All" Assignments to Selected Writing Items[a]

	First-Year	Senior
For how many writing assignments have you:		
Talked with instructor to develop ideas before drafting	67%	67%
Received feedback from instructor about a draft	75%	63%
Received feedback from classmate, friend, or family about a draft	74%	64%
Visited campus-based writing center to et help	31%	19%
In how many writing assignments did you:		
Analyze or evaluate something you read, researched, or observed	91%	91%
Argue a position using evidence and reasoning	80%	73%
Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	43%	50%
Create the project with multimedia web page, poster, etc.)	45%	68%
In how many writing assignments has your instructor:		
Explained in advance what he or she wanted you to learn	84%	82%
Explained in advance the grading criteria he or she would use	90%	91%
Asked you to do short pieces of writing that were not graded	54%	36%
Asked you to give feedback to a classmate about a draft	65%	38%

Response options included 1 = no assignments, 2 = few assignments, 3 = some assignments, 4 = most assignments, and 5 = all assignments. To view all 27 questions and their exact wording visit www.nsse.iub.edu/pdf/Writing_Questions_2008.pdf

As valuable as these insights are to writing studies in general, it is important to view these latest findings as one layer of data in relation to the many other studies that not only provide further support for these findings, but also expand upon and complicate them. For example, the 2002–2003 National Curriculum Survey administered by ACT, Inc., included responses from 1,099 college and 828 high school faculty in composition/language arts. Both high school faculty and college faculty ranked skills classified "writing as process" as more than moderately important, with the top three process or prewriting skills for both groups being "Selecting a Topic and Formulating a Thesis," "Editing and Proofreading," and "Revising Focusing on Content" rather than mechanics (9). Similarly, when ranking the most important pur-

poses of writing, high school and college teachers agreed on four of the top five purposes: “developing logical arguments and supporting them with valid evidence,” “writing an argumentative or persuasive essay,” “writing expository prose,” and “analyzing an issue or problem” (9). Similarly, in ACT’s 2012 National Curriculum Survey, both high school English Language Arts (ELA) teachers and college composition teachers rated persuasive and informative/explanatory texts as well as logical arguments as more important overall than poetry, journal entries, and narratives although the high school ELA teachers place a higher relative importance on writing such as poetry and journals than the college instructors (7).

This ranking of skills and purposes by faculty is in line with NSSE’s deep-learning subscale. But in the ACT writing surveys, much like the NAEP questionnaires, even though faculty highly rank process-oriented writing instruction, we can’t know what this means if the survey instrument is not detailed enough. As Applebee and Langer note in their analysis of NAEP results: “what teachers mean by this [process-oriented instruction] and how it is implemented in their classrooms remains unclear. The consistent emphasis that emerges in teachers’ reports may mask considerable variation in actual patterns of instruction” (“The State of Writing Instruction” 26). This, of course, suggests a need for more in-depth studies that can unmask potential variations, such as the collaboration between the Center on English Learning and Achievement and the National Writing Project. But it also calls upon researchers to analyze raw data above and beyond that presented in final reports. For example, in taking a closer look at the ACT data, Patterson and Duer found a significant difference in the types of writing skills reportedly taught in classes of students identified as primarily college bound versus those who are primarily non-college bound (84–85). While the sample used to draw this conclusion is admittedly small, it does warrant a closer look at whether the persistence of tracking is contributing to the degree to which the achievement gap between students of different socioeconomic and racial groups also persists as identified by the NAEP.

The writing activities reported in the Stanford Study of Writing also closely reflect the kinds of activities associated with deep learning: “During their first year, students reported being assigned to do eighteen different kinds of writing; this broad range of genre persisted through the four years, though the ratio differed from year to year” (par. 1). As Figure 2.1 indicates, the majority of the kinds of writing students listed are also examples of higher-order writing indicated by the the NSSE deep-learning subscale.

Many of the initial results of our own research in this area are largely in line with these other results. Because our study varies from the NSSE/WPA collab-

