TEACHING WITH WRITING

Pre/Views by Vicki Collins

Writing-to-Learn on the Internet

The hot topic this month in Writing Intensive circles is email as a vehicle for writing-to-learn. In this issue of *Teaching With Writing* you will find a collection of emails about using email in your classes.

Susan Prows, Department of Public Health, emailed me (we have a new verb in the language) about asking her class to respond weekly to readings using email. Before sharing this good idea with 1,700 faculty members at Oregon State, I decided to check with University Computing Services (UCS) to make sure it would be okay for any of us (or all of us!) to make a similar assignment. It is. Helpful hints (gathered via email, of course) from Ken Eshelby and Debra Crowe at UCS appear following Susan's message on page 3.

During May, I have been meeting with alumni of the WIC faculty seminar, many of whom are now experienced WIC teachers. When I said, "Tell us what's working," several teachers mentioned assignments using email. Becky Warner, who assigns research on the Internet as

An Interview with Leslie Burns and Cheryl Jordan

AIHM Takes Aim at Curriculum Revision

by August Baunach—Hsts doctoral student

The following is an interview with two OSU faculty members who for the last five years have been involved with WIC (writing intensive curriculum) and WAC (writing across the curriculum) discussions here on campus. The two faculty members—Leslie Burns and Cheryl Jordan of the Department of Apparel, Interiors, Housing, and Merchandising (AIHM)—began participating is these discussions as avowed skeptics. Over the years, however—as they first attended presentations, then WIC seminars, then hosted open forums within their department, and most recently participated in a WIC-centered retreat—they have become advocates of writing-to-learn practices in the classroom. Burns and Jordan are responsible for the curriculum within AIHM's Merchandising Management Program.

WIC: I understand that for AIHM's Merchandising Management Program, you've integrated all four of the core courses within a writing-to-learn framework—how did you become so involved with the WIC philosophy?

JORDAN: Several years ago, before the WIC Program was even in place, we were looking at the prospect of being required to teach a WIC course within our department; we went to hear some of the speakers brought to campus by, I think it was, the Writing Advisory Board. Anyway, we were very skeptical and not looking forward to becoming "English professors" or writing instructors. But we came away from listening to

part of several courses, shared successes—along with cautionary tales. First a success: her research methods courses meet in a computer lab; whenever she senses resistance in the class she stops teaching so that students can send each other email messages (describing their reactions) and receive responses from others in the class. The downside of this success is that Warner's students became so enthusiastic about the research data they were locating on the Internet that they began flooding her emailbox with their findings. Now she sets up user-groups to reduce the number of messages to her.

Warner recalled receiving one student email posted at ten p.m. on Saturday night that said, "I am sitting at my terminal waiting for you to answer my question about how to do the next assignment." Warner admitted with chagrin that she may have reinforced such moves on the students' part by actually answering this query at ten p.m. on Saturday night. She now sets email office hours and recommends them to any teacher using such assignments. For example, tell students they may write to you at any time, but that you will only be answering email Tuesday 11-12 and Friday 3-4. Please share your other good ideas for using email in a WIC course. Write to me at collinsv@ccmail.orst.edu.

At the May meetings with WIC Seminar Alums I heard a strong request to extend support for WIC faculty beyond the introductory level seminar. Because considerable enthusiasm exists for an Advanced Faculty Seminar, I have begun plans for one during Winter Term 1995. I am gathering suggestions for topics to be considered. So far, requests have included: "Help us learn to manage collaborative writing projects." "Update us on new developments in Writing Across the Curriculum." "Let's talk more about working with international students in WIC classes." The most frequent request is "Give us more ideas for writing-to-learn. It's really working." If you have topics to suggest for the advanced seminar, please send them in.

In this issue, I am happy to announce the recipients of the WIC Department Development Grants. The departments receiving awards for 1993-94 are listed on page 6. Congratulations to these departments for their commitment to improving the teaching of writing in their curriculum.

Spring is also when the winners of last year's grants report on their projects. August Baunach, doctoral student in History of Science, interviewed two of the 1992-93 WIC Grant holders and reports on their activities beginning on page 1. I hope that sharing a bit about this project will inspire other departments to begin plans for similar work.

The WIC office will be closed during the summer. I will begin checking email and phone messages again on September 1. Have a good summer!

"Coverage" and the WIC Course

Many faculty across the curriculum express initial doubts about incorporating writing into an upper division course in the major. They ask, "How can I teach writing to my majors when I have so much material to cover?"

Chris Langdon, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at the Hatfield Marine Science Center, expressed similar concerns in last fall's WIC Seminar as he planned to convert his course in Aquaculture to a WIC course. Aquaculture did become a WIC course, and Langdon taught it during Winter 1994 to students in residence at the Hatfield Center.

