

# TEACHING WITH WRITING

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING INTENSIVE CURRICULUM (WIC) NEWSLETTER

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## **Pre/Views** by Vicki Collins

In the Fall 1993 WIC Faculty Seminar, Navy Commander Dave Ward seemed the most skeptical participant, asking hard questions about teaching with writing and about education in general. But in March 1994 he applied for a WIC grant to train his whole department in WIC methods. Ward's goal is for OSU NROTC graduates to have taken twelve writing intensive ROTC courses in addition to the WIC in their academic major. Read "Writing-to-Lead" to learn why OSU's ensigns may well become known as the best writers in the Navy.

This issue also contains highlights and results of other WIC grants awarded in 1994, including the Department of Psychology's experiment with team teaching a WIC course limited to students with at least a 3.5 gpa in psychology courses. Also, Chris Langdon of Fisheries and Wildlife tells how a WIC grant helps student writers enrolled in a WIC course at the Hatfield Marine Science Center.

Congratulations to the departments of Philosophy and Exercise and Sports Sciences, recipients of 1995 WIC grants (pg. 3). While it is unusual for one department to be awarded two grants, both proposals from Philosophy promise fruitful results, one in curricular development and the other in email software and assignment design which should prove useful in WIC courses across the university. ■

## **WRITING-TO-LEAD IN THE NAVAL SCIENCES**

by Sue Vega-Peters

Commander Dave Ward of the Naval Science Department recently received an e-mail note from a former student who had gone through the Navy ROTC writing intensive program. Now an ensign in his first assignment, the student comments that his writing training has come in very handy. Ward explained that there has been a fundamental shift in testing philosophy at training schools, from the traditional multiple choice tests "to a writing intensive type format, because there are no canned multiple choices in the real world and they want to see how the students think, formulate, and respond to situations more closely to the operating environment. [This is] another example of real world application of WIC and [the] necessity for good writing skills."

This necessity for good writing skills, and his enthusiasm for WIC techniques, led Ward to develop his version of the WIC Writing-to-Learn theory, which he calls Writing-to-Lead. Ward applied for a 1993-94 WIC grant that funded WIC training in a retreat format for the entire Navy ROTC teaching faculty in June 1994. Since that time, it's been Ward's goal that every NROTC course use WIC techniques to improve teaching and increase student participation and learning. Although the department doesn't offer a major in Naval Science, and therefore their classes aren't certified as WIC courses, NROTC instructors use WIC methods in every course.

**Writing-to-Lead**—continued on page 2

## ***Plan Ahead for the Fall 1995 WIC Faculty Seminar***

Wednesdays 3-5 PM

October 11, 18, 25 and November 1, 8

Registration: Nominations by department chair sent to [millss@cla.orst.edu](mailto:millss@cla.orst.edu)

**Writing-to-Lead**—continued from page 1

Ward described some unique features that make the ROTC program both an opportunity and a challenge in implementing WIC strategies. Because the department is self-contained, it is easier to develop a unified program. Ward's idea is for intensive writing activities to begin in first year classes and continue through the 400 level. Ward says the "intent is to create a coordinated, coherent, progressive, and seamless model (cradle to grave for undergraduate students) of academic standards. . . in writing for all levels of instruction within the department."

**The Challenges of WIC**

The Navy ROTC faces two major challenges, however, in meeting its goal, including the high transition rate of the instructional staff. Because most instructors are in the department for only two to three years, Ward must offer almost constant training for the instructional staff. The

NROTC grant tried to meet that need by providing a WIC seminar for the staff, conducting follow-up workshops, and assisting staff in developing a coherent teaching model adapting WIC strategies to the existing instructional NROTC curricula.

This curricula presents the second challenge to the NROTC plan. The Navy provides its instructors with a complete training guide from which the instructors must teach their classes. Ward says that NROTC instructors have looked carefully at the preformatted curricula to see how WIC methods could be used to increase student learning and participation. He admits this is an ambitious goal but says NROTC instructors are committed to finding spaces in the curricula for WIC methods.

**The Most Useful Technique**

Ward explained that probably the most useful WIC technique NROTC instructors have used so far is the directed journal, or directed log. NROTC instructors have experimented with freewriting, but have found that this kind of ungraded writing works best when it is clearly di-

rected toward particular material being covered. Ward believes that unfocused freewriting, in which a student might write about a walk across campus or something that is not directly applicable to the classroom, is not helpful for the student. Directing the students to a target area in the material helps them focus their energies and enhances their academic learning.

Directed logs also work well with materials in Navy Science courses such as Celestial Navigation or Naval Engineering, which can prove particularly difficult for many students. Instructors

are able to foresee areas that might be difficult and can direct students to think and write about specific questions pertaining to those areas. This method helps students understand the material as well as increases participation and retention.

NROTC writing instruction includes other activities that fit into Ward's vision of Writing-

to-Lead, such as Order Writing, in which students learn how to direct other people through writing. Because NROTC students will be leading and managing others in Navy assignments after graduation, it is important that they be able to write coherent and precise orders. Ward says that despite the new technology that is part of training and education today, the ability to write clearly and concisely is still most important.

**One Final Thing. . .**

While Ward says there are no statistics that show a correlation between employing WIC techniques and improved student GPAs, he believes writing intensive methods do make a difference in student learning and success. And the effect of this intensive plan implementing WIC in all levels and all courses is beginning to be reflected in comments from its graduates. As one of Ward's former students so elegantly puts it: "One final thing. . . WIC. As much as I hated it as a student at unit, it is very prevalent here at SWOS. I want to thank you personally for the exposure to Navy writing and hope that the program continues to grow."■

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## HATFIELD MARINE SCIENCE CENTER WIC GRANT REPORT

by Dr. Chris Langdon, Fisheries and Wildlife

Aquaculture 497X/597X was approved as a WIC course in December, 1993. This course is taught once a year at the Hatfield Marine Center (HMSC), Newport, which is 50 miles from the OSU main campus. Because students stay at HMSC during the winter term and take a suite of courses, they do not have access to the OSU writing center. The long term strategy has been to develop facilities at HMSC that will compensate for this lack of regular support from the campus writing center.

