

**To Write or Not to Write: A Look at Faculty Use of Writing at a Small Liberal
Arts College**

Charlene L. Kiser

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and
State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy
In
Education and Curriculum

Mary Alice Barksdale, Co-chair
Carol Bailey, Co-chair
Peter Dolittle
Patricia Kelly
Nancy Metz

February 17, 2006
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: college writing, faculty attitudes, writing across the curriculum

To Write or Not to Write: A Look at Faculty Use of Writing at a Small Liberal Arts College

Charlene L. Kiser

(ABSTRACT)

Although it may not seem possible that a student could graduate from an Ivy League institution without basic writing skills, a 2003 Chronicle of Higher Education article concluded that it is not only possible, but that it does happen. Some students are actually suing colleges and universities because they do not believe they have been taught the skills necessary to succeed in the area of written communication. This deficiency reflects poorly on universities, and even small liberal arts colleges are not exempt from this problem.

This dissertation was driven by a desire to learn how professors at one small liberal arts college viewed the use of writing in their courses. The professors were interviewed to determine how they viewed writing, how they viewed their students' writing, how familiar they were with writing-across-the-curriculum practices, and how much writing was assigned in their courses.

The study results indicated that many professors use writing extensively in their courses, and that they considered their assignments appropriate and successful in achieving their goals. The study also revealed that some professors use little or no writing, and their reasons for doing so were varied. The most common explanation was a lack of time to create assignments and to read and assess written assignments. Some professors also concurred that they felt uncomfortable using writing because their own writing skills were lacking. Other professors were discouraged by poor student writing and had given up on using additional writing assignments.

The most surprising result from this study was the professors' lack of knowledge concerning the use of writing as a learning and thinking tool. Most were comfortable with the standard research paper, case study type of writing assignments, but few used writing-across-the-curriculum methods or practices. Writing prompts, journals, and non-graded pieces were not part of their teaching repertoire. Even professors in the field of education reported that they have not adopted the newer teaching strategies. The concluding chapter addressed faculty concerns and provided suggestions for overcoming these concerns.

This work is dedicated first of all to Chad and Shelley who have been and continue to be my inspiration. Secondly, it is dedicated to a multitude of friends who have believed in me and who have urged me to keep going even when times were very rocky. I love you all, Charlene.

Table of Contents

Chapter One – Introduction	1
Chapter Two – Writing at Walker College	9
Chapter Three – Writing Across the Curriculum	27
Chapter Four – My Research	51
Chapter Five – Faculty Perceptions of Student Writing	75
Chapter Six – The Role of Writing at Walker College	83
Chapter Seven – Time in the Educational Bottle	95
Chapter Eight – Whose Responsibility?	107
Chapter Nine – Faculty Concerns	116
Chapter Ten – Conclusions.....	128
Chapter Eleven – Recommendations for Walker College	148

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A bright young transfer student recently confided to me as she turned in an assigned essay for my course, "This is the first paper I have written since I have been at Walker College." "How long have you been here?" I asked. Her response startled me: "This is my third semester." I wondered how it was possible that this student could have completed almost three semesters, presumably about fifteen courses, without ever writing a paper.

Even more troublesome are the recent statistics from the National Survey of Student Engagement. According to this study, Walker College freshmen and seniors reported that they did fewer papers than the national average in each of the three categories listed: twenty pages or more, between five and nineteen pages, and fewer than five pages (NSSE 2004, 2005). I am forced to ask, as did Thomas Bartlett (2003) in his article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "So why is it that, even at the nation's best colleges, the teaching of writing has long been treated less like a high priority and more like an afterthought?" Many in the academic world are beginning to realize that somewhere along the line, we have failed to meet the needs of our students.

Colleges and universities across America are now facing a crisis of sorts: students are graduating, and many do not possess the writing skills necessary to survive in the working world. Some students are involved in lawsuits with their educational institutions because they believe they were not given quality writing instruction (Bartlett, 2003). In addition, professors of upper division courses often

agree that students are not proficient writers and that they are not prepared when they enter their junior and senior level classes (McLeod, 1987; Howard & Jamieson, 1995; Blumner, Eliason, & Fritz, 2001; Tandy & Smith, 1990). Chris Anson, (2002) a strong advocate for writing across the curriculum, reveals that most professors are concerned “about the jumbled, inarticulate prose” of their students (p. ix).

