

# Exploring Response Cultures in the World of WAC

JOHN ELIASON, GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

THOMAS SCHRAND, PHILADELPHIA UNIVERSITY

AS LONGTIME WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM advocates, we have often benefitted from working with colleagues across and within disciplinary settings. The rewards have usually accrued for us in the form of shared insights about rhetorical values for specific genres of writing and unique approaches to teaching students to improve as writers. Like most WAC consultants, we have reciprocated by assisting faculty with assignment design and offering tips on responding to student work. This latter area has been a particular concern for us because of the ambivalence many of our colleagues feel when giving feedback to students and when facilitating peer response activities. In our respective administrative roles as WAC Director and Associate Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, we recognize the potential for quality faculty and peer feedback to promote student learning, but we also understand the frustration that instructors experience regarding their efforts to respond to student work. As a means of addressing these widely-shared concerns, we recently set out to expand our understanding of the dynamics of response, both by learning more from the existing literature on the topic and through an enhanced focus on response as it occurred within our own institutional settings. After carrying out a year-long research project on student perceptions of faculty and peer feedback to student work in the areas of writing and design, we have begun to develop a focus on “response cultures” across the curriculum that has produced not only a stronger collaborative network for WAC initiatives, but also several interesting initial reflections about feedback. We hope our study and these resulting reflections will encourage other WAC consultants and faculty to explore—and learn from—the response cultures within their own institutions.

In her essay, “Opening Dialogue: Students Respond to Teacher Comments in a Psychology Classroom,” Lynne Ticke explains why student perceptions on feedback should be the concern of faculty integrating writing in their courses: “thinking about

and reflecting on their writing in response to teacher commentary encourages students to slow down their cognitive process, making their thinking an object of contemplation. When students are asked to reflect on their writing processes or encouraged to be more aware of them, their understanding improves.” The relationship between response and learning is necessarily complex, however, because of all the variables surrounding the people, settings, and assignments that help to make up a response culture. In “The Complexities of Responding to Student Writing,” Richard Haswell indirectly reinforces this point by reminding faculty and others who read and respond to student writing that they would do well on behalf of their students if they were to resist oversimplifying their approaches. Citing a number of studies on response to writing that were executed within a variety of disciplinary contexts, Haswell asserts that “the even gaze of research has observed pretty much the same curiosity in every field, that the ecology of response—its full human, social, and institutional context—is more complex than the customary practice of response seems to warrant.” As Haswell’s metaphor of “ecology” so aptly suggests, feedback practices and their effectiveness are shaped by a wide array of environmental factors and often change to adapt to specific ecological niches.<sup>i</sup> With this observation in mind, we were determined to explore the local ecosystems of response at our campus and to add our findings to the teeming literature of response and feedback.

### **The Research Project**

Indirectly, our research on response began in 2004, when Philadelphia University (where we worked together at the time) was accepted for participation in the three-year Integrative Learning Project (ILP) grant sponsored jointly by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.<sup>ii</sup> As representatives from one of just 10 U.S. institutions chosen for the ILP grant, our Philadelphia University team of faculty and administrators initiated a project aimed at strengthening the student learning connections between the university’s general education core curriculum and selected majors. After the three-year grant period concluded in 2007, the two of us agreed to continue working to strengthen the student learning connections between the university’s general education core curriculum and selected majors. We did so, in part, because Philadelphia University’s mission is focused on professional education, and one of the university’s strengths is its design majors, with programs in fields such as architecture, fashion design, and industrial design. It therefore seemed appropriate to collaborate with design faculty and students to learn more about response practices in design courses and general educa-

tion writing courses. We wondered whether we would find anything that could be transferable from the university's professional majors to the writing-intensive learning environments. Put another way, as faculty could we model integrative learning ourselves by examining the dynamics of response together and then attempting to replicate, transform, or blend the best features and practices we discovered?