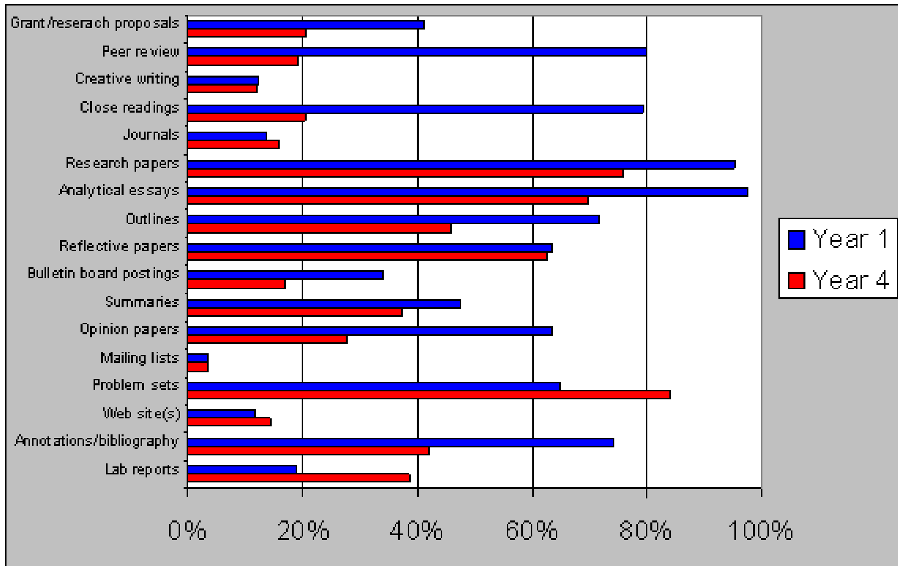

Figure 2.1 Stanford Study Results: Kinds of Writing–Year 1 to 4.

oration in terms of depth, we can offer results that extend, and sometimes challenge, these results as well as common current practices. Indeed, while at first glance the NSSE results and related research validates some of our work, a closer look complicates these findings in ways that call upon faculty and administrators to do more to promote deep learning using writing across the curriculum. For example, further investigation of the data shows that of the five scales developed by NSSE, there is significant adherence to, at best, only three (prewriting, clear expectations, and assigning higher-order writing) across the curriculum, and even these are subject to speculation.

In our own research, our goal has been to gather direct and indirect evidence of how both students and faculty experience writing instruction across the curriculum, beginning with a survey (see appendix) of both faculty and students. We did not have direct access to our survey respondents; all participating schools required that our survey be administered through the appropriate institutional research office. In some cases, the survey was distributed to all students and faculty on campus and in other cases to a representative sample of all students and faculty. Thus, determining an overall response rate is not possible and certainly a limitation. In our initial survey, 544 faculty and 1,412 students participated. Of the faculty, 22 percent were high school, 11 percent were community college, 19 percent were four-year public, 16

percent were four-year private, 8 percent were master's-granting public, and 24 percent were doctorate-granting public. Of the students, 13 percent were high school, 26 percent were community college, 6 percent were four-year public, 2 percent were four-year private, 8 percent were master's-granting public, and 47 percent were doctoral-granting public. Their majors/departments ranged from industrial technology and religious studies to business and psychology. The limitations our sample poses requires that our results be triangulated with the results of others as well as with a follow-up study of direct evidence.

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 focus on questions from our surveys related to prewriting, clear expectations, and good instructor practices (as defined by NSSE). It is interesting to note in these two tables the moments of convergence and divergence between high school and college faculty as well as faculty and students.

College and high school faculty across the curriculum are generally aligned with one another when it comes to prewriting, clear expectations, and good instructor practices. Most differences are relatively easy to explain. For example, while 58 percent of college faculty report sending students to institutional support services for writing, only 18 percent of high school faculty report doing so. This result may reflect that most U.S. high schools do not operate writing centers, instead relying on classroom teachers or paraprofessionals to do the work except in clearly defined circumstances (e.g., special education). We see two significant differences between college and high school faculty, however, that may merit further consideration: college faculty are far less likely than high school faculty to (1) provide opportunities for informal, exploratory writing or (2) have students read/respond to other students' work. Both of these components of literacy instruction are held in high esteem among writing specialists and reaffirmed by NSSE as activities that contribute to deep learning. Thus, while NSSE has identified common writing instruction practices related to deep learning, our results suggest that in at least these two areas of writing—exploratory writing and peer review—high school faculty may engage in a greater variety of writing activities that promote deep learning than college faculty. Of course, additional data is needed to more fully substantiate this claim.

The degree of alignment between high school and college faculty, or the fact that more high school faculty in our sample reported engagement in deep-learning activities than college faculty, may be surprising. What may be more (or less) surprising is the degree of similarity and difference between student and faculty responses at both levels. For example, while 30 percent of high school faculty report "always" requiring multiple drafts, only 16 percent

