



WAC NEWS

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"Ultimately, literacy in an area comes from the general ability to follow the reasoning in that area, not simply from the detailed familiarity with the specific material that has been read."

— Dr. Ezra Shahn

MPA PROGRAM TAKES INITIATIVE ON WRITING

This spring, **Dr. Beverly Lyons**, Associate Professor of Gerontology & Health Administration, contacted the WAC office to assist her in organizing and conducting a Writing Workshop for a group of graduate students enrolled in the **Masters in Public Administration and Health Administration Program (MPA)**.

The MPA, offered by LIU's School of Business, Public Administration and Information Sciences, is designed for the working adult who wishes to pursue a graduate degree part-time, and prepares public service professionals for managerial positions in government, health, and not-for-profit sectors.

The MPA program stresses written communication and oral presentation skills as core competencies necessary to success in the profession. Seeking to affirm the Program's emphasis on these skills, Dr. Lyons decided to offer a voluntary workshop to address students' writing needs.

On February 10, 2006, Assistant Professor and Reference Librarian **Jane Suda**, WAC Coordinators **Kevin Reyes** and **Tina Erickson**, and WAC Director **Dr. William Burgos** addressed Dr. Lyon's class of 24 students in an all-day Writing Workshop, which included instruction in thesis development, the writing process, and database usage and research techniques.

The response to the session was overwhelmingly positive, with over 95 percent of participants suggesting that the MPA Program offer similar writing workshops in the future. Dr. Lyons' insightful response to student needs as well as student feedback on the workshop prompted **Dr. Judith J. Kirchoff**, Associate Professor and MPA Program Director, and MPA Program faculty to mandate that the Writing Workshop become a requirement for all new MPA students.

Next fall, the WAC office looks forward to working with Dr. Lyons to create a workshop series for incoming MPA students and all MPA students who wish to hone their writing and research skills.

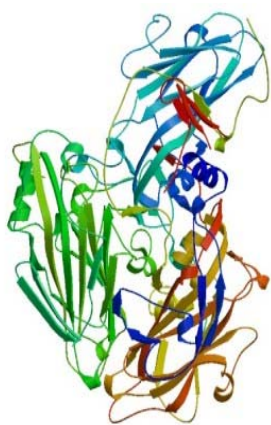
MPA STUDENTS RESPOND FAVORABLY

"This workshop needs to be mandatory for anybody entering the MA Program."

"The workshop was very helpful; the MPA Program should always give the workshop. They will have better writers for the future."

"I thought the program was not only a great writing and research seminar but also a great community builder."

WAC AND SCIENCES



Spring 2006 marks the beginning of a new initiative from the WAC Program. Recognizing that majors in the sciences and health sciences make up a significant percentage of the undergraduate and graduate population, the WAC office plans to develop its resources and expertise in writing in

the sciences and in the health professions. Our goal is to provide better support for faculty in these disciplines.

To improve our "scientific literacy," the WAC office has pursued several approaches, all centered on soliciting direct input from faculty. We sent out surveys to all Science (Conolly College Division II), Pharmacy, Nursing, and Health Science faculty. The surveys were designed to provide us with information about courses faculty teach and the kinds of writing they assign.

In March, we invited **Professor Ezra Shahn**, a biology professor from Hunter College, to facilitate the first of

what we hope will be many discussions over the next year on scientific literacy. A key question Prof. Shahn raised was which aspects of "literacy" are general to all disciplines, and which are emphasized in the sciences.

One important insight that emerged from Dr. Shahn's presentation was the crucial concept of "causality" in science. In science writing, students often have to explain causality. Typically, for instance, they are asked to articulate the relationship "A because of B." Shahn pointed out, however, that "Students often don't understand what 'because' means," and this leads to difficulties in their writing.

Shahn's talk was followed in April by an open forum in which faculty were invited to speak to representatives of various Campus resources (WAC, the Writing Center, ARC, and the Library) about the challenges they face teaching in the sciences and health sciences, and how these resources can, individually and collaboratively, help them meet these challenges. One of the participants, **Prof. Janet Haynes** (Biology), pinpointed a concern of hers, shared undoubtedly by many faculty: "In reading student papers, it's sometimes hard to know even where to begin—there are so many problems. We need back-up."

In the coming year, the WAC office will focus on providing "back-up" to the sciences and health sciences, as well as promoting writing—as always!—across the curriculum.