One of our overarching questions concerned the emotional dynamics of the design critique experience, in which students and faculty respond in a live studio setting to design work presented by the student designer. As outside observers, we had occasionally experienced the dynamic pedagogies of our university's design programs firsthand, as guest "jurors" for final critiques of student work. Attending these critiques (or "crits") provided an opportunity to observe how our colleagues and students in the design fields offer feedback to students presenting their projects. Regardless of which design discipline was involved, the critique procedure was generally the same: students present a collection or sample of their designs for review by faculty members and sometimes outside professionals who are practicing in that specific design field. The presenting students' classmates and friends stand or sit behind the faculty and guests. One by one, students explain their projects and address questions, challenges, and other types of feedback offered by the crit audience. Another element related to feedback in the design disciplines is the preliminary critique (sometimes called a desk crit), which occurs before the final critique. In a preliminary or desk crit, the faculty member, sometimes alone but frequently accompanied by other students, visits each designer's work station in the studio and facilitates an informal discussion about the student's designs-in-progress.<sup>iii</sup>

We were frequently impressed by the level of faculty and student engagement during preliminary and final critiques and came to understand that the sessions function for design faculty as a "signature pedagogy." This term, coined by Lee Shulman, past-president of the Carnegie Foundation, applies to "types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions." For Shulman, the test for determining such a pedagogy lies in whether novices "are instructed in critical aspects of the three fundamental dimensions of professional work—to *think*, to *perform*, and to *act with integrity*." According to our design colleagues and our reading about design pedagogy, the studio space and its attendant social and intellectual milieu seem to pass this test, as the crit simulates or approximates how designs are developed and presented in professional times and spaces. In other words, the crit is a signature pedagogy, in part because it presents opportunities for modeling actual professional practices.

The professional design studio approach is markedly different from the feedback practices faculty often employ in writing-specific and writing-intensive courses in general education.<sup>iv</sup> For example, the central space for formative assessment in a writing course might take place in peer review sessions or in the oral or written ungraded assessment of a first draft by the instructor. The final evaluative response in such courses might be offered solely through writing, and the final versions of student writing may end up being reviewed just by the instructors. Typical approaches to responding to writing might be along the lines of commenting in the margins and/or providing end commentary to accompany letter grades and scores. Boiled down to their primary characteristics, we could describe the feedback practices in our institution's design courses as oral and public and the feedback in the writing-specific and writing-enriched general education courses as written and private.

Our inquiry into these response cultures entailed conducting a site-based study at our own institution that took place over the span of one academic year and included the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Upon receiving expedited human subjects research approval from the chair of the university's Institutional Review Board, we created an online survey in consultation with selected design faculty.<sup>v</sup> Helpful colleagues in our university's Office of Information Technology used a site-licensed instrument to host our survey, which was then administered to all second- to fourth-year students in 10 different design fields at our institution. Responses were anonymous. Out of the approximately 700 prospective respondents in this group of design majors, 373 completed the questionnaire. The survey questions asked students to reflect on the feedback practices both in their design courses and their general education writing courses. For the design courses, we asked about preliminary critiques and final critiques; for the writing classes, we inquired about peer reviews, one-on-one consultations with a writing instructor, and receiving graded papers with written comments. For each of these five different feedback settings, the student respondents answered questions about their perceptions of their comfort level, the quality of their learning experience, and whether the setting created any emotional effects that interfered with their learning.

Once we had collected the results of our online survey, we arranged group interviews with student volunteers from three specific majors: fashion design, architecture, and industrial design. These group interviews, lasting about 45–50 minutes each and involving two to five students, were organized around the questions in the online survey, with the aim of getting a clearer sense of the student thinking behind their written responses. The group interviews were videotaped, as were some additional interviews

with faculty members from the same design fields and with a writing faculty member who teaches a design-focused writing class in our general education core curriculum. Prior to all sessions with students and faculty, we obtained signed consent forms.