Table 2.2 College and High School Faculty Teaching Practices

Faculty Teaching Practice	Always	Some	Never
Require Multiple Drafts on Writing Assignments			
College Faculty	30	51	17
High School Faculty	30	50	16
Provide Written Feedback on Early Drafts		3	
College Faculty	47	38	12
High School Faculty	39	41	14
Conference with Students on Papers in Progress			
College Faculty	17	46	32
High School Faculty	31	40	23
Have Students Read/Respond to Other Students' Work			
College Faculty	19	36	41
High School Faculty	26	55	14
Provide Written Descriptions for Writing Assignments			
College Faculty	78	15	3
High School Faculty	67	25	5
Provide Grading Criteria Early in the Writing Process			
College Faculty	67	23	6
High School Faculty	63	28	7
Provide Opportunities for Informal, Exploratory Writing			
College Faculty	27	32	35
High School Faculty	40	39	12
Discuss Examples of Good Writing in Class			
College Faculty	44	41	13
High School Faculty	45	46	4
Discuss Writing with Your Class			
College Faculty	56	34	7
High School Faculty	60	39	4
Provide Handouts/Checklists/Examples			
College Faculty	54	34	9
High School Faculty	58	33	5
Provide References/Handbooks/Websites			
College Faculty	52	33	11
High School Faculty	36	42	17
Have Students Reflect on and Evaluate Own Writing			
College Faculty	223	339	33
High School Faculty	34	47	14

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Table 2.2—*continued*

Faculty Teaching Practice	Always	Some	Never
Direct Students to Institutional Support Services for Writing (e.g., Writing Center)			
College Faculty	58	31	7
High School Faculty	18	29	47

Where the total percentage does not equal 100 participants, they either didn't respond or didn't know if they engaged in this particular activity as described in our survey.

Table 2.3 Teaching Practices and Corresponding Student Writing Activities

Teaching Practice | Student Writing Activity	Always	Some	Never
Require Multiple Drafts on Writing Assignments			
College Faculty	30	51	17
High School Faculty	30	50	16
Write Multiple Drafts			
College Students	28	48	16
High School Students	16	61	11
Conference with Students on Papers in Progress			
College Faculty	17	46	32
High School Faculty	31	40	23
Discuss Writing with My Teacher			
College Students	13	56	22
High School Students	12	58	15
Have Students Read/Respond to Other Students' Work			
College Faculty	19	36	41
High School Faculty	26	55	14
Discuss My Writing With Other Students			
College Students	12	53	26
High School Students	23	48	16
Direct Students to Institutional Support Services for Writing (e.g., Writing Center)			
College Faculty	58	31	7
High School Faculty	18	29	47

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Table 2.3—*continued*

Teaching Practice | Student Writing Activity	Always	Some	Never
Discuss My Writing with the Writing Center or a Tutor			
College Students	3	22	65
High School Students	2	23	56
Provide References/Handbooks/Websites			
College Faculty	52	33	11
High School Faculty	36	42	17
Consult Reference Books, Handouts, Websites			
College Students	37	47	7
High School Students	24	46	13

of high school students report "always" writing multiple drafts. And while 31 percent of high school faculty report "always" conferencing with students on papers in progress, only 12 percent of high school students report "always" discussing their writing with their teacher. At the college level, while 58 percent of the faculty "always" direct students to institutional support services for writing, and 31 percent do so "sometimes," only 3 percent of students report "always" going to a writing center, and a small 22 percent "sometimes" seek institutional support services. These results and others suggest that even when faculty do engage in best practices for teaching writing, many students do not engage in best practices for learning how to write, calling attention to the need to find ways to encourage greater engagement among students for best practices in learning how to write.

One of the measures of the NSSE/WPA research that led to deep learning was clear expectations. We find this focus interesting given the wide variation in faculty and student rankings of writing abilities. If there is a high degree of clear expectations at play, should we not then expect student and faculty ranking of their writing abilities to be closely aligned? In our survey, faculty were asked to rank their students' writing abilities on a number of measures using a scale of 1–5 (1=very dissatisfied, 5=very satisfied). Students were asked to rank their own writing abilities using the same scale. Results are shown in Tables 2.4 and 2.5.

We asked faculty to rate how satisfied they are with students' ability on various markers of writing. For example, we asked them to rate how satisfied they are with students' ability to employ correct grammar and mechanics. The most highly satisfied faculty are those at the private high school, and the least satisfied are those at the urban high school. Also in the least-satisfied category are the

Table 2.4: Students' Writing Abilities as Ranked by Faculty

	Mean College Faculty Rating		Mean College Student Rating	
	Freshman/ Sophomore	Junior/ Senior	Freshman/ Sophomore	Junior/ Senior
Write appropriately for different audiences	2.66	2.97	3.66	4.03
Write appropriately for different purposes	2.52	2.93	3.83	4.18
Organize a paper	2.49	2.91	3.87	4.15
Develop a main idea	2.57	2.90	3.91	4.21
Use paragraphs appropriately	2.71	2.97	4.0	4.28
Use supporting evidence appropriately	2.43	2.77	3.87	4.29
Analyze data/ideas/arguments	2.20	2.73	3.81	4.19
Synthesize information from multiple sources	2.28	2.70	3.70	4.11
Appropriately use, cite and document sources	2.03	2.63	3.61	4.00
Quote and paraphrase appropriately	2.13	2.63	3.70	4.10
Record data and/or use detail	2.37	2.87	3.65	4.01
Use correct grammar and syntax	2.42	2.71	3.86	4.15
Employ correct mechanics (e.g., spelling)	2.39	2.85	3.96	4.19