This lack of basic writing skills is a national problem. Often students come to college unprepared to do the writing required of them (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1983; ACT, 2003). According to Little (2003), our public schools have deteriorated, and “most students do not arrive at college knowing how to write well” (p. 4). A *Johnson City Press* article reported that a 50-state review of high school graduation requirements revealed that high school graduates in Tennessee are not prepared to “succeed in higher education or work” in any area with the result that they require remedial work once they go to college (Jan. 1, 2005). According to the study, Tennessee graduates lack basic reading and writing skills.

Further, we often fail to teach them once they arrive on our campuses. In the January 3, 2003, edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Thomas Bartlett wrote a scathing article entitled, “Why Johnny Can’t Write, Even Though He Went to Princeton.” It appears that most colleges and universities, even the Ivy League institutions, are falling short in meeting student needs when it comes to writing instruction. According to Bartlett (2003), most academics acknowledge the importance of writing, but they fail to address negative attitudes that run

rampant on their campuses. He (2003) confirms that “administrators also point to an increase in the number of complaints from professors” who cite a lack of ability among students to write “a real paper with a thesis and an argument.” Bartlett (2003) continues that many prestigious institutions are now revamping their writing programs to alleviate some of the problems.

It is generally accepted that writing skills should be well developed by the time students have completed bachelor degree programs in the United States. Yet, there have been no studies that have interrogated professor perspectives on writing instruction.

A Search for Answers: Constructivism

One theory that provides a framework for understanding professor perspectives on their work is constructivism. Constructivism can be used to explain professors’ understandings of their jobs and the approaches they take to their work, including the use of writing in the context of their courses. The primary premise behind constructivism is that individuals construct knowledge. According to Brooks and Brooks (1999), we learn “by constructing new understandings of relationships and phenomena in our world” (p. 5). They continue, “Deep understanding occurs when the presence of new information prompts the emergence or enhancement of cognitive structures,” and we are asked to “rethink ... prior ideas” (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 15).

Although different branches of constructivism exist, all are concerned with how individuals process information and create new knowledge. Radical constructivists believe humans encounter new information through subjective

experiences, determine the viability of that new information, and assimilate it to fit with other mental constructions or make changes or accommodations in mental constructions to use that information in whatever way it will be needed in the future. According to their philosophy, the mind is, as Piaget wrote, capable of “a higher form or adaptation” (qtd, in Von Glaserfeld, 1995, p. 59). Many professors teach as they were taught; they change their teaching methods only in ways that are comfortable to them.

Social constructivism, another branch of constructivism, asserts that knowledge is socially agreed upon, that it is available for review and critique, that it can change, and that it revolves around language. Social constructivists believe that communities construct knowledge, extending the idea to subjective knowledge or knowledge that is acknowledged by all in a group. The knowledge that exists is the result of the work of the community, and it can change if the community deems it necessary.

Constructivism serves as a foundational theory supporting this study because teaching can be understood as a socially constructed phenomenon. Professors were students before they became teachers, and they have observed a variety of teaching styles from elementary school teachers to the university professors on the PhD level. They have watched and interacted with those teachers, and Baxter Magolda (1999), believes that teachers “reproduce the teaching practices... [they] experienced as learners” (p. 237). Obviously, the foundations of a professor’s understanding of teaching are socially constructed. We assume that professors are greatly influenced by those who taught them and

that they will, as Baxter Magolda (1999) emphasizes, attempt to mimic those who made the biggest impressions when they take on the role of teacher.

Unfortunately, most college and university professors receive very little formal pedagogical training; instead they are thrown into the classroom with their content knowledge and very little else. According to Perry and Smart (1997), “personal experience and shared myths about teaching are often deemed sufficient to equip oneself to teach effectively” (p. 3). Typically, new professors are not observed, they do not receive feedback, and they are left to figure out the practice of good teaching on their own. They talk to colleagues, and through them, they learn about students and what is important to their particular institution. They also learn about teacher and student expectations. They bring in information from their past educational experiences, and they gain knowledge about students and teaching in the hallways and lounges of the faculty world at their individual colleges.