### **Student Perceptions of Response in Design and Writing Courses**

Our surveys and interviews revealed several key findings (see appendix for detailed results). First, we discovered that the students reported that the emotional dynamics of feedback, even in high-stakes, public settings like final critiques, did not significantly detract from their learning. (Only 28.1 percent indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the emotions that occur during a final critique interfere with their learning, which was the highest response for the five feedback settings covered in our study.) Next, we found that students scored one of the formative feedback settings, the desk or working critique, both as the most emotionally “comfortable” and as the most effective learning experience of the five settings in the study. A final key finding was the strong disparity in student perceptions of the value of a different type of formative assessment: peer review. Students valued peer review in their design classes very highly, even higher than feedback from their design instructors (92.5 percent of student respondents classified peer feedback in design as “helpful” or “very helpful,” versus a 90 percent response for feedback from their design instructors), while their responses for peer feedback in writing classes were much less positive (only 39.7 percent found it “helpful” or “very helpful”).

This last statistic, while not necessarily surprising, certainly alarmed us, given that we and many of our colleagues teaching general education courses that involve writing had struggled to implement effective peer review activities. In particular, we were struck by the results from the second question on the survey, which asked students to rate the effectiveness of each feedback setting in terms of their learning experience. Students perceived the preliminary critique setting to be the most effective learning experience, with 92.8 percent of students rating it as “Helpful” or “Very Helpful.” They gave a lower rating to final critiques, with 83.1 percent calling them “Helpful” or “Very Helpful.” Peer reviews in writing classes received the lowest ratings, with only 43.7 percent rating them as helpful. In fact, students rated the educational effectiveness of peer reviews in general education writing classes significantly lower than any other feedback type in the study. Without prompting, some students addressed the learning gap between critiques in design and peer reviews in writing classes:

Critiques are a very important part of design (both from peers and instructors). I feel like I learn a lot in design from people whose opinion I value. But in writ-

ing classes I tend to only take the opinion of the professor seriously because I just don't get to know the students very well and some of them just seem like idiots whose opinion I couldn't care less about, that is if they even offer up an opinion at all (student survey response).

In this sample response, the student is identifying several issues that seem to undermine the perceived helpfulness of peer reviews in writing courses. In reading and listening to such student comments, we began to see the following topics emerging that might help explain some of the perceptions many students have regarding peer review.

**Student Engagement:** Many student designers see themselves as designers and make a clear commitment to their pursuit of that profession. Though faculty in design and general education settings strongly encourage students to see writing as an integral part of design, the fact remains that many students often do not put much time and effort into their writing. One student interviewed explained, "When we are gearing everything toward our design projects, sometimes our writing in other classes can slip behind, in importance, so there's definitely been many times while going into a peer review and I'm, like, 'I can't believe I wrote this.'" Such comments came up frequently, and even beyond the context of our study, students often admit to relatively low levels of engagement as writers and as peer responders to writing. In such instances, the expectations of the usefulness of the peer review exercise are low. Everyone in our discussions also acknowledged what could be called the degrees of separation between a student's investment in her own work and the relative level of investment in the response offered by her faculty and peers. One interviewee, for example, offered:

The other student who reads your work, they give you like a little bit of criticism to it, or tell you how you should improve it, but, really, I think they're more worried about their own paper than yours, so, they're looking more towards, you know, 'I'm really not going to help you out,' sort of, so ... you kind of like, take it with a grain of salt.

Students' assessments about their own writing abilities seemed to have some influence on how seriously they would take response, including response from peers. For example, one student interviewed said, "I guess I don't really get that stressed about them, or feel uncomfortable. I'm very private with my work. When I write, it's hard for me to let it go and have somebody criticize it, but peer reviews are never really that hard." In many cases, however, the degree of seriousness seemed to depend more on

poor experiences with peer responders, as illustrated in this example from an interviewee who strongly voiced her perspective on peer feedback:

I think it's unhelpful, to the very most extreme. I cannot stand peer reviews for writing. It just bothers me so much ... I feel that the students do not know your writing style ... they're kind of just skimming through your paper and not really reading what you're trying to portray in your writing and so they don't really care what's going on and they're giving you feedback that's not really helping you towards the final stage of it.