Table 2.5: Students' Writing Abilities as Ranked by Themselves

	Mean High School Faculty Rating		Mean High School Student Rating	
	Freshman/ Sophomore	Junior/ Senior	Freshman/ Sophomore	Junior/ Senior
Write appropriately for different audiences	2.43	3.24	3.55	3.65
Write appropriately for different purposes	2.57	3.34	3.62	3.82
Organize a paper	2.69	3.25	3.73	3.81
Develop a main idea	2.83	3.36	3.67	3.84
Use paragraphs appropriately	2.75	3.36	3.71	4.10
Use supporting evidence appropriately	2.55	3.22	3.69	3.95
Analyze data/ideas/arguments	2.39	3.03	3.52	3.72
Synthesize information from multiple sources	2.20	2.78	3.38	3.64
Appropriately use, cite and document sources	2.18	2.92	3.56	3.71
Quote and paraphrase appropriately	2.14	2.97	3.51	3.85
Record data and/or use detail	2.41	3.04	3.56	3.70
Use correct grammar and syntax	2.52	3.11	3.60	3.80
Employ correct mechanics (e.g., spelling)	2.48	3.07	3.75	3.90

faculty at the community colleges and, perhaps surprisingly, the faculty at the doctorate-granting flagship university. Lumped in the middle are the four-year schools, the master's-granting university, and suburban public high school. It should be noted that on a scale of 1–5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, not a single faculty rated their students overall a 4 or 5—the highest average score was a 3.48 and the lowest a 1.92.

Students, however, think much more highly of their abilities than their teachers. Student overall ratings ranged from a low of 3.19 to a high of 4.3. Interestingly, student ratings of themselves at the private high school were most closely aligned with those of their teachers. Student ratings of themselves at the doctoral flagship university were least aligned with that of their teachers, followed closely by those at the urban high school. At the doctorate-granting institution, for example, faculty gave an overall score of 2.74 for student mastery of grammar, whereas the students gave themselves a 4.10. Several possible explanations could elucidate this disparity. One is that at this institution the highest percentage of students felt that their writing was equal to or better than that of their peers, thus indicating a generally higher self-perception of themselves as writers than students at other institutions or than their teachers feel is warranted. Of course, we might also want to consider class size (the smaller the class, the more direct communication between faculty and students, perhaps explaining why students at the private high school are most in line with their teachers). Further, it is possible that faculty have unrealistically high expectations for student writing. But in the end, we ask whether such great disparities in the rankings between faculty and students can exist if clear expectations for writing are set. Perhaps the self-reporting aspect of NSSE is suspect here, with the faculty choosing to respond to the questions on writing inflating the degree to which clear expectations are set. We hypothesize that the setting of clear expectations specifically for writing does not occur that often across the curriculum, thus leading to the disparity between faculty and student rankings. A study of direct evidence (e.g., actual faculty assignment sheets, peer review directions, etc.) is needed in order to begin to answer this question with any degree of validity.

BEYOND PREWRITING AND CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

NSSE's third scale is the degree to which faculty assign and students engage in higher-order writing. According to NSSE, the types of writing assignments that promote "deep learning" across the curriculum include those that focus on analysis, synthesis, and integration of ideas from various sources in ways that lead to engagement with course ideas both inside and outside of the classroom (22). But how much of the actual writing across the curriculum falls into this category?

Further, how does the writing assigned prepare students for writing beyond the academy? In large-scale studies, institutional studies, and our own research, it seems that much of the writing assigned to students across the curriculum does intend to promote deep learning, although very little prepares students for writing beyond the academy. For example, in 2003, Dan Melzer conducted textual analysis on 787 undergraduate writing assignments from forty-eight diverse academic institutions that were gathered via course websites. Melzer found, much like Britton in 1975 and Applebee in 1985, that the majority of the writing was transactional (84 percent), with almost half of the writing consisting of traditional essay exams, research papers, and journals.[3] In George Mason University's Faculty Survey of Student Writing, the three most important writing tasks included research paper (57 percent), critique or review (39 percent), and journal or other reflection paper (34 percent). Melzer's research confirms our own results that college faculty provide little opportunity for exploratory writing or workplace-based genres. As we reflect on the types of writing being assigned, we need to consider not only whether they promote deep learning, but also whether the writing submitted by students evidences the deep learning intended as well as ways in which we may or may not be preparing students for life beyond the academy.[4]

