

Forum

Faculty development in composition

As a result of the current fiscal crunch in higher education, declining enrollment in English literature courses, and lack of writing ability among undergraduates generally, senior faculty in many institutions have been forced recently to return to teaching composition. This fact has made it necessary for WPAs and English department chairs to find ways to help these highly trained faculty, deeply committed in other areas of the profession, to undertake this new or renewed responsibility.

Harvey Wiener, President of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, invited several experienced WPAs and department chairs to address this problem at WPA-sponsored sessions during the 1979 MLA convention in San Francisco and the 1980 CCCC convention in Washington. WPA would like to be able to publish every one of these fine contributions. Space limitations permit us, however, to publish only two papers in full and only the most salient portions of others. We are most grateful to those whose work we have had to excerpt in this way for allowing us to share their ideas with our readers in abbreviated form.

I. Faculty indifference to writing: A pessimistic view *Richard Marius*

I have been asked to make a few remarks on enlisting the aid of senior faculty in teaching writing. I want to begin with the pessimistic observation that getting senior faculty to teach writing is almost impossible.

We can all point to exceptions, in both individuals and institutions. The University of Illinois, I believe, requires that every senior faculty member in the English department teach one course in composition at least every four years. Louis Martz, one of Yale's most distinguished scholars, was the chief lecturer in Yale's popular writing course, *Daily Themes*, in 1980. At Maryland, every department in the college of liberal arts must furnish someone to teach composition each term or else supply from the department budget a sum that will pay someone else to do the job—a kind of academic bounty system. And we can all mention

this or that important individual exception, the man or woman who will insist that students write well and will make an effort to see that they do.

But, for the most part, I believe *we* face a nearly unbroken wall of indifference on the part of senior faculty to the notion that they have any responsibility at all to help students write well. They would much rather *curse* the dark than light a candle.

My own entry into this field came through the back door—one might even say the basement door. It taught me a lot about the reaction of colleagues to the teaching of writing. I feel quite tolerant about these reactions—tolerant and resigned.

I taught European history for 14 years at my undergraduate college, the University of *Tennessee*, Knoxville. There I became deeply concerned because my students could not write coherent papers. I wanted them to make arguments, to keep everything in their papers related to one theme, to make their last paragraph say something about the first without indulging in the useless pomposity of saying, "In conclusion I have proved that...." I wanted them to use the English language well, or at least to use it idiomatically, so the reader did not have to keep going over their prose to see what on earth it might mean.

I assigned term papers, and I spent a lot of time marking those papers to show the writers how to make better arguments, how to use the language more effectively, how to say what I thought they really wanted to say. But students who handed papers in at the end of the term seldom came by to pick them up. They were interested only in their grade. Once they knew that solemn fact, they were uninterested in anything else I had to say about their work, including anything I had to say about how they wrote the English language.

I was doubtful about the wisdom of midterm exams and finals. I did not believe students remembered much about an exam after it was over. So, in addition to writing well, my students, I thought, should carry something lasting with them out of the course. As it was, I thought the things they remembered best were the humorous anecdotes I told to illustrate some point. They seldom remembered the point itself. I thought they might remember the subject of an eight-page paper they had spent two weeks writing.

So, about 1971, I got rid of the midterm and final, those hallowed old institutions without which universities are supposed to collapse and civilizations decay. I got rid of the long term paper, the pillar of scholarship and discipline in academe. Instead of these, I assigned an eight-page paper every two weeks in my course in the history of thought from Machiavelli to Montaigne. I told my students that they could never tell me, "I know it, but I just can't write it." I said a thousand times, "If you can't write it, you don't really know it." Students said to me in great earnestness, pointing at some gibberish on their papers, "But what I mean is....," and I said, "Mr. Beanblossom, if you have to tell me what you mean, you have not succeeded in this paper." I recall the anguished recognition of one student who cried out one day in the midst of discussion, "I thought this was a history course, and it isn't. It's a course *on rhetoric!*" He spoke in the tone of one *who* had just discovered a cockroach in his soup. In fact it was a history course, but it was also a course in thinking, and thinking is inseparable from rhetoric in any of the liberal arts.