It is worth noting that many of these students had experienced carefully structured peer writing activities by conscientious faculty familiar with literature on integrating peer review activities into their writing pedagogy. The resistance to peer review in writing, it seems, may have little to do with faculty preparedness or student misunderstanding of the intended purposes of the peer review. In some instances, we even learned that students become annoyed by student responders who are "overly" engaged because the response embarrasses the writer who did not put that much work into the writing to warrant such careful reading and commentary. We also had instances where students complained that their peers cared too much or were excessive in their attention to detail.

***Experience/expertise of peers:*** We learned from students that they valued peer response and other forms of feedback in design settings, in part, because their faculty and peers were experienced both with design and the discourse of design critiques. In writing courses, on the other hand, they could not identify or claim a similar level of experience, either in composing their own work or in responding to others' writing. One survey respondent opined, "Peer editing is usually unhelpful because I either already know what needs to be changed or the person editing lacks the ability to write well and therefore cannot edit my paper well." Other students commented on concerns about the competency of their peers. One person interviewed explained, "Where I have friends [in design] who are competent enough to analyze and evaluate my work, peers in my writing classes tend to be apathetic and ancillary to my needs." Another student stated that peer reviews provide no help "unless the reviewer is a genius."

***Familiarity, comfort, and trust in others:*** If those offering feedback were not interested in the topic and/or demonstrating an ethic of care for the student presenting her work, it seemed difficult for that student to take the feedback seriously. Investment in all its permutations can have much to do with students' comfort levels with one another. Our

work with those in the design crits confirmed that investment and comfort can be mutually exclusive or integrally connected, especially depending on whether students feel insulted or complimented by the feedback and whether they perceive they are receiving an honest or sugar-coated response. To most students we interviewed, emotions matter and respect is required. Similarly, the degrees of comfort in a current feedback setting often have much to do with historical precedents established by and among the people giving and receiving response. In addition, students don't have the same level of familiarity and comfort with the peers in their general education writing classes that they do with the peers in their design studios. The design response culture simply has much more time to develop because of the long hours students spend working together on projects in design studios.

***Depth and disciplinary arena of response:*** Peer review troubled many students because they had not received feedback that they perceived to be substantive. For example, in one of the interviews, a student asserted that peer review in writing is helpful for errors in mechanics and usage and other grammatical features, but not for "the substance of the paper." She continued: "I feel like the other students are just as confused and worried about their paper as yours, and I feel, when I grade someone's paper ... I don't know all the facts about what they're doing ... I don't feel confident in grading it myself, so I usually don't say as much as I'd like to say." The terminology students used, such as "grading" or "editing," suggests the multiple ways they interpreted the role of peer responder. The writing faculty we interviewed, and others with whom we spoke informally, all insist that they teach a vocabulary of response that intentionally resists such language, preferring labels such as "peer reviewer" or "reader" or "responder." Regardless of the terms employed, though, we learned that students are very often concerned that the level of feedback on written work is superficial or low. They want more critical (but humane) feedback; they don't want their time wasted. Feedback should be sensitive to context as well as to content, and according to several students interviewed, comprehensive response is the ideal. Some students, though, just prefer feedback from their professors when it comes to writing. For instance, one student claimed that design is "a completely different thing than writing," and that though peers are "very helpful" in the design process, "my professor is more helpful in the writing process."