While our work here focuses on high school and college writing, we should still be very aware of the concerns raised by Applebee and Langer in their analysis of the most recent set of NAEP data in relation to K–8 writing instruction. Most notably, Applebee and Langer conclude that students are simply not writing enough to prepare them for the demands of postsecondary education. They highlight the fact that "some 40% of twelfth-grade students . . . report never or hardly ever being asked to write a paper of three pages or more" ("The State of Writing Instruction" 26). Not coincidentally, their analysis comes at the same time that influential educators and policymakers such as Dr. Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education, professor at New York University and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and Chester E. Finn, former professor at Vanderbilt University and former assistant secretary of education, have begun to reverse course on the value of the No Child Left Behind Act, charter schools, and other similar efforts. As quoted in a *New York Times* article, Finn states: "Standards in many places have proven nebulous and low, . . . 'Accountability' has turned to test-cramming and bean-counting, often limited to basic reading and math skills" (Dillon). And, in our mind, too often ignoring the hard work of writing.

GENRES BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY

In *Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . or a Ticket Out,* the National Commission on Writing surveyed the Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs of many

leading U.S. corporations. Among the findings is that, "Writing is almost a universal professional skill required in service industries as well as finance, insurance, and real estate" (7). Upward of 70 percent of salaried employees have writing responsibilities. Indeed, 96–100 percent of the students and faculty at each school in our survey think writing will be somewhat important or very important to their future success, and 93–100 percent believe they will write often or very often after graduation. Here, it seems that our research agrees with the National Commission's. In our research, there is also significant consistency among students and faculty from all types of institutions about the role of writing in the workplace.

At this point we can share some useful information about the types of writing required in the workplace, college, and high school. In *Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . or a Ticket Out*, email and oral presentations with visuals aids such as PowerPoint are "frequently" or "almost always" required 80–98 percent of the time, followed by memos and official correspondence (70 percent), formal reports (62 percent), and technical reports (59 percent) (11). Similarly, in *Writing: A Powerful Message from State Government*, the National Commission on Writing's study of state government employees, email and memos/official correspondence are "frequently" or "almost always" required, followed by formal reports (71 percent), oral presentations (67 percent), technical reports (65 percent), legislative analysis (59 percent), and policy alerts (51 percent) (17).

But what do faculty view as the most important writing tasks? In our survey, high school faculty ranked the most important writing tasks assigned to freshman and sophomores as in-class writing, journal/reflective writing, and summary/abstract. At the junior/senior-level, high school faculty chose research paper, critique, position paper, and analysis paper. The data seem to suggest that high school faculty are following the lead of college faculty and working to prepare students for the types of writing they will encounter in college. But it may be that college faculty are not adequately preparing students for required writing tasks in the private or government sector. We doubt this is a matter of willful neglect on the part of faculty. After all, it would be as easy to assign memos as research papers.

Many faculty resist workplace genres on philosophical grounds, often arguing that their role is to help prepare citizens of the world, not train workers. While a student may never need to write an academic research paper in the workplace, many faculty believe the experience of doing so benefits students immensely when it allows for the opportunity to entertain an idea, follow its intellectual trajectory, and engage in its debate. Some research suggests that such noble goals, even if desirable, often are not met within the context of most

Table 2.6 Writing Tasks Assigned: College Faculty

Freshman/Sophomore		Junior/Senior	
Research Paper	34%	Research Paper	47%
Critique/Review Paper	27%	Analysis Paper	30%
Analysis Paper	27%	Critique/Review Paper	23%
Journal/Reflection Paper	24%	Reaction Paper	18%
Reaction Paper	21%	Position/Issue Paper	18%

writing assignments. Although we do not find the cultivating of critical citizens and productive workers to be mutually exclusive endeavors, we will sidestep this particular issue for now and focus on an emerging line of research that may help us better understand what is at stake. It has been posited by some that the abilities to analyze, synthesize, and integrate knowledge transfer across genres, thus making it less important to teach the genres of the workplace in the academy. Recent work by Elizabeth Wardle, David Smit, Anne Beaufort, Linda Bergman and Janet Zepernick, and others seeks to strongly draw our attention to the issue of transfer. In particular, they seek to understand whether the work students do in first-year composition courses transfers to other contexts, especially within the academy. Their attention to transfer comes on the heels of many studies strongly suggesting writing instruction is not preparing students for the literacy demands placed on them outside of school (Anson and Forsberg; Odell and Goswami; Spilka).