Recently Langdon updated me on results of the course. He wrote, "The majority [of students] felt they learned some new ideas. . . . I was especially happy with the exam results. I thought that because I had not covered the course material in such depth as in previous non-WIC years, the students would not have grasped the concepts as well. In fact, I think they did better with the WIC approach in both learning and knowing how to apply concepts to problems."

Email About Email: Classes Wired for Learning

From: Susan L. Prows at H&HP
To: Vicki Collins at CLA
Subject: Good idea . . .
--------------------------------Message Contents----------------------------
Vicki: Thought I would share something that I am trying this term in two of my
classes. In Public Health we are involved in a self-study of accreditation guide-
lines, and one area where our courses need improvement is in the required use of
computers. It occured to me that I might kill two birds with one stone. What I
did was require all students to get an email address and to respond weekly to the
assigned course readings. When we began, less than 10% of the students had an
email address, and there was a lot of anxiety about this requirement UNTIL they
had completed an assignment or two. After that, their reactions were all posi-
tive--and they actually came to class having read the assigned material. WOW--a
totally new concept! In H569 (Maternal/Child Health), I require students to send
their reactions to ALL members of the class--this generates a lot of discussion,
and those students who typically do not speak up in class are able to communicate
in a "safer" forum. Thanks, Vicki, for getting me going on this! Susan

From: Vicki Collins at CLA
To: Ken Eshelby and Debra Crowe at UCS
Subject: Using Email for Class Discussions
-----------------------------------Message Contents---------------------------
As director of the Writing Intensive Curriculum Program, I recently received a
great idea from a faculty member--her students all get university email accounts
and use them to participate in class discussions of assigned readings. I wanted
to share this idea with other faculty, but first I want to know if there are any
cautions or advice from University Computing regarding this sort of assignment. I
think email offers wonderful opportunities for students, but I do not want to
suggest something that will cause problems for the system. Vicki Collins

From: Ken Eshelby at UCS
To: Vicki Collins at CLA
Subject: Class Email Assignments
-----------------------------------Message Contents---------------------------
I don't see any reason why every student can't use email on the UCS machine.
Every student at the university has a right to a free account. In a classroom
setting, you might want to set up a mailing list, so that each of your students
can only send to your class--that way a distribution procedure to other class
members is automatically set-up. Good luck! Ken Eshelby, UCS Consulting Desk

From: Debra Crowe at UCS
To: Vicki Collins at CLA
Subject:Class Email Assignments
-----------------------------------Message Contents---------------------------
That's a great idea! Many instructors already have their students come here—to
Milne 217—to get an email account. Once here, students can also sign up for
"Navigating the Internet"--a workshop that's held every month to explain how to
use the email program on the mainframe. As for your concern about overloading the
ccmail system, email isn't the same as ccmail--ccmail is a particular "brand" of
email for local area networks, while email is electronic mail located on our
academic mainframe. More email accounts would be no problem for the mainframe!
Debra Crowe, UCS User Services

AIHM—*continued from page 1*

those talks thinking that writing-to-learn activities might not be as narrow an activity as we'd thought.

Later, we attended a WIC workshop that was funded by the USDA and coordinated by Lex Runciman—after attending that workshop, it became even more obvious to us that writing-to-learn activities could be a great opportunity, both for students and instructors.
BURNS: Using writing-to-learn activities in the classroom has completely changed the way I teach—I spend less time grading papers now, I think, than I did before—even though my students write more.
WIC: Because you allow for the revision process?
BURNS: Yes, we both figured out that we were "Conan the Grammarian" when it came to grading papers—for example, I used to have an elaborate check-off sheet that I would use to grade final papers, which students would never revise.
WIC: And your enthusiasm for using writing-to-learn activities in the classroom has spread to other faculty in the department, too? Would you talk a little about that?

BURNS: We've actually participated in two WIC grants. The first one was for a series of department seminars, which allowed faculty within the depart-

> *Excerpts from *The Style Handbook, or The Apparel Design and Merchandising Guide to Success and Happiness*, by Elaine Pedersen
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> "... In this guide, commonly used assignment and exam terms are discussed and defined along with what A.I.H.M. instructors in apparel design and merchandising expect when these terms are utilized. ... When one analyzes something it is examined in detail and the nature and relationship of the individual parts or components are studied with regard to how they contribute to the whole. A synonym of analysis is dissection. ... Synthesis is the combining of parts or elements to form a whole. ... When you write a paper you begin by collecting information. That information is not necessarily arranged in the order in which you can or wish to utilize it. In the process of writing the paper you synthesize the various ideas and facts that you have collected and add your own ideas on the subject. The resultant paper is a synthesis of other individuals' ideas and facts with your own."

ment to share ideas, do some brainstorming about topics such as "How do we incorporate writing activities into studio classes?" Later, when we received the second grant, we had incorporated writing activities into our core courses, but we wanted to take the process one step further and assess the effectiveness of our curriculum. The second grant allowed us to do several things related to assessment.
WIC: What are some examples?