***Comparisons and strength in community:*** Not all of the students were uniformly negative about or disinterested in peer review in writing courses. One student noted:

I think that peer review is interesting, though, because you get to see ... how other people write, and then I have something that I'm comparing myself to



rather than just like a shot-in-the-dark, ‘Am I getting better?’ I can be, like, ‘Oh, well look at how this person opened the paper up, rather than ‘I have no idea how to open this paper up,’ so it’s kind of like helps set a standard and then also just opening up to what else is there.

Another student remarked that though the response from peers is “not helpful,” he appreciated “just being able to see other people’s work.” A third student commented, “I don’t like feeling isolated when I do work, so other people’s feedback goes miles and miles in telling me that what I’m doing is right at least for one person.”

*Time—and time together:* Despite the occasionally positive commentary from students, however, we believe that the themes emerging from the categories above help explain why peer reviews in writing received the lowest emotional interference rating, 6.2 percent. It was profound to see that when students were asked to consider the helpfulness of feedback from peers and instructors in design courses and writing courses, the results for peer review in writing were again relatively low, as only 39.7 percent of students found such activities helpful or very helpful as opposed to 92.5 percent of students finding peer review in design courses helpful or very helpful. The question of time for students to think and to respond together seems an important one, as well. Addressing this theme directly, one student hints at the possible benefits of peer review in writing even while presenting a significant caveat: “If you have enough time ... and if you’re able to ask, you know, a specific question like, ‘Help me on this problem that I’m having with my paper,’ and the person’s able to help you because the teacher gives you enough time, then, yes, I think it can be helpful. But in general, you don’t care that much, and you don’t have enough time.”

Our particular attention to peer review raised a variety of questions about practices common among faculty (including us) who teach writing across the curriculum. We learned that, in addition to the sub-categories listed above and exemplified through student comments, a host of other variables exist within a single class activity such as peer review. We had known about the importance of setting the stage for response activities, but through this research project, we became acutely aware of the potential value of continuing to consider student perceptions, to promote conversations about the amount of time it can take to not only write but also respond. So much revolves around how seriously the faculty, peers, and writers take the activity, and how well they can offer rhetorically sensitive, but constructive criticism that is intentional as opposed to scattered or irrelevant. Further, though we certainly still see the value in having students read resources on effective peer reviewing,<sup>vi</sup> we have become more skepti-

cal about the prospects that such readings will have much positive effect for writer or reviewer if the response culture does not engage students and if faculty do not provide a setting that affords adequate time on task. And while we see great potential in the use of digital learning spaces to promote effective peer review, our conversations with students suggest that the same general questions of engagement remain.

### **Response Cultures Inquiry as Strategy for WAC Consulting**

In general, the student responses to our study gave us some insights into the factors that might account for the perceived greater effectiveness of the response cultures in their design classes, which in turn suggest the potential value of developing strategies to apply the power of these practices to WAC, WID, and other contexts across the curriculum in which response to writing plays a significant role. As we learn more from our faculty as well as student colleagues, we will continue to refine our WAC consulting with faculty, especially since this study has caused us to seriously reconsider prior assumptions about students' perceptions of peer review involving writing. In addition to what we learned about feedback practices and response cultures at our university, there were other benefits to this project that we hadn't fully expected. Since we began our comparative project with a genuine curiosity about how feedback worked in different academic settings, we were able to have an open and mutually respectful dialogue with students and our faculty colleagues about a topic that is central to all of our professional lives and to the mission of WAC itself: student learning. Not only did the process of collecting our data strengthen WAC relationships across campus, but when the study was completed, we had a vehicle for extending the dialogue about feedback even further. As noted above, we were particularly influenced by the student perceptions about peer review in writing courses, and so we will continue to address that topic with our colleagues in general education courses, but also in other WAC and WID contexts. But really, we are interested in response in all its permutations because, as Nancy Sommers aptly notes in "Across the Drafts," faculty "feel a weighty responsibility when we respond to our students' words, knowing that we, too, have received comments that have given us hope—and sometimes made us despair—in our abilities as writers" (248). Such a sentiment resonates with us and accounts to some degree for our motivation to continue collaborating with our faculty and student colleagues.