Now, it is not my purpose to relive those years and to discuss what I learned

about teaching writing. I am-like all of you-ready to discuss these matters at the drop of a semicolon, but this is not the time to preach to the converted. I might digress long enough to recall that my mother was a member of a religious sect with a number of unique and bizarre beliefs, and I recall how avidly the members of her little group got together to comfort each other for the indifference of the world and to give testimony about their own steadfast devotion in the midst of persecution. Now when writing teachers get together I seem to hear the ghost of that old spirit of my mother's sect stirring through our talk.

I want only to report the reaction of my colleagues to my own strange behavior. My department chair caught a bad case of the glooms because enrollment quickly dropped in my class from around 50 students to 18. We got money from the state according to the number of credit hours we produced, and department chairs have to be concerned about such things. I hasten to add that within a couple of years my enrollment climbed back into the forties. A lot of engineering students and some from business administration and even some from education were willing to suffer Machiavelli to Montaigne so they could learn to write a coherent essay.

I must again digress to say that it is one of the highest academic ironies that students today yearn to learn how to write well and that senior faculty do not want to teach them. My department chair never gave me a word of encouragement for teaching writing. He never inquired into my methods or my philosophy. He never made any remarks about the labor I expended in grading all those papers. He only expressed his fears about enrollment. Nor did any of my colleagues show any interest in what I was doing. I do not blame them for their attitude. Most of them were good and true, hardworking and devoted. I only note the symbolic importance of their indifference to the teaching of writing, for it is an attitude shared by most senior faculty members in all departments in all universities.

I was somewhat surprised by the indifference of our own English Department at Tennessee. I ran my advanced course as a writing course for seven years. With great effort, I converted my freshman history survey into a similar course. Students liked it, though they worked very hard. Yet no one in our English Department ever asked me a single question about what I was doing or what I was learning. When I came to Harvard to direct the Expository Writing Program, the English Department at Tennessee—a distinguished department, I might add—had me down to lecture on what I was doing. I was glad to go back to Tennessee at the department's expense. Tennessee is my home, and I have always loved my state and my alma mater. But I did comment on the irony of the invitation. At any time during the previous seven years I could have descended five floors in the elevator and given the same lecture that I was giving them at the cost of an airline ticket and honorarium, and I would have done it for nothing. But nobody asked.

Why are senior faculty so indifferent to our task? For one reason, they are not rewarded for it. Teaching students to write well does not bring the public acclaim that is stirred by the brilliant lecture. It brings nothing like the distinction of publishing the great book, though I want to make another digression to say that writing teachers should themselves regularly publish and that their publications should not all be about teaching writing.

We also need to look at an even more obvious reason for the reluctance of

senior faculty to undertake our task. Most academics in this country write abominably, and they could not teach writing if they tried. I don't know if you have noticed, but articles in *PMLA* are seldom anything one reads for pleasure, I seldom find in any of them a phrase I want to repeat to my friends or even a phrase I can remember. Yet these articles represent—we must all agree—the best in our profession.

We have to keep their inability to write in mind when we talk about getting senior faculty involved in the teaching of writing. Maybe we don't want them. We may be summoning up the captain of the Titanic to direct our naval operations. At least we ought not assume unquestioningly that senior faculty members are necessarily good writing teachers just because they are senior faculty members.

We must also deal with another problem that strikes me as more difficult than we have thought. Teaching writing involves the teacher with the student in ways that are not superficial. Writing is an intimate act, and when we criticize people for their intimate acts, they do not respond cheerfully. One of the hardest tasks any teacher must perform is to put a grade on a piece of writing. I think writing should be graded and graded rigorously. But I also think grades should be justified to students. That is a time-consuming and emotionally wearing business, one that senior faculty members do not like to undertake. Often, senior faculty members in such a situation must make a psychological leap that most older teachers find uncomfortable.