BURNS: Well, last summer four of us held a retreat in Newport for a day-and-half—Cheryl and I and the two faculty in charge of the Apparel Design Program—students within the department take pretty much the same courses for their first couple of years, so our programs are interrelated. On the retreat we took our course outlines and syllabi and followed an agenda for discussions. We found the retreat to be a very valuable experience.
JORDAN: Most of us have collaborated on research projects, but teaching is usually done individually. It's especially valuable when you can share ideas about teaching and understand that you aren't working in isolation.
BURNS: It was good just to get away, too. We were able to get things out in the open that we wouldn't otherwise publicize, you know, like describing problems associated with a class that just "bombs."
JORDAN: And then we would take off on philosophical points, like, "Why don't students know how to analyze or synthesize information?" One of us, Elaine Pedersen, brought along her laptop and took notes. We found
AIHM—*continued on page 5*

AIHM—*continued from page 4*

that a first step was to agree among ourselves what it meant to analyze and synthesize, and then we decided to provide those definitions, along with an abbreviated APA style guide, to the students. Elaine compiled this information from our retreat, and its now available to our students at the OSU Bookstore for 75 cents.*

A second part of our most recent WIC grant was to hire three students to assess the assignments in our core courses. We wanted to make sure that the assignments weren't perceived just as busywork, and we wanted feedback on what might be confusing and what might be changed. That evaluation process was worthwhile and insightful; we're compiling the results now.

BURNS: Also, for the last two years we've done presentations at national meetings within our discipline—both at International Textile and Apparel Association meetings and at national Home Economics Association meetings—on the subject of writing-to-learn activities in the classroom.

> ". . . [A] first step was to agree among ourselves what it meant to analyze and synthesize, and then we decided to provide those definitions, along with an abbreviated APA style guide, to the students. Elaine [Pedersen] compiled this information from our retreat, and it's now available to our students at the OSU Bookstore. . . ."

These have generally been very well received. Afterwards, we get many requests for information.

WIC: Wow—you should write a book on the subject!

BURNS: Ha-hah! As a matter of fact, I just finished an instructor's manual for a textbook, and every chapter of the manual has in-class writing activities.

JORDAN: The best part of the whole process, though, is when you see students' eyes light up with understanding. That energy is contagious, and it spreads among the faculty, too. Eventually, we'd like to integrate all the courses in the department within the same philosophy.

BURNS: And it all began by sharing information and brainstorming. Assignment ideas are now frequently shared around the department. I find notes in my mailbox or leave notes in other people's mailbox that say, "I'm working on this assignment idea—would you read it, and tell me if it makes sense to you?" It's exciting to participate in this process.

No More Hide and Seek

In the interest of making WIC courses easier for students, faculty, and advisors to identify, these changes are taking place:

• In the 1994-95 University Catalog, each WIC course is identified with with a "^," and the course description contains the phrase "(Writing Intensive Course)."

• In the Fall 1994 Schedule of Classes, WIC courses are identified with a "^" to the left of the course title. A key to this and other symbols appear at the bottom of each right hand page.

• A current list of WIC courses (updated twice weekly) appears on Gopher.

• Departments are moving to ensure that any course number approved as a WIC course is always taught as WIC. In other words, the goal is to eliminate cases where one section of a course is taught as WIC and another is not. In some cases this means assigning new course numbers for clarity.

Recipients of the 1993-94 WIC Department Development Grants

Department of Apparel, Interiors, Housing, and Merchandising, College of Home Economics and Education. Stage One Grant. Goal: To develop a new WIC course in the Housing option and to integrate writing across the Housing curriculum, including a lower division writing course for majors as well as 400-level courses involving advanced professional writing.

Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, College of Agriculture. Stage One Grant. Goal: To support student writing in Aquaculture, FW497X, a WIC course offered at the Hatfield Marine Science Center, Newport, in light of delayed implementation of teleconferencing needed for the course.

Department of Psychology, College of Liberal Arts. Stage One Grant. Goal: To develop the writing component for Psychology 303x, Research Topics in PsychologicalScience,a team-taught honors-level course for qualified majors early in their academic career.

Department of Speech Communication, College of Liberal Arts. Stage One Grant. Goal: To develop a course on Non-Verbal Persuasion, which will teach students to think and write about the impact of non-verbal images in culture.

Department of Naval Science. Stage One Grant. Goal: To improve instructional techniques of Naval Science instructors using the WIC model, to revise syllabi for existing courses to include more writing, and to create a set of writing expectations and standards that are coherent and progressive from 100 to 400-level courses in Naval Science.

Writing Center, Center for Writing and Learning. Stage One Grant. Goal: To support training in computer-assisted instruction related to writing across the curriculum; to purchase software for the Writing Center which will support student learning of high-order concerns of organization and thesis development as well as low-order concerns of grammatical and mechanical correctness; to purchase reference books for the Writing Center with particular emphasis on WAC and writing in specific disciplines.