A tele-conferencing link was established between HMSC and the main campus, which will potentially allow real-time oral and visual communication between students at HMSC and writing center personnel. The drawbacks are that the terminals are expensive and there are only three on main campus, including facilities in Kidder Hall.

In 1994 a WIC grant of \$556 was provided to support a part-time TA to help with writing assignments as well as to purchase the grammar-checker program "Grammatik" for the HMSC library. Luckily, I was able to use a TA supported by my department (Fisheries and Wildlife) to help

with the writing, so I did not need to use the WIC grant to support a TA. Instead, the funds have been used (with Dr. Collins' permission) to upgrade word-processing software on IBM and MAC computers of the HMSC library, which are used by students in their writing assignments. The upgrades (WordPerfect (v. 6.0) for DOS and Word (v. 6.0) for the MAC) have grammar-checking capabilities included in the word-processing programs, making separate grammar-checking capabilities obsolete. In addition, PowerPoint for the MAC was purchased so that students can practice preparing material for oral presentations of their projects. A PowerMac can be hooked up to an overhead projector and "slides" of the student's material can be directly projected onto a screen from the computer.

It is anticipated that the application of these various technologies and software programs, in combination with the personnel efforts of myself and TAs, will enable future WIC students to perform well at HMSC, despite the separation from the main campus. ■

### 1995 WIC DEPARTMENT DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Department of Exercise and Sports Science, College of Health and Human Performance (Sandra Suttie, Proposer)

Goal: To revise two existing courses to include writing intensive activities and to plan and execute a faculty in-service retreat for the Department of Exercise and Sports Science, focusing on writing intensive activities.

Department of Philosophy, College of Liberal Arts (Kathleen Moore and Courtney Campbell, Proposers)

Goal: To identify student writing needs after graduation, to articulate specific writing goals for students, to define a sequence of steps to build writing skills in the major, to integrate the sequence into the curriculum, and to design a brief writing handbook for students in philosophy classes. These activities will be carried out through a faculty work group retreat and a one day departmental retreat focused on writing.

Department of Philosophy, College of Liberal Arts (John Dorbolo, Proposer)

Goal: To develop thirteen writing intensive activities using email. The assignments will be piloted in Interquest (an introductory philosophy taught by means of the computer internet) and will be a key component of the proposer's application for an Annenber/CPB Initiative grant to develop software for email management.

## TEAM TEACHING WIC IN PSYCHOLOGY

by Sue Vega-Peters

Dr. Kevin Lanning comments that "in psychology courses, class sizes are usually huge, precluding written work of any form. This is to everyone's disadvantage. The opportunity to teach a small class of able and motivated students has been really nice." Lanning is referring to PSY 303X--Research Topics in Psychological Science, which Doug Derryberry, John Gillis, Kevin Lanning, Marge Reed, Lawrence Ryan, Patti Watkins, and Bev Wilson have collaboratively taught this term.

The course, voluntarily taught on overload, was developed through a WIC grant because the faculty felt most existing courses available to students, while providing a strong base of knowledge, are too large to require much written work and too impersonal to identify students with the potential to do advanced course work. Prerequisites for participating in PSY 303X were a 3.5 average in PSY 201 and 202 and consent from the instructor. Lanning says students were selected for PSY 303X because those "trained in technical writing and introduced to contemporary research in the field earlier in their undergraduate training will

ultimately be better prepared for entry into post graduate programs in psychology."

The WIC portion of the course consists of five short, informal written assignments and a term paper, expanding on one of the earlier papers or integrating several together. This process includes students presenting a rough draft for peer review and meeting several times with a professor the student chooses to work with closely on the paper.

Lanning comments that due to the low teacher/students ratio and the collaborative method of teaching, the faculty has not developed any short-cut writing assignments that would be useful in larger classes. Larger classes have to be geared toward efficiency, while the luxury of small classes allows more individualized teaching and learning. Lanning believes that the faculty as well as the students benefit from this arrangement.

Lanning has been impressed with the style and content of several of the students' compositions. In such a class as PSY 303X, Lanning says teachers have the opportunity to recognize that students have a unique voice that they can express in academic composition. ■

### WIC GRANT MAKES WRITING RESOURCES AVAILABLE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

As part of a 1994 WIC grant, Writing Center coordinator Jon Olson travelled to New Orleans for the National Writing Centers Association conference where he learned more about developing an on-line writing center. Olson hopes to set up an e-mail Writing Hotline, which students across the disciplines and members of the community can use as a reference for their writing questions. The Writing Center also received WIC funds to purchase, and is currently researching, software for writers wanting to brush up on their skills in grammar and mechanics.

The final section of the WIC grant allowed the Writing Center to purchase a number of books that support writing across the curriculum. These books will be used for Writing Center staff training and development, and they will also be available in Waldo 123 for on-site consultation by anyone on campus. Among the titles available in various areas of writing are:

**Writing Across the Curriculum:** *Writing to Learn Mathematics and Science, Writing Science, The Writing of Economics, A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, Writer's Guide: Life Sciences*

**Reference:** *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed.

**English as a Second Language:** *Second Language Writing, Understanding ESL Writers, Grammar Troublespots*