The reason for this discomfort may be that, if you will pardon the cliché, we continue to endure today an abysmal division between the generations. The old and the young are more divided than they ever have been, and one ancient pattern has been turned upside down. For centuries the young have aspired to be like the old. It was not so very long ago that the ideal man was middle-aged and plump—his corpulence showing something of his achievement in the world, an achievement the young wanted to emulate. But now the old aspire to be like the young. Age, even more than death, has become the great enemy of our souls, the reality we would all most like to translate into illusion.

This antipathy to age militates against writing. Writing is one of the traditional arts. It always represents rules, discipline, and tradition. And one reason senior faculty members have trouble when they teach writing is that they feel threatened when they try to pass on rules to the young. The free spirit of the young makes people past forty feel uncomfortable when they seek to hand on the tradition, for tradition is always an obstacle to some kinds of freedom. It is always much easier for a senior professor to do research, which is often a kind of solitary looking in a mirror, a satisfying form of narcissism, than it is to descend into the common street to give people direction.

In colleges of any size, the division between the old and the young is made still more profound by the insertion of the teaching assistant between students and the teacher in charge of the course. Teaching assistants lead the discussions, often make up the exams, and nearly always grade the papers. Senior faculty members are left to look at students from a comfortable distance—much like visitors to a zoo eyeing the tigers. But no one ever taught writing from a distance.

So there you have my pessimistic appraisal of our subject. Is there anything we can do? Let me rephrase the problem just a bit and suggest a direction. The problem is really this: How do we get a whole institution, not just the English

composition teachers, to become engaged in the teaching of writing?

Obviously, we should seek qualified senior *faculty* members to help us. When we know we have good writers among the senior faculty, we should do our best to persuade them to convey something of their craft to *students*. We need to persuade senior faculty members to assign more writing to their students. We should do all we can to make the multiple-choice exam contemptible. And we should lobby continually against the old heresy that style is cosmetic and not truly related to substance. Ever on our lips should be the gospel that good writing is good thinking and that bad writing is bad thinking. Perhaps my religious metaphor should be extended; we might need some training in the uses of religion—or psychology—to help us become expert in inducing guilt.

I have one other suggestion that may offset the fundamental fact of our times, that senior faculty members are not going to help us very much. My own scheme at Harvard is to try to get a hold on the young teaching assistants and teaching fellows in courses throughout the college. I am trying to get Harvard's administration to let me and others in our program train all teaching assistants in courses offered in our core curriculum. I want to show them how to look at a paper to see if it is written well, and I want to persuade them that a mere listing of nouns on the subject being discussed is not in itself proof that the student throwing those nouns into a paper really knows the material. I want to get these young teaching assistants to have a certain confidence in their own judgement. For my feeling is that when readers cannot understand what a writer is saying, the writer usually does not know what he or she has tried to say. Young section leaders, insecure in their own judgements especially among very bright undergraduates, are likely to keep looking at a paper until they find some truth in it. But such a search shows, to my mind at least, that the paper has already failed in a fundamental way.

So here is the end of my tale. The sum of my feeling about our prospects is that no sudden revolution is going to change things, and we are not going to be saved by gimmicks. We have a long, hard road to walk, and I do not see many senior faculty members up there with their hands outstretched to help us. But perhaps if we start inculcating our ideals in the young teachers who will be the profession of tomorrow, with the help of administrations that are usually much more willing to change than are senior faculty members, we may have just a chance to avoid discussing this same problem under similar conditions 20 years from now.

II. Faculty development through professional collaboration

Robert Lyons

When we consider the issue of how to introduce or reintroduce experienced teachers of literature to composition, we can usefully begin by comparing their particular situation with that of other groups new to this kind of teaching. I would like quickly to survey the types of faculty now commonly trained to teach composition in our colleges and the ways that have been established for training them. These will be very broad categories and, I am sure, familiar ones.