But given the research by members of our own field as well as those outside our field who have reached the same conclusions, alongside the findings of the National Commission on Writing, we must ask whether studying current practices for evidence of transfer is worthwhile. For example, it may be that issues of articulation and issues of transfer go hand-in-hand. In other words, growing evidence may suggest that what teachers and employers articulate as best practices in writing vary across discipline and context. Further, even within the same discipline, teachers may not be doing enough to articulate best practices to their students or employing the required meta-language as defined by Janet Giltrow, thus contributing to the disconnect we see in this data between students and teachers. If there is a problem of articulation, then a valid study of transfer must also take into account matters of articulation. As a step in this direction, we suggest that rhetoric and composition as a field must establish a framework for the literacy demands in academia and beyond, to which the work completed in first-year writing courses must aspire, all the while being grounded in the rich rhetorical tradition that reaches back thousands of years.

WRITING ATTRIBUTES BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY

In addition to genre, we have evidence of the *value* that employers, faculty, and students place on certain aspects of writing. In the National Commission on Writing report, 96 percent of employers view *accuracy* as "extremely important" or "important," 97 percent view *clarity* as "extremely important" or "important," and 95 percent view *spelling, punctuation, and grammar* as "extremely important" or "important" ("Writing: A Ticket to Work" 28). In our survey, faculty were asked to identify the five most important characteristics of good writing in their field. Interestingly, as Figure 2.2 indicates, among college faculty, organization was chosen more often than any other characteristic (66 percent), followed closely by analysis data/ideas/arguments (59 percent), and uses supporting evidence appropriately (57 percent). Because organization is a major contributor to clarity, and both analysis and use of evidence constitute accuracy, these findings align with one another.

We are struck by the interesting lack of focus on audience and purpose by faculty in the disciplines—especially given the emphasis that rhetoric, composition, and our textbooks place on it. This result could be explained by faculty's lack of awareness of the role that audience and purpose play in helping a writer make sound rhetorical choices; thus, if a paper is well organized, it is "readable" by the audience and supports its purpose nearly invisibly. However, given the amount of transactional writing found by Melzer that, by definition, has audience as one of its primary foci, it could be that faculty across the curriculum do care quite a bit about audience, but have not articulated it in the ways we do in composition. This finding is worth further exploration.

We'd like to end our look at the survey results on a truly affective note. After all, if people just do not like to write, we have an entirely different battle to wage. In some ways, the results of the data are not surprising. As Table 2.7 indicates, nearly half of the high school students reported that they enjoyed writing for their own personal goals, but disliked assigned school writing. What is perhaps surprising is that 41 percent of college students reported that they enjoy writing and look forward to most writing tasks, whereas only 28 percent of high school students felt that way.

Numerous reasons could exist for this change over time. As students progress through college, they perhaps gain more confidence as writers (indeed 56 percent of college students felt that they write as well as or better than their peers), and a more confident writer is one who can approach a new writing task without apprehension. It may also be that college students have been writing more—since elementary school perhaps, or since high school certainly—and they have simply gained more experience with it. With more experience, they

Table 2.7 Students' Affective Response to Writing and Their Abilities

	College Students	High School Students
I enjoy writing and look forward to most writing tasks	41	28
I enjoy writing for personal goals but do not like school-related writing	36	48
I do not like to write	16	13
I think I write as well or better than most of my peers	56	30
I think I write about the same as my peers	25	39
I think most of my peers write better than I do	7	12
I think almost all of my peers write better than I do	1	1
I don't know how my writing compares to my peers		6

