
Editor's Introduction

This is the fourth volume of the Plymouth State College *Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum*.

As we welcome nine writers to this issue of the *Journal*, we note the steady interest in WAC at PSC. When Mary-Lou Hinman retired after four years as head of WAC, she was succeeded for an interim year by Sally Boland, who now will be succeeded by Robert Miller.

Under Mary-Lou's extremely capable leadership, the Task Force saw WAC through its start-up and building phases into maintenance of a maturing program.

During the year that she has headed the Task Force, Sally Boland not only maintained the impetus created by the past four years of work but also supported critical analysis of the program and initiated several new programs.

We look forward now to three years under the able leadership of Robert Miller. The College has been fortunate in the leaders it has had.

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Contributions to this edition of the *Journal* come from several quarters: two principal administrators, a librarian, a staff member of the Reading/Writing Center, a member of the Education Department, one from Natural Science, and four from English. Perhaps of the most interest to all of us is the student-generated report. These articles reflect the continued widespread and expanding interest in a maturing program.

Here's what you will find in the pages of this edition:

The idea that writing is a source of personal power comes as no surprise to college teachers, but to hear the idea so knowledgeably discussed by the President of the College is heartening. President (and now Chancellor-elect) William Farrell shows how writing is used in an organization. Those who write well exercise a degree of power not shared by those who don't.

As several of us have noted, WAC programs have from the start provided a much-needed forum for professional interaction among faculty. As Theo J. Kalikow, Dean of the College, points out, WAC programs have stimulated discussions of teaching and learning that were practically unheard of half a decade ago. In addition to its many other functions, WAC at PSC has been a faculty support group.

What ideas do faculty at PSC share about standards for writing? What style of writing do we expect students to use? Roy Andrews has surveyed twenty-seven faculty members from various disciplines to raise this question: should students master the traditional language of the discipline, or should they learn to express themselves in natural language?

A couple of years ago, after working with Robert Fitzpatrick of the Lamson Library staff on an assignment for Composition, I sent him a copy of a student research paper. Since the paper was the joint product of our efforts with the student, this seemed a natural thing for me to do, and I was surprised that I hadn't thought of it before. *I* was surprised? So was Bob. He told me that was the first time any instructor had showed him student writing that had issued from his labor. His presentation in this issue of the journal explains how faculty and librarians can more fruitfully collaborate to design effective library research assignments.

A perennial problem for instructors is how to write examination questions that really engage students. Unimaginative questions simply require memory and regurgitation. Walter Tatara shows how to write examination questions that are at once traditional and innovative and that require students to think creatively and apply their knowledge.

There's one thing we'd like to know about: how successful has our

WAC program been? To find out what students thought of the program, Dennise Bartelo and Mary-Lou Hinman teamed up to teach a specially-designed Integrative course and oversaw student researchers. What they found out, displayed here in an authentic report of student voices, is both heartening and chastening. It becomes clear that we need to listen more to such student voices. That means finding ways to encourage them to speak up.

Since about a decade ago when *Time* magazine showed a picture of Jimmy Carter writing his memoirs on a computer, word processors have increasingly become the preferred instrument for writers. Just last year, after years of planning, the English Department installed a cluster of word processors for use in teaching Composition for first-year students. Russell Lord, one of the first to try out the new machines, describes his successes and problems.

College teachers who limit student writing to standard essay examinations and research papers may overlook the possibilities of having students write a newsletter. While fulfilling the objectives of the traditional writing assignments, a newsletter helps students think more consciously about audience, format, and production processes. Larry Spencer shows how he became an instant editor-in-chief and helped his students learn material at the same time they communicated it to others.

Those of us who have encouraged peer review and collaborative learning have run into problems getting students to work productively in small groups. Meg Peterson-González has devised a method to encourage peer review of writing, cross-fertilization of learning, and development of community. It's simple, and it works. I know. I've tried it.

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