The first category of people we find ourselves training includes graduate students and other young and inexperienced teachers, new not only to teaching composition but to any classroom teaching at all. Most commonly, these new teachers attend a seminar—the usual setting in graduate education. In more fortunate cases, they are given some kind of concurrent experience teaching writing as a tutor, as a staff member in a language lab or writing center, or as a classroom teacher in the college's composition program.

A second group consists of college teachers of all ranks and from all departments who are asked to participate in programs designed to make them more aware of the need to emphasize writing in their own discipline. Such a training program is part of a by now well-publicized effort to teach writing throughout the college curriculum. The program often involves a committee with representatives from many disciplines who will return to their departments and proselytize their colleagues in an enlightened way to pay greater attention to writing. To guide the faculty, the committee often prepares a handbook or other sample materials designed for particular disciplines. Alternatively, some colleges offer more direct instruction, gathering members of the faculty for several days or even weeks in workshops on composition, planned and presented by the English Department or by some outside authority in the field of composition.

In a third group are senior, tenured members of departments other than English whose courses have been canceled due to low enrollments and who are reassigned to teaching writing. The most common shift of this kind today involves teachers of foreign languages, but they are by no means the only faculty members who discover they have, with very little warning, been impressed into a new career. The college usually offers some kind of intensive training for such teachers. They may work closely with one or two members of the regular composition staff or, in the best of circumstances, they may be granted a semester of released time to participate in a formal retraining program before taking on new teaching duties.

The fourth and final group I will mention are teachers of English, senior members of the department who have not taught writing for a number of years. These faculty members are now teaching composition because shrinking budgets and low enrollments have reduced both the staff and the number of electives in the English Department or because the college has mandated an expanded writing requirement. I am particularly familiar with this group, since my own department at Queens College includes many able teachers of literature who have only recently had to resume teaching in the composition program. These teachers would understandably prefer to teach their specialties, but they generally accept the composition assignment as a professional responsibility, even if they approach it with some uncertainty and reluctance.

There has been, to date, no program in my department, however, to retrain such teachers. In fact, there have been few systematic efforts on the college level specifically designed to help experienced English teachers returning to composition. Why, we may reasonably ask, is this most important group not being served by the resources devoted to training other groups of composition teachers?

Why retraining is difficult to accomplish. The reason this important group remains neglected seems to be that the very notion of retraining senior members of the faculty provokes a good deal of personal and professional discomfort. If we think about the different situations in which the four groups of teachers I have listed find themselves, we may gain a clearer understanding of why this is the case. Teachers in all the other groups mentioned have had no experience in teaching writing. They may be eager or hesitant, but they all recognize the usefulness of some systematic preparation for such teaching. The graduate student is used to being a learner, subordinated to many mentors. Indeed, graduate students often welcome training in teaching writing because, especially when practical experience is involved, it often gives them more autonomy than most other graduate courses provide. History or psychology teachers who participate in a writing-across-the-curriculum project are really part of a collaborative venture. They exchange their knowledge of the forms of discourse particularly important in their disciplines for some suggestions about effective strategies to teach those forms. In addition, they have the reassuring feeling that they are doing something beyond the usual academic requirements, making a distinct contribution to the improvement of written expression. Even the teacher reassigned to composition from another discipline has at least the support and sympathy of colleagues who recognize the difficulty of the adjustment.

But senior professors of English have none of these incentives or consolations. They have spent a good many of their early years in the profession teaching a good many sections of composition. They left such teaching not because they were doing it poorly but because it was a recognized stage of apprenticeship on the way to becoming a teacher and scholar of literature. The idea that teaching composition now requires retraining sounds patronizing or even insulting, for it suggests not only a return to junior status but also an implicit judgment about the work of earlier years. Why should experienced teachers of English need to be retrained to teach writing unless their teaching has been markedly unsatisfactory?