Because we had filmed our interviews with students and faculty members, we were able to assemble some of the key moments into a 20-minute clip that we showed as part of a faculty research colloquium series. The turnout for this event was quite large, since the presentation focused on design critiques and so many of our faculty

work in design disciplines; as a result, we had a large audience and the video stimulated a lively discussion of feedback practices. This combination of factors created one of the most inclusive discussions of teaching and learning that our university had seen in quite some time. Though much of the data from our research project was interesting to us in the context of our own institution, the cross-disciplinary faculty dialogue about response that resulted when we shared our findings seemed even more valuable. The faculty response to this event, and the similar experience we had at another local university when we were invited to present our findings at a faculty workshop there, convinced us that the interdisciplinary examination of response cultures can serve as a fruitful strategy for strengthening WAC work. Almost any college or university hosts a diverse ecosystem of response cultures, so the possibilities for learning about and from different response processes seem virtually endless. Examples could include the social dynamics of a Fine Arts studio where students are critiquing a senior's pottery collection, or the potential advantages and disadvantages of a final jury in which Music faculty are providing criticism from behind a curtain to members of a student jazz combo on stage.

Once the WAC director or other facilitator has identified or recruited faculty with an interest in exploring these settings, they could begin collaborating on a procedure for comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing their findings about the feedback practices in their respective disciplines. Faculty could also develop an inquiry process to help them compare, for example, the response cultures of a creative writing workshop, a mock court class, and a physics lab. As in our initial study, the resulting inquiry could involve the collection of data from the relevant students and faculty through surveys, observations, and/or focus group interviews. Possible avenues of research could include the emotional effects of the given response cultures; the timing, format, sources and effectiveness of formative feedback versus summative assessment; and the perceived pedagogical effectiveness of various response practices. Another fruitful component of a response cultures inquiry might be a focus on the concept of signature pedagogies as a framework for understanding the role of a given set of feedback practices.

Our experiences have convinced us that the study of local practices, and sharing the results of those studies, is highly effective for engaging faculty from across the institution in meaningful examinations of the roles of feedback in student learning. During the period of our study, we bolstered our WAC library with helpful publications such as Richard Straub's *The Practice of Response: Strategies for Commenting on Student Writing* and Edward White's *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating: A Writing Teacher's Guide*. Selected faculty learned of the interesting longitudinal work on

response led by Nancy Sommers at Harvard and viewed clips from *Across the Drafts: Students and Teachers Talk about Feedback*. We also compiled articles on response from a wide variety of scholars interested in a vast range of issues concerning feedback. As noted earlier, reading and recommending such research from WAC and writing studies assisted us in realizing the complexities of responding to writing. Despite the fact that an immense and extremely helpful body of literature on feedback exists, we still see the need for additional means that will welcome faculty into discussions about the topic. The response cultures inquiry, in other words, qualifies for us as a low-threshold approach in the service of that goal. It is, at base level, simply a procedure co-designed by faculty to generate ideas and questions regarding feedback settings. For example, we anticipate continuing to follow up with faculty in design, to learn more about their approaches to giving—and to facilitating—response in their respective settings. In that process, we will refine our questions, but the following list provides us with a starting point:

- What are some of your primary goals for giving feedback?
- In what other settings do you give feedback (e.g., digital settings, office hours, the phone)?
- To what degree, if any, does your approach to giving feedback depend on the student?
- What are the roles of the student (i.e., peer feedback) in the formative and summative settings for response?
- How did you come to give feedback as you do (e.g., through formal training, assimilation in your response culture, from another discipline, etc.)?
- Do you discuss how to give feedback with your students and/or colleagues? If so, how?
- How, if at all, does awareness of your own emotions affect the feedback you give and the ways in which you give it?