An examination of how professors socially construct their work can help explain professors’ approaches to using writing in the context of their courses and programs. A socially constructed conceptual framework implies that if faculty were involved in undergraduate and graduate programs where writing was considered valuable, professors will probably view writing as important. If they believe their institution values and supports writing, they will be more prone to use it in their courses. If they personally enjoy writing and find it a fulfilling endeavor, then they may pass that enthusiasm along to their students. If they view writing as an important learning tool, they may find ways to incorporate it

into their assignments. On the other hand, if their socially constructed world did not view writing as important or fulfilling, then they may not either. Although I clearly entered this research through the lens of social constructivism, I was open to alternative explanations. The theoretical and conceptual insights that resulted from this work are based on the analysis of the data. However, my methodological stance required that I clearly indicate the conceptual frame that guided this work. The end product, however, depended upon my understanding of how faculty members felt about writing and why.

Purpose of the Study

Student writing deficiencies will not just go away. Writers are not born; they are intentionally made. Although most professors agree that writing is an important skill that all students must gain, few facilitate that learning process, and some do not use writing in their classes. Thus, students may complete entire semesters without doing any writing. Most educators would consider this is a travesty to the students and to the institutions they represent. However, professors make conscious decisions about their curricula, and their decisions are, I assume, well thought out and justifiable.

At the same time, I know that writing can and has been used in every discipline. Just as faculty have good reasons for doing what they do, they may also have reasons for not using writing. I was curious to know those reasons. My work focused specifically on Walker College, and I hoped to discover how our faculty viewed writing and how much they used in it their teaching.

If writing use was minimal, I hoped to determine what teaching tools, if any, replaced writing and to identify the reasons faculty have chosen alternative tools over writing. Why do some professors use writing while others do not? I was most concerned with faculty attitudes towards writing. I wanted to understand my colleagues and to describe their experiences with writing. I hope to use the information gathered to discover ways to increase professors' understanding of the value of writing as both a communication tool and as a learning tool.

Research Question

I have taught at Walker College since 1984, so I know over half of my colleagues well, and I approached my research confident that they are serious about their work and that they desire to be the best teachers they can be. They genuinely care about their students and want them to succeed. They acknowledge the importance of good writing skills in every career, and most want their students to be better writers. In interviews done for an early graduate class, every professor questioned espoused the virtues of writing proficiently. However, a tremendous contradiction remained. These same professors who believe students need to write well and who believe students need writing instruction do very little to teach writing skills to their students. They rarely use write-to-learn assignments, and some do not even use writing at all. I believe that Walker College faculty present a good example of cognitive dissonance, and thus, my research will attempt to answer the following questions:

What is the relationship between the importance faculty at one small liberal arts college place on student writing and their actual pedagogical practices? If a disjunction exists between the two, how can it best be explained?

Contribution of the Study

Many college students lack proficiency in writing, many professors are frustrated with student abilities, and life goes on as usual on college and university campuses in the United States. Although the general consensus is that faculty believe students write poorly, very little research has been done to determine the professors' involvement in the teaching of writing, and no extensive research exists that examines faculty attitudes towards writing. Although this study focuses on Walker College, the results should be beneficial to any college or university concerned about how their professors use writing in their teaching. My conclusions will also be beneficial to other similar liberal arts colleges who desire to evaluate their own campuses. The conclusions from this study could be used to design resources to aid administrators and professors on my campus and on other campuses.

CHAPTER TWO

WRITING AT WALKER COLLEGE

Walker College is a small, Christian, liberal arts college known for its academic rigor and its emphasis on a Christian worldview. Approximately 75 faculty members teach over 900 students. Walker offers 21 majors and has three Masters programs. The college is supported by many donors, but most come from the Christian Church and the Church of Christ affiliations.

Walker College is a beautiful campus with rolling hills and stately red brick buildings. A recent renovation to the main classroom building restored its elegance and functionality. Walker has three large dormitories and three smaller, residential apartment-style dormitories. Most students live on campus, and most professors live in close proximity.

Walker College faculty, staff, and students are driven by the mission statement: "As a Christian liberal arts college, Walker College seeks to honor God by educating men and women to be servant-leaders" (*Walker Catalog*, 2005-6, p.6). Most professors at Walker teach out of a love for students and teaching, not for money (which is a good thing!). We are a close-knit community of learners. I consider my colleagues good friends, and we all encourage and support each other. While not a perfect place, Walker is known for being warm and caring.