The reluctance of experienced English teachers to consent to retraining is also understandable when we consider the familiar justifications that English depart-

merits use to explain their monopoly control over writing courses and composition programs. English teachers are assumed to possess a special sensitivity to the nuances of the English language, to the shapes of English sentences, and to the formal arrangements of different modes of English discourse. The literature teacher simply attends to these subjects in a different way' in the composition class. And English teachers assume implicitly that anybody (that is, any English teacher) can teach composition. Because of these assumptions, senior professors who in recent years have been teaching literature exclusively do not feel that their work has taken them far from composition. They believe the attention they give to the uses of the written language in their literature classes keeps them reasonably close to the concerns of a composition teacher. Furthermore, literature teachers often feel they maintain their role as writing teachers in their elective courses by continuing to assign papers, never having given in to the flood of short-answer and multiple-choice forms that now make writing across the curriculum such an urgent academic issue. Not only do such professors think of themselves as writing teachers because of their years of apprenticeship, but also because they are still committed to standards of writing competence in their literature courses.

When senior professors contemplating retraining look around their own department and discuss their consternation with the people they have worked with for many years, their discontents will almost surely find a choral accompaniment. Commonly, the department's composition specialists (and perhaps even using the plural is an exaggeration) are among its junior members, fairly recently recruited to bring order and purpose to the writing program and show that the department was responsive to the college's concern for improved basic skills. Even when composition specialists do occupy a more prominent position, they are most assuredly a minority voice in a department whose faculty are primarily trained in and committed to literature. And finally, however persuasively composition teachers present their case, experienced professors are well aware that composition is a field in which debates about purposes and methods have been long and arduous and never convincingly resolved. They are likely to take comfort with their colleagues in the feeling that they have maintained standards, resisted compromise, and remained impervious to the latest popular panaceas.

I intend this overview of the situation of senior English professors to be sympathetic, not ironic. It seems to me that their circumstances—both internal and external—provide understandable reasons for them to be less than cooperative with plans to retrain them as teachers of writing. Retraining senior professors, as I have sketched it, is not a process that will get an enthusiastic response or will lead to the swift transformation of a composition program. The trainees do not feel they need a reeducation, the trainers are a vulnerable minority, and the usual occasions for training, the staff *meeting* or faculty workshop, do not serve the broader purpose of rethinking one's role as a composition teacher. Under these circumstances, the idea of retraining will have to be replaced by another conception, a special kind of collaborative effort, if we are to make any headway.

A program of professional collaboration. The initiative in establishing a cooperative effort must come from the English Department and its administrators. The department's goal, in fact, should not be retraining, but rather develop

ing among more teachers a serious professional interest in composition.

The department head can begin this effort by affirming that composition is an important concern for full-time faculty and that it will continue to be a regular teaching responsibility. Too often, English Department heads try to placate teachers by telling them that a composition course assignment is a stopgap measure to tide things over, thereby reinforcing the idea that the course should be recognized as an unwanted burden.

Second, the department head should point to the substantial evidence that most college freshmen are less skilled writers than their counterparts were a decade ago. I will not recount the familiar litany of reasons for this situation, but the fact that such a litany exists proves that writing problems are not confined to a small, identifiable group of underprepared students. The department head needs to emphasize that the inability to write well is now a widespread problem and therefore a major responsibility.

Third, the department head should remind teachers of literature courses that, although they may think they have already adjusted to teaching students with less developed writing abilities, their literature students have been a self-selected minority of the college population. Teaching a composition course will mean working with students who have very basic problems as writers and who do not consider the liberal arts as a significant part of their college education. For the most part, teachers in literature courses have had in the past a different kind of involvement with student writing. They have expected good writing, advocated it, and rewarded it. But they have not actually taught writing, except in so far as some comments in the margins of a completed essay might influence a student in writing a subsequent essay. Literature teachers, then, need to consider, in the light of a new situation, how writers can establish their skills or improve them. They need to determine where and how to intervene in helping poorly prepared writers develop.