Based on experiences through the Integrative Learning Project and our later project with design students and faculty, we firmly believe that WAC and writing studies scholarship could be enriched if WAC consultants and their colleagues directed even more attention to understanding the dynamics and complexity of feedback. Scholars with an interest in exploring response cultures—including and perhaps even particularly those settings that do not involve writing—could expand WAC's field of vision. New ideas for promoting healthy, productive, intellectually stimulating response cultures could come from unanticipated corners of campus and the spaces of digital

learning environments.<sup>vii</sup> Throughout WAC's history, faculty from across the disciplines have benefitted from the contributions of WAC consultants sharing insights about writing and genre studies.<sup>viii</sup> What reciprocal gains might be awaiting those consultants willing to study response through an even broader lens, using a collaborative approach and the idea of a response culture inquiry? In our case, thinking about response cultures has helped us learn more about response, a topic we have all too often witnessed as a source of frustration for faculty and students. Response matters, and continuing to develop our initial inquiry has opened our minds to the array of variables in play when people give, receive, and study feedback across the curriculum.

## WORKS CITED

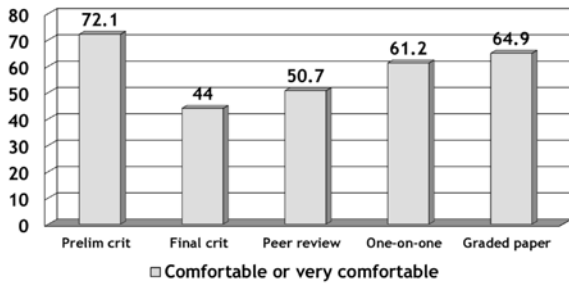
---

- Across the Drafts: Students and Teachers Talk About Feedback*. Dir. Nancy Sommers. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Expository Writing Program, 2005. DVD.
- Dannels, Deanna P., and Amy L. Housley Gaffney. "Beyond Content, Deeper than Delivery: What Critique Feedback Reveals about Communication Expectations in Design Education." *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. 2.2 (2008): 1–16. Web. 17 Oct. 2009.
- Dannels, Deanna P. "Performing Tribal Rituals: A Genre Analysis of 'Crits' in Design Studios." *Communication Education* 54.2 (2005): 136–160. Print.
- Haswell, Richard. "The Complexities of Responding to Student Writing; or, Looking for Shortcuts via the Road of Excess." *Across the Disciplines* (2006): N. pag. Web. 13 Nov. 2006.
- Shulman, Lee S. "Signature Pedagogies in the Professions." *Daedalus* 134.3 (2005): 52–59. Web. 16 Oct. 2009.
- Sommers, Nancy. "Across the Drafts." *College Composition and Communication* 58.2 (2006): 248–257. Print.
- Straub, Richard. *The Practice of Response: Strategies for Commenting on Student Writing*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2000. Print.
- Ticke, Lynne. "Opening Dialogue: Students Respond to Teacher Comments in a Psychology Classroom." *The WAC Journal* 14 (2003): 19–35. Print.
- White, Edward M. *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating: A Writing Teacher's Guide*. 4th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. Print.

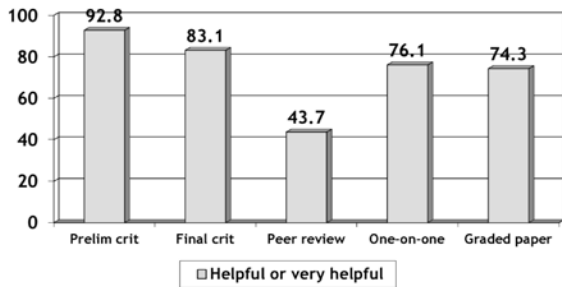
**APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS**