However, since we are a small, private college, the workload is heavy. A full-time teaching position is four to five classes per semester, and most professors have two or three preparations. Walker professors also spend

considerable time on committees and other support work. Most professors are very dedicated to the students, so they show up at athletic and artistic events and often have students in their homes. A commitment to Walker usually means a commitment of more than forty hours per week, but I think that the professors agree that their work is rewarding. Their efforts have paid off; Walker enjoys a high academic reputation in our area and among our constituency.

The Early Years: Setting the Stage for Academic Excellence

Walker College has a long history in the mountains of East Tennessee. Founded as the Buffalo Male and Female Institute in 1866, it was later renamed Walker College and was led by Josephus and Sarah LaRue Hopwood who believed that Christian education was “the hope of the world” (cited in Cornwell, 1989, p. 12). Walker continued as a college under various presidents until 1943 when it “offered its entire facilities to the United States Government” and became until 1945 a Naval training base (*Walker College Catalog, 2001-2002*, pp. 5-6).

A look at the history of Walker College reveals that although it has had a strong emphasis on writing, it is clear that we, too, have failed our students in the area of writing and that we have failed to learn valuable lessons from the writing-across-the-curriculum movement.

The deliberate focus on academics has made writing an important part of the curriculum since the college’s inception. According to the school register (or catalog) from 1893-94, all freshmen were required to take two English courses: Rhetoric and Analysis of English (p. 21). This register, and others for years to come, begins its description of the Rhetoric-Literature area with this wonderful

first sentence: “The origin and growth of the English language forms a study of the most thrilling interest” (p. 29). By the school year 1896-97, all freshmen used *Lockwood’s Lessons in English* (*Register*, 1896-97, p. 16). The *Register* for 1901-02 shows an expansion in the requirements in the English area. All freshmen used *Lockwood’s Lessons in English*, sophomores had English Rhetoric, and juniors had *Genung’s Working Principles of Rhetoric* (pp. 19-21). John Genung, the author of the required book, intended it to be used as a textbook and a reference for students (Dooley). Interestingly, all students, even science majors, had three years of composition-rhetoric.

By 1922, more changes had occurred in the curriculum. All students were required to have three units or semesters of English for graduation, including English I, which consisted of two semesters with an emphasis on grammar, theme writing, rhetoric, and composition (*Catalog*, 1922-23, pp. 28, 33). A more deliberate emphasis on writing is evident in 1924. According to the *Bulletin*, each degree candidate had to write a thesis of 5,000 or more words: “This thesis must be accepted by a professor in whose department it is written, and a typewritten copy of it must be presented to the library before the degree is conferred” (p. 38). Thus, even though scholars had not yet created the phrase, “writing across the curriculum,” Walker College had an early version of WAC in that they required each student in every discipline to engage in significant writing in their discipline.

The school year 1925-26 presented the students with a unique writing opportunity. According to the *Bulletin*, a very special essay contest occurred: students were offered an opportunity to win \$20 for the best essay writing on the

topic of making Johnson City a better city. This was quite a prize considering that tuition for that year was \$32.00 per semester. This year also witnessed the addition of public speaking and debate, a boost to the communication skills of the students (*Bulletin*, 1925-26, p. 31).

The next school year, 1926-27, provided more opportunities for student writing. The college added two publications: one bi-weekly, *The Stampede*, and one yearly, *The Buffalo*. According to the *Bulletin*, *The Stampede* “like all newspapers... gives the news of the college for the information of both the student body and the friends of the college” (p. 37). Some curricular changes occurred that year as well. Graduation requirements continued to include eighteen hours of English, even for science majors, but the freshman and sophomore writing courses were renamed “English 11” and “English 12.” The *Bulletin*, 1926-27, described English 11 as follows: “Review of grammar and composition. Theme-work based on text of rhetoric and composition. Oral and written composition and self-expression. Current events and brief themes on current topics selected from periodicals. Practice in writing short stories, poems, essays, briefs, and debates” (p. 56). The variety of writing assignments was different from those seen before. The *Bulletin* reports that English 12, the second semester course, included term debate, “Parliamentary drill,” and like many institutions of higher education at the time, literary masterpieces (p. 56).