A departmental statement of the kind I have just described, emphasizing both the importance of the task of teaching composition and the changed nature of the task, is a first step in engaging the attention of senior teachers. The purpose of gaining their attention is to secure agreement on one point: that today, students are entering college composition at a different level of preparedness than in the past. This agreement will justify the department in sponsoring a common effort by its senior faculty to review the teaching of composition. Such a review should follow whatever form collegial work in the department customarily takes. If most work is done through committees, then a committee of senior faculty should be established to consider the responsibilities of the composition teacher.

The faculty participants in the group obviously should not usurp any of the policy making functions of the writing program administrator. They should serve the department in an advisory role. To ensure some sense of purpose, the group should have an explicit goal, one determined by the needs of the department. All other things being equal, my own suggestion would be that the group prepare a model training program for new teachers or review an existing program. At the same time, the implicit aims of the group effort will be, first, to familiarize senior faculty involved in the group with recent publications in composition, and, second, to draw their attention to some student writing problems that they may not previously have addressed directly in the composition classroom. These two

activities, connecting the theoretical and the practical, will encourage senior faculty to reevaluate their approaches to teaching composition and to ask again Walker Gibson's useful question, "What do I mean by good writing, and what does that have to do with the young people in my class at 9:05 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday?"

The first activity of this faculty group, then, should be to read and discuss several books or articles that would together give them an overview of recent and impressive work being done in composition theory. The point to emphasize is that this material is not being "taught" to anyone, since all members of the group would be peers. Instead, the material would be jointly explored as a way of gaining insight about composition. Writers such as James Britton, Janet Emig, James Moffett, and Mina Shaughnessy would provide valuable perspectives on the teaching of writing. They would also demonstrate to faculty trained in literature that composition is not exclusively a matter of textbooks, but that thoughtful and well-written research, parallel to similar work in their own particular fields, already exists. Other work, like that of E.D. Hirsch Jr. or Wayne Booth, can demonstrate the connections between literary theory and composition theory and can also testify to the way someone trained in literature might expand his or her professional interests to include research relevant to the teaching of composition.

Any planning for this sort of endeavor should begin with Richard Larson's valuable article, "Resources for the Veteran Teacher, New to Composition." Larson has provided sensible criteria for choosing readings, and he has also compiled a short list of articles and books that he finds of particular value in introducing a faculty member to new directions in teaching composition. My own list would be a still shorter one, however, given the many demands on the time of senior faculty. The list would not, of course, be an honor roll of the four or five best statements about composition. It would reflect a range of concerns, including rhetorical theory, since that would already be a subject of interest to literature teachers. It would also include work on the composing process and on the way students develop their abilities as writers, as well as, when appropriate, more detailed discussion of the problems of seriously underprepared writers.* I would supplement my list not only with Larson's recommendations, but also with citations in *Teaching Composition*, a volume of bibliographic essays edited by Gary Tate, to offer faculty more guidance if they wanted to explore a topic in greater depth.

The reading list I have described is much more modest than one that might be used in a graduate seminar in teaching writing. Composition specialists may find it difficult to restrict themselves to such a limited introduction to their field. Recent surveys of the discipline mark out as essential reading an imposing list of works from many areas. The length of this list reflects, in part, the value to composition teachers of some familiarity with the history and structure of languages and with the biological, psychological, and sociological characteristics of language users. It may also reflect a new sense of academic respectability, a kind of intellectual muscle flexing, attempting to prove that composition can sustain its own graduate curriculum with bibliographies at least as long as those in any other discipline. However, the object of convening senior faculty returning to composition should not be to overwhelm them with a sense of how much there is to be known, but to provide a bridge whereby their language interests and

their ideas about rhetoric can be extended and expanded toward an interest in composition.

Larson would agree. He observes that teachers now specializing in literature are likely to respond most favorably to "imaginative and incisive theory" about discourse. He urges that a reading list include "items about composition by wellknown literary scholars and practicing writers, if we find useful material by this kind of person." As Larson implies, the effort to involve senior faculty must be a gradual effort in persuasion. We have no reason to expect that experienced teachers are going to abandon the assumptions and methods that have sustained them for many years without some trepidation and without a good deal of preliminary questioning.