---

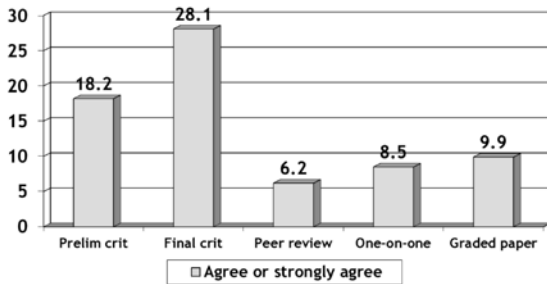
Survey question 1: “During a [feedback setting], I usually feel....” (responses in percentages, 373 total replies)



Survey question 2: “As a learning experience, a [feedback setting] is usually ...” (responses in percentages, 373 total replies)



Survey question 3: “The emotional effects of a [feedback setting] sometimes interfere with my learning.” (responses in percentages, 373 total replies)



## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>i</sup> Just drawing from titles of publications alone can result in a daunting but exciting list of sub-topics that can be applied to any consideration of “feedback” or “response.” Consider the following list of topics taken from the extensive References section of Haswell’s essay: ways of knowing, writing across the curriculum, rubrics and other evaluative criteria, the politics of response, self and peer review, TESOL, the ecology of response, studies of error and its gravity, automated text checkers and scorers, amounts and kinds of marking, protocol analysis, writing centers and tutor feedback, unconventional readings of student writing, judgmental and nonjudgmental responses, encountering and interpreting student texts, writing and relative familiarity with audience, hedging strategies, reliability and validity of ratings on student writing, how students read, responding to feedback, listening to students, negotiating meanings, writing and human dignity, writing in the disciplines, technical communication, writing to learn, response groups, educating teaching assistants to respond, cross-curricular writing instruction, hidden agendas in commenting, response as an academic conversation, the “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition,” and even repetitive strain.

<sup>ii</sup> For information on the Opportunities to Connect grant, visit [gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/ilp](http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/ilp).

<sup>iii</sup> For more discussion of critiques in design, consult Deanna Dannels et al.’s “Beyond Content, Deeper than Delivery ...” and Dannels’s “Performing Tribal Rituals.”

<sup>iv</sup> We discussed at length how to refer to the writing and to the design settings addressed in this article. Referencing them as just two disciplines is problematic because the writing course is a general education selection, not a discipline in the way design could be construed as one, or even as some scholars would categorize, say, composition courses, or writing-in-the-disciplines offerings. Design is often construed as a discipline with sub-fields, but since we worked with architecture, fashion design, and industrial design, specifically, for the purposes of our research project and this article, we decided to group all three design professions (but not others) and refer to them as a singular discipline. This decision was made with the understanding that our divisions and nomenclature are to some degree arbitrary and that alternative approaches could have worked as well or better. For future work on response cultures, we would turn more attention to the challenges and opportunities associated with such confluences of terminology.

<sup>v</sup> Several faculty colleagues particularly helpful throughout this project were promised that we would mention them by name: Clara Henry, Tod Corlett, Valerie Hanson, and Susan Frostèn.

<sup>vi</sup> Faculty might wish to provide students with access to resources such as Richard Straub’s “Responding—Really Responding—to Other Students’ Writing,” but if our experience with students is any indication, it could be quite illuminating to ask students to articulate their preferences for giving and receiving response in peer response activities within writing courses.

<sup>vii</sup> We see a rich depth and breadth of WAC collaborations and thus an increase in resources for those seeking thoughtful approaches to response. One notable example is the Research Exchange on the WAC Clearinghouse Web site [wac.colostate.edu/research](http://wac.colostate.edu/research). Within the developing dialogue across institutions, organizations, communities, and countries, the study of response will continue to grow in size and complexity. We find this an extremely encouraging prospect for WAC advocates and students.

<sup>viii</sup> The *Perspectives in Writing* series on the WAC Clearinghouse [wac.colostate.edu](http://wac.colostate.edu) includes detailed treatment of activity studies and genre studies as applied to a range of scenes for writing and pedagogy.