
Preface

The motivation to publish *The PSC Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum* came last June during a “second-phase” faculty-training workshop led by Toby Fulwiler, Writing Coordinator at the University of Vermont. As faculty participants shared writing activities from their courses, Toby Fulwiler kept repeating, “Write an article. Let others know what you are doing.” Later, the Writing Task Force decided to create this journal as a forum where faculty and students could share ideas and practical suggestions for using Writing Across the Curriculum techniques. The papers in this journal reflect the activity at Plymouth State College in Writing Across the Curriculum.

The idea of creating a Writing Across the Curriculum program at Plymouth surfaced five years ago during the deliberations of the General Education Committee, a faculty committee formed to study and revise Plymouth’s General Education requirements. The Committee sought a program which would expose students to “the breath of knowledge that has shaped human culture” and guarantee proper skills levels in several areas, including communication. Consequently, the Committee placed particular emphasis on writing when they proposed a new W-Course plan.

Academic requirements for all students already included a freshman-level, skills-oriented composition course. In addition, the General Education Committee proposed that each academic department offer a required W-Course with a “significant writing component” for its majors (ideally at the junior or senior level). The W-Course would not be a course in writing skills but rather a course in which students used writing as a tool for learning in their field. Thus a variety of writing activities could fulfill this requirement: journal entries, multiple draft essays, imaginative and ex-

pository writing, and non-graded as well as graded work.

To train faculty to devise and teach W-Courses and to address faculty concerns about writing in general, the General Education Committee appointed a Task Force on Writing Across the Curriculum during the fall term in 1985. Only one member of the original Task Force was from the English department; others came from the departments of Business, Education, Health and Physical Education, Math, and Natural Science. The diverse composition of the group reinforced the idea that writing would be the concern of all disciplines.

The first year the Writing Task Force surveyed the faculty to determine the role writing already played in classes across the curriculum. The survey revealed some deep-seated frustrations but also widespread interest in increased emphasis on writing. The Task Force then read and discussed recent pedagogy on Writing Across the Curriculum, concentrating on works published since 1980 to take advantage of the experiences of other institutions with programs already in place. Based on that reading, the group organized and distributed a two-page bibliography to faculty before their summer break.

With that accomplished, the Task Force turned to its most pressing concern—training faculty from all disciplines who would be teaching W-Courses. In the spring of 1986, Toby Fulwiler came to campus to run the first workshop. Hiring an outside consultant lent credibility to the program, but, more importantly, Toby Fulwiler provided the Task Force with a model for subsequent faculty-training workshops. The three-day workshop covered many traditional topics such as revising, editing, and evaluating writing, but primarily focused on writing as a tool for learning through journal writing, short freewrites, and multiple draft essays.

That first workshop was successful not only because faculty found new ways of incorporating writing into their classes but also because they had time to discuss teaching techniques in general. During the final sessions of the workshop, over half of the participants volunteered to be actively involved with the Writing Task Force during the next academic year. From that group came the leaders and presenters for subsequent faculty-training writing workshops.

The Writing Task Force continued to offer workshops every January and May for the next two years. To date, over 60% of the Plymouth faculty have attended the two-day sessions. In two of those workshops, PSC faculty were joined by teachers from secondary schools, establishing ties that still exist between PSC and two local high schools.

The Writing Task Force also sponsored a number of follow-up sessions for workshop participants and twice held "reading parties" where faculty worked together on their own writing in progress. On the group's recommendation, the college adopted the *Borzoi Handbook for Writers* as a reference for use across the curriculum. For two years now, all freshmen have received the handbook as part of their freshman "package." Finally, the Task Force has established this journal which we hope will be an annual forum for discussion of Writing Across the Curriculum at Plymouth.

As the articles themselves testify, there is no "party line" in the publication, and a healthy debate over Writing Across the Curriculum continues. Members of the same department differ over issues in theory and practice. (See, for example, the two articles written by Robert Hayden and Paul Estes of the Math Department.) Furthermore, Dennise Bartelo and Robert Morton have suggested in their article, "Iconology: An Alternative Form of Writing," that the very definition of "writing" needs to be expanded. Finally, two articles by Richard Chisholm and Robert Miller that explore collaborative writing and learning activities suggest new possibilities for Writing Across the Curriculum techniques. The evolution towards new approaches in teaching and learning represents one of the most satisfying qualities of the program. We present these papers in the hope that others may profit from the experiences of their colleagues and will join the continuing dialogue about Writing Across the Curriculum at Plymouth.

Mary-Lou Hinman, Chair
Writing Task Force