Discussion about composition among senior faculty should not concern itself with specific writing assignments, with the choice of a particular textbook or handbook, or with detailed guidelines establishing what teachers should do in the classroom. In fact, one of the reasons I have proposed that these discussion groups be restricted to senior faculty is to create an alternative to staff meetings and workshops where practical questions usually take precedence. To focus on these matters is to invite deadlock, because the disputed choices really reflect assumptions about how writing should be taught.

At the same time, as I said earlier, senior English professors need to reconsider what kinds of writing abilities should get substantial reinforcement in the classroom. The topics I would especially like to see discussed are fluency, invention, and revision. All have received a good deal of attention in recent research, so they are likely to be represented even in a brief reading list. And these topics are closely linked to three of the most familiar complaints of the senior teacher new to composition: My students have never done any writing, My students never have any ideas, and My students never listen to what I tell them. Concentrating on these topics, teachers returning to composition will in all likelihood be tempted to explore studies of the composing process, of systems of invention, and of stylistic options in revision as they look for ways both to encourage and actively influence student writers.

How teachers apply in the classroom what they learn about these and other topics should be left to their own judgment. Matters like fluency, invention, and revision can be addressed in any number of ways—they can even be lectured about, as an extreme example—so they can be incorporated into the writing course by teachers who may still resist considering changes in their teaching methods. To press too quickly for change in what senior teachers do in the classroom, no matter how cogent the reasons or how persuasive the demonstration of available alternatives, runs the risk of alienating these teachers to the detriment of the program.

What I am suggesting, in the end, is a policy of gradualism and cooperation but not one of benign neglect. Writing program administrators should not rush in to train the senior faculty, even if this were a practical possibility. They should encourage a departmental consensus that informed interest in composition is part of the professional responsibility of all the English faculty. They should initiate discussion that will create or sustain this professional interest. And they should be ready to provide additional support or guidance when individual faculty members request it. At the same time, they should not feel that their efforts are wasted if

only a few senior faculty show a serious, sustained interest in composition. And they should not automatically assume that an unresponsive faculty member is incapable of teaching composition effectively. If senior faculty are shown the importance of the task, if they are not patronized, and if they recognize that some distinguished academics are now involved in composition theory, we can expect that some of our most *successful teachers of composition will be* those who are now rediscovering the challenge of this important work.

Note

• A short list of readings on teaching composition.

- Booth, Wayne. "The Rhetorical Stance." *CCC*, 14 (October, 1963), 139-145.
- Britton, James. *The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18*. London: Macmillan Education, 1975.
- Emig, Janet. "Writing as a Mode of Learning." *CCC*, 28 (May, 1977), 122-127.
- Hirsch, E.D., Jr. *The Philosophy of Composition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Larson, Richard L. "Resources for the Veteran Teacher, New to Composition." *ADE Bulletin*, 58 (September, 1978), 28-32.
- Moffett, James. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.
- Shaughnessy, Mina P. "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing." *CCC*, 27 (October, 1976), 234-239.
- _____. *Errors and Expectations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Tate, Gary, ed. *Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographic Essays*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

III. Helping faculty make rewarding assignments

Ellen Nold

WPAs who try to get senior faculty members-in English or any other department-to teach writing in their elective courses must begin with some well-founded assumptions about the nature of writing and the nature of faculty motivation. As for writing, improvement results from revision. As for motivation, faculty need to feel that when they teach or promote good writing, their students will actually write better.

These two assumptions lead to the following premise: that we are more likely to be successful in our efforts to get faculty to teach writing if we urge them to stress rewriting. Most writing evaluated in college courses other than writing courses per se is submitted at the end of the term and never revised. This is the term paper syndrome: the view that college writing means writing long research papers or other major documents. The way to increase faculty satisfaction with teaching writing, and in fact to improve the writing that students produce, is to urge faculty to assign fewer long end-of-term essays and instead make shorter writing assignments due earlier in the term. After marking these short papers---commenting on both content and writing technique--professors should ask students to revise their work, assuring students that revision is a normal activity in both the academic world and the world of work. And professors, in reading the revisions, will gain a strong sense that their work on their students' writing has paid off.

