

## Reflections on Writing Across the Curriculum

What I have experienced as a participant in the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative is the building of a community, a community involved in learning more about the practice of good writing. To begin with, we assumed different roles in this community, but ultimately we were all learners, learning from each other and from the students.

Like members of other communities, we participants in the WAC community have had to learn to trust each other. We have trusted each other enough to show our work—assignments, rubrics, drafts--and share our reactions, and in response we have received respect, not judgment. We have worked on a vocabulary, a language for discussing writing issues and responding to writing. In both our meetings and in the classroom working with students, this has sometimes resulted in epiphanies.

When we as teachers have responded to student writing as readers rather than as evaluators, students have been eager to imitate this behavior. They have welcomed our comments and become willing to see their own writing from a new perspective. In one class I visited, a student who had been vocal in his critical evaluation of one paper revealed to me after class that he had been critiquing his own paper. In another class, once teachers had begun to comment, students tentatively began to voice their own reactions. They showed evidence of developing confidence in their ability to help each other.

Working with other colleagues on this initiative has given me an opportunity to appreciate more deeply what they do. When I reacted to student drafts in Dave Danielson's philosophy class, I realized that his midterm assignment provided students a model for the way he expected them to come to a conclusion. The assignment did not dictate the conclusion but modeled for students a logical way to move from evidence to conclusion, a path to good thinking. When I worked with students in Mike Burke's class on his global warming assignment, I saw how this assignment encouraged students to realize what they could discover from certain data and what they still did not know. Both assignments helped students develop their thinking by requiring them to write.

For me, the experience of working on the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative has expanded my understanding of the *community* in the Community College. Whereas before I saw myself as a member of the Language Arts Division and a member of the Foreign Language and ESL departments, now I see myself as part of the Writing Community, working with colleagues from many different disciplines to provide support to students, working with students both in the classroom and in the Writing Center, so that these students can become more confident writers. I am hopeful that students will begin to see all of us as resources, willingly seeking us out for feedback on their assignments. To make that happen, I hope to be present in classrooms when the writing assignments are given out so that the students there will see me as a potential coach and so that from the beginning I have a clearer understanding of the class instructors' expectations for the assignment.

Like other communities, this community will undoubtedly develop in unexpected directions, leading to surprising insights for all of us. My hope is that the participating students will see themselves as members of this Writing Community, recognizing that we

too are striving to get better at this skill, some as apprentices, others more practiced, but all valuing the effort that good writing requires.

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