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Check the website for information on WI requirements and other WAC materials and faculty resources.
www.liu.edu/brooklyn/wac

Designated Writing Intensive Courses:

Anthropology:

- ANT 137, Ethnography

Art:

- ART 101, Caves to Cathedrals

Business:

- FIN 115, Financial Statement Analysis

- MAN 131, Managerial Communications

Communication Studies, Performance Studies, & Theater

- SPE 194, Research Methodology in Communication

- THE 101, Demystifying Writing about Theater

Dance:

- DAN 205, Dance History

Division of Sports Sciences:

- SPS 152, Exercise Physiology I
- HS 603, Independent Study

Economics

- ECO 100, U.S. and the Global Economy

English:

- ENG 101, Introduction to English Studies
- ENG 190, Senior Seminar

Foreign Languages:

- FRE 106, Advanced French Tutorial in French Literature

- SPA 106, Tutorial on Peninsular/Hispanic Themes

History:

- HIS 100, The American Experience

Journalism:

- JOU 119, News Writing

Media Arts:

- MA 164, History of Photography
- MA 187, Introduction to Film Studies
- MA 239, Survey of Computer Arts

Music:

- MUS 107, Music History I
- MUS 108, Music History II

Nursing:

- NUR 254, Introduction to Professional Nursing

Occupational Therapy:

- OT 620, Research Proposal Writing
- OT 720, Community Practice, Education, and Health

Philosophy:

- PHI 196/196, Honors Study in Philosophy

Political Science:

- POL 128, Race, Sex and the Law

Respiratory Care:

- RC 205, Cardiopulmonary Medical Sciences

Social Work:

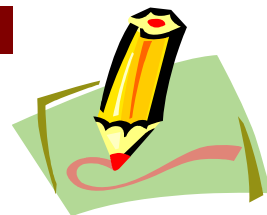
- SWK 115, Introduction to Human Services and Social Work

Teaching and Learning:

- TAL 350, The Developing Child

WAC TIPS

Nota Bene



If an instructor had to guess which students in the room were more likely to do well on an exam or to hand in a strong essay, he or she might hazard a pretty good guess based on one observation: the students whose notebooks and texts are open, and whose fists, gripping a writing implement, are moving across the page in the act of note-taking. Though note-taking is not an infallible index to the “A” student, it’s a reliable indicator.

Note-taking—good note-taking—however, is a difficult skill to master, and yet it’s one worth taking the time to

encourage students to practice because it helps them with skills essential to study in the University. Good note-taking is the ability to recognize and abstract key words and concepts from a discussion or lecture. And it’s the act of writing which reinforces the retention of this information.

Many professors are wary of writing-to-learn techniques because of the (justifiable) concern about the time taken away from conveying course content. But note-taking is a form of writing that is synchronous with teaching content. Ten minutes spent on reviewing the basics of note-taking—or, for the truly time-pressed

lecturer, the distribution of a handout—is time well-spent on skills students need for academic success.

If class time permits, the instructor could even designate a student or two as the note-taker for that class session, and then photo-copy and distribute the notes at the next class session. This exercise allows the entire class to review course content

and learn from each other how to sharpen their note-taking skills. (Bernard Schweizer, English, uses this exercise regularly, and has posted a useful write-up of it on the WAC website. Look under “Past

Workshop Materials,” Fall 2005, “Come as You Are,” Handouts Distributed.)

Instructors can also refer students who need better note-taking skills to one of the student resources: the **Writing Center**, the **Academic Reinforcement Center**, **HEOP**, and **Achievement Studies**. All these resources have tutors who can coach students on how to take notes.

Even if you assign no other in-class writing, you’ll do students an important pedagogical favor by encouraging them to practice writing as a means of learning course content.

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E-TUTORING: ONLINE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY

For the second spring semester in a row, the Writing Center (WC) and the WAC office are collaborating on an e-tutoring pilot program, which is being developed by the WC. E-tutoring allows students to submit their essays via email to an “e-tutor,” who comments on the essay on-line and then emails the essay back.

One benefit of e-tutoring is that it allows students to submit their work to a tutor without even leaving their homes. For faculty there’s the advantage of knowing that their students’ writing will receive—through the e-tutor—further individual attention. The e-tutor can help a student address writing issues in his or her draft before a professor reads the paper, and this in turn allows the professor to focus more on content.

One faculty member who can speak to the advantages of e-tutoring is **Professor Thomas Johnson**. Prof. Johnson teaches **Respiratory Care 205**, *Cardiopulmonary Medical Sciences*, the writing-intensive course required of all RC majors, which he developed.

In spring 2005, the WAC office contacted Prof. Johnson about participating in the

WC’s e-tutoring pilot project. He agreed and asked all 14 of his students to submit their drafts to the e-tutors. By the semester’s end, both the WAC office and Prof. Johnson were impressed with the results.

For his part, Prof. Johnson saw significant improvement in the drafts he received after his students worked with the e-tutors. One of his strongest students, **Camille Chin**, received the American Association for Respiratory Care’s **Jimmy A. Young Memorial Scholarship** for the essay she wrote for Prof. Johnson. He credits the on-line tutors with “motivating and guiding Ms. Chin and her classmates into a higher level of professional writing.”

The WAC office is especially gratified with these results because our task is to support faculty—particularly faculty teaching WI courses—in their efforts to integrate writing into their teaching. The collaboration with the WC’s e-tutoring pilot program has proven to be a win/win for students and faculty.

Because of his positive experience, Prof. Johnson agreed this semester to work again with **Kevin Reyes** and **Sarah Blazer** from the WAC office and the WC to offer his RC students the benefits of e-tutoring.