IV. Six steps toward departmental engagement in composition

Thomas Bonner, Jr.

The most serious problem the WPA and department chair face in a department in which suddenly everyone has to teach composition is low morale. The first order of business must be to raise it. To do this, teaching composition must be established as a common objective of the whole department.

Several steps can be taken to do this. First, senior faculty must be convinced that a comprehensive approach to teaching composition will help both themselves and the department, in part by attracting both funds and gratitude from the higher administration for a professional job well done. Second, the department must identify specific skills for each level of undergraduate instruction so that the nature of the job becomes clearly defined. Third, senior faculty, perhaps working in committee, should be encouraged to incorporate instruction in these skills into their writing and literature courses. Fourth, senior faculty should be encouraged to teach both freshman-level and advanced composition courses on grounds that by doing so they provide beginning students with the opportunity to be taught by the college's most experienced and most highly trained professors.

Fifth, travel funds and research grants under the department's control should be refocused so as to help senior faculty working in composition to attend conferences devoted to composition issues and to pursue research in this and related fields. And sixth, both the department chair and the writing program administrator should take unusual interest in senior faculty who teach composition and should go out of their way to commend them, writing letters praising their leadership, with copies to division and college deans. Naturally, all these steps must be taken with the greatest of tact and diplomacy.

V. Three kinds of writing workshops for English teachers

Barbara Brothers

In planning workshops on teaching writing at Youngstown State University, we have assumed that all faculty know something about teaching writing but need to learn more, that teaching writing is central to the English Department's undergraduate and graduate programs, and that teaching writing is the joint responsibility of senior, junior, and limited-service (part-time) faculty. We have in-service workshops for our own faculty and graduate assistants, summer graduate institutes and workshops for area teachers (K-12), and sessions for YSU faculty outside the English Department.

First, in workshops addressed to English Department faculty, we have stressed both research and classroom practices. One outside consultant, Charles Cooper, chair of NCTE's Council on Research, reviewed current research on the composing process to aid faculty in designing their own research projects as well as to encourage them to do so. Then the faculty gave examples of how the principles that Cooper had drawn from the research for teaching composition could be applied in the classroom. Another consultant, Stanley Fish of Johns Hopkins University, gave a lecture and served as a respondent to two faculty panels that examined how our assumptions about the nature of reading and writing are reflected in the various ways we teach literature and composition. (Fish's commitment to teaching writing and his knowledge of such a work as Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* is also a valuable example for senior faculty). To prepare for the presentations, faculty read selected publications written by the consultants.

At these workshops our own faculty have led sessions on such topics as identifying patterns of errors and strategies for reading the work of basic writers (the faculty was introduced to Shaughnessy's work and applied some of her principles to our own students' essays); writing effective assignments; using the writing center as an adjunct to teaching composition; grading papers and alternatives to grading; using the classroom as a workshop; and exploring topics through pre-writing activities.

Second, our summer graduate institutes and workshops, run by faculty who specialize in teaching writing, involve other English faculty members as consultants. We expect faculty to take part in every session and thereby learn from their colleagues. Concerned about graduate enrollment in their literature classes, many faculty have seen the workshops as opportunities to attract students to the M.A. program in English, and to their own classes, by demonstrating their involvement, competence, and interest in teaching reading and writing on all levels. To prepare for the workshops, we have compiled annotated bibliographies and a resource library on teaching composition. Periodically updated, these materials are also a valuable aid in improving the department's writing instruction.

Third, we run Professional Day workshops for high school English teachers. We plan the programs with advisers from the high schools, using as leaders consultants invited from outside, members of our own faculty, and teachers who have attended one of our graduate workshops on writing. Through these workshops we share information and experience in order to create better writing programs and better writing teachers. Newsletters supplement the workshops by providing an ongoing forum for exchanging information and ideas.