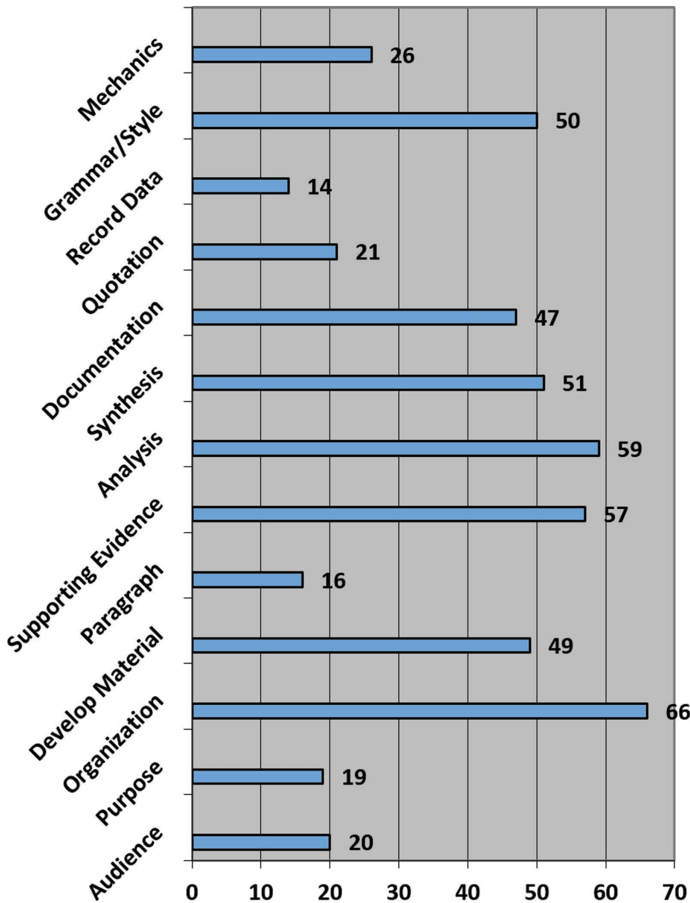

Figure 2.2: College Faculty Views of Good Writing in the Disciplines

have confidence that they can meet the goals of a new writing situation. Alternatively, as found in the Pew Internet and American Life/National Commission on Writing report, *Writing, Teens, and Technology,* part of the story is that what teenagers define as writing is not nearly as inclusive as what we might define as writing (Lenhart et al.). In other words, the teens in this survey did not consider what we in rhetoric and composition would call digital or multimodal writing (emails, blogging, texting, and the like) as writing. Thus, teenagers may actually be writing more than ever, but in a far greater variety of forms not normally recognized as part of the school or work experience. These results, which are worthy of further exploration but beyond the scope of this volume, do leave us with a positive note: for our students, writing is not necessarily the "dreaded" activity that many of us imagine.

NOTES

1. The WPA/NSSE collaboration is now known as the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College, and a list of the questions administered can be found at http://comppile.org/wpa+nsse/docs/27_Question_Supplement.pdf.
2. A significant body of scholarship has addressed the concepts of deep learning. According to Thomas Laird, Michael Schwarz, Rick Shoup, and George Kuh, "students who use deep approaches to learning tend to perform better as well as retain, integrate, and transfer information at higher rates than students using surface approaches to learning" (3). To measure deep learning, NSSE uses three subscales: higher-order learning, integrative learning, and reflective learning. NSSE acknowledges that the questions in each subscale are not "intended as a replacement for other, more in-depth measures of deep learning; it [the instrument] serves as a quick way to address this important concept in a survey that reaches a substantial number of college students every year" (Laird, Shoup, and Kuh).
3. Melzer categorized writing samples following the research of James Britton: "Britton divided writing into three different "functions," which correspond to different points on the rhetorical triangle of writer (the expressive function), text (the poetic function), and audience (the transactional function). Transactional assignments ask students to inform or persuade an audience; for example, a book review, annotated bibliography, or editorial. Expressive assignments are informal and exploratory, with minimal demands for structure and the self as audience. Freewrites and personal journals are typical expressive assignments. Poetic writing is imaginative, with the focus on the text itself as an art form. Poems, stories, and plays are common poetic assignments. Based on Timothy Crusius' (1989) critique of Britton's categories, which Crusius feels lack a place for informal writing for an audience beyond the self, I added one more category, "exploratory." Like expressive assignments, exploratory

assignments are informal and focus on exploring ideas, but the audience is public and the form is usually more structured than expressive assignments" (Melzer 88).

4. That college should be preparing students for their professional lives is certainly a debate that can be traced back at least to the Morrill Act about the value of higher education in general and a student's purpose in attending university. We do not dismiss the intrinsic value of education to broaden one's mind and engage deeply with new ideas. Nor do we think that the writing courses should be limited in scope to providing a service to the university and its students: gaining rhetorical awareness and sophistication promotes engaged citizenry and academic success. In today's economies of academia and the world, scholars and teachers cannot blindly ignore that students, parents, taxpayers, and legislators believe that a higher education in general is a way to a better life and job.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY OF WRITING IN COLLEGE

1. Your gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

2. How old are you? ________

3. Currently I am:

- ☐ A first or second-year college student
- ☐ A community college student for more than one year
- ☐ A junior or senior college student at a 4-year school

4. Which kind of high school did you attend?

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private

5. How many years of English did you take in high school?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4

6. Have you taken other kinds of writing classes, such as journalism, creative writing, or any other kind of course in which a primary focus was writing?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Name of course(s):

7. Which of the following kinds of writing tasks do you recall doing during high school in any kind of class? (Some answers will overlap. Please check as many as apply.)

- ☐ Research paper
- ☐ Essay exam answers
- ☐ Personal narrative (a nonfiction piece about yourself)
- ☐ Essay
- ☐ An obituary
- ☐ A poem
- ☐ Analysis of a poem, story, or other reading
- ☐ Short story
- ☐ Newspaper article or letter to the editor
- ☐ Speech
- ☐ Argumentative paper
- ☐ Lab report
- ☐ Summary
- ☐ Evaluation
- ☐ Journal or other reflective writing
- ☐ Professional letter
- ☐ Issue paper
- ☐ Collaborative (or group) paper
- ☐ Other (please specify): ____

8. When you wrote papers in your English classes, did you get written feedback from your teacher about the quality of the paper?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. Did you usually receive a grade for the paper?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. In your best estimate, how often did you have writing tasks/assignments in classes other than English?

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

11. If you wrote in other classes, what classes did you write in? (Check as many as apply.)

- ☐ History
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Math

- ☐ P.E.
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Foreign Language
- ☐ Other (please specify): ____

12. When you produced writing in other classes, did you get written feedback from your teacher about the quality of the paper?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Did you usually receive a grade for the writing?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

The following questions will ask about your overall experiences and attitudes about writing.

14. How important do you think writing is to your future job or career?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Neither important nor unimportant
- ☐ Not very important
- ☐ Don't know

15. How often do you think you will have to write after you finish high school?

Very often Often Rarely Never

16. How would you characterize your feelings about writing? (Choose the answer that is the closest match to your feelings.)

- ☐ I enjoy writing and look forward to most writing tasks.
- ☐ I enjoy writing for personal goals but do not like school-related writing.
- ☐ I do not like to write.

17. Which of these responses best matches your perception of your writing ability?

- ☐ I think I write as well or better than most of my peers.
- ☐ I think I write about the same as my peers.
- ☐ I think most of my peers write better than I do.
- ☐ I think almost all of my peers write better than I do.
- ☐ I don't know how my writing compares to my peers.

18. How much emphasis do you think your school places on writing?

- ☐ Too much
- ☐ Enough
- ☐ Not enough
- ☐ Don't know

19. How satisfied are you with your ability to:

	Very dissatisfied				Very satisfied
Write appropriately for different audiences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organize a paper	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop a main idea	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use paragraphs appropriately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use supporting evidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Analyzeideas/arguments/data	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Synthesize information from multiple sources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Appropriately use, cite, and document sources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quote and paraphrase appropriately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Record data and/or use appropriate level of detail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use correct grammar and syntax	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employ correct mechanics (spelling and punctuation)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. To what extent do you engage in the following strategies when writing?

	Always use	Sometimes use	Never use	Don't know
Write multiple drafts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discuss my writing with my teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discuss my writing with the Writing Center or a tutor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discuss my writing with other students (including peer review)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discuss my writing with someone other than my teacher or tutor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consult reference books or websites	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following questions will ask about your experiences writing in college.

21. Did you take a freshman composition course at this or another institution?

☐ Yes

☐ No

22. Have you taken any other kind of course that focuses on writing at this or another institution?

☐ No

☐ Yes. Type of course: ____

23. Have you taken other English classes?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

24. As you reflect upon your college experience, how often did you have to write in courses outside of English?

- ☐ In most courses
- ☐ In some courses
- ☐ In a few courses
- ☐ Never

25. If you wrote in other classes, what classes did you write in? (Check as many as apply.)

- ☐ History
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Math
- ☐ Psychology
- ☐ Economics
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Philosophy
- ☐ Anthropology
- ☐ Sociology
- ☐ Social Work
- ☐ Speech
- ☐ Health Sciences/Nursing
- ☐ Foreign Language
- ☐ Professional field/Other (please specify): ______________________________

26. What kinds of writing did you have to produce? (Some answers will overlap. Please check as many as apply.)

- ☐ Summary and/or analysis
- ☐ Abstract or precis
- ☐ Research paper
- ☐ Lab report
- ☐ Personal opinion paper
- ☐ Annotated bibliography
- ☐ News stories and/or press releases
- ☐ Essay exam answers
- ☐ Case study and/or narratives
- ☐ Journals and/or other reflection papers

- ☐ Impromptu in-class writing
- ☐ Reaction paper
- ☐ Outline writing
- ☐ Critiques, evaluations, or reviews
- ☐ Professional letters and/or memos
- ☐ Literature review
- ☐ Collaborative (or group) project
- ☐ Analysis of a poem, story, or other reading
- ☐ Other (please specify): ____

27. Did your professors give you guidelines about how to write in various disciplines?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

28. Other than English classes, did your professors devote class time to discussing the paper, giving advice about how to write it, or the like?

- ☐ In most courses
- ☐ In some courses
- ☐ In a few courses
- ☐ Never

29. When you produced writing in other classes, did you get written feedback from your teacher about the quality of the paper?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

30. Did you receive a grade on the writing?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No