The 1940s: Meeting the Needs of all Students

The 1940s witnessed more changes in the composition requirements at Walker College. Most students still took at least fifteen hours of English, six of

which were composition (English 11 and 12). However, by this point, the science majors only had to take twelve hours of English, including English 11 and 12. The *Bulletin* for 1940-41 revealed an interesting additional class: English 9, “a course required of freshmen who, because of deficiencies in grammar, are unprepared for college composition” (p. 51). The *Bulletin* continues, “Intensive and elementary study of English grammar. No credit for Freshman Composition granted until examination in grammar is passed” (p. 51). Here is the first evidence of a developmental class to aid those students needing additional help.

By the late 1940s, Walker had adopted a B.S./B.A. program of studies. The B.S. required twelve hours of English including the composition courses, which were then called English 111 and 112, and the B.A. degree required fifteen hours of English. The 111 and 112 classes were composition classes; the remaining courses were, as in the past, literature courses (*Bulletin, 1947-48*). *English 9* no longer shows up in the *Bulletin* after this point.

The 1960s: More Writing and Reading

By 1960, Walker required all students to take only twelve hours of English, including the six hours of composition, English 111 and 112. The *Bulletin* of 1960-61 describes English 111 and 112 as follows: “A six-hour course covering two semesters. Instruction and practice in the correct use of the English language as the basic tool of communication, grammar, vocabulary building, techniques of research, analytical reading for comprehension and appreciation, and the forms and skills of composition. Required of all freshmen” (p. 21). The interesting new addition here is the mention of the concentration on reading,

which perhaps indicates that students needed additional work in this area as well as in writing.

During the 1960s, students did quite a bit of writing. Walker College required students to complete six hours of composition for graduation until the introduction of the Humanities program in 1968. However, according to a past student Allen,¹ prior to 1968, a philosophy course was connected to an Honors composition course for a few years, giving students a true writing-across-the-curriculum experience in that all the writing assignments were directly connected to the course material (July 25, 2002). Other interviews and emails reveal that students also wrote in classes other than composition with the exception of the science courses, and that was not considered unusual by those interviewed. Past students and administrators believe that Walker required more writing when they were students than is required presently of students (Dillard, Allen, Johnson, July, 2002).

1968: The Introduction of the Humanities Program

According to John Henry Newman (1852), “all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the works of the Creator.” In 1968, with that concept of an integrated curriculum in mind, Walker College implemented a humanities core to fulfill composition, literature, history, philosophy, and fine arts credits. As part of this program, composition courses were discontinued, and the freshman and sophomore composition instruction was woven into the humanities

¹ Allen (pseudonym) was interviewed July 25, 2002. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

classes—a true writing-across-the-curriculum model. With this curricular change, students were required to complete twenty-four hours of Humanities courses, six hours per semester their freshman and sophomore years. The twenty-four hour plan integrated six hours of history, six hours of literature, six hours of composition, and three hours each of fine arts and philosophy. Now instead of taking courses in each individual area, students took four courses in the Humanities, two in their freshman year and two in their sophomore year that covered all the above areas in a chronological format. They attended small group sessions (18-20 students) on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, all Humanities students gathered in a large auditorium (freshmen at 11:00 AM and sophomores at 8:00 AM) for lectures, videos, etc. Individuals in the Humanities area as well as invited outside guests presented the lectures. Professors in the Humanities area were required to teach not only their chosen subjects, as they had done in the past, but the other subjects in Humanities as well. Although some professors were from the history, English, philosophy, and fine arts areas, they were now also a part of the Humanities area. The rationale behind this radical change was to better reflect the “philosophy that all knowledge is ultimately connected” (Allen, July 25, 2002).

This change did not come without a battle. According to Allen, current area chair of Humanities: “The blood was still flowing when I came in 1970, and you could definitely tell that some of the more experienced faculty were in this program by no choice of their own” (July 25, 2002). Johnson², Academic Dean at

² Johnson (pseudonym) was interviewed July 24, 2002. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

that time reflected, “I think the teachers that we had at that time were firmly set in their ways [...] Some of our older teachers were just adamantly opposed to the Humanities program and would not have anything to do with it. And of course, those of us who were very enthusiastic about it still carried into it a pretty strong sense of our own discipline” (July 24, 2002). However, as time has passed, the professors in the Humanities program became convinced of the validity of such a curriculum, and those presently involved in it support it enthusiastically.

The original designers of the Humanities program decided to include the required six hours of composition into the core twenty-four hours. Johnson recalls, “It just seemed logical that since we were absorbing the English literature requirement to also absorb the writing requirement. In other words, I don’t suppose we could have imagined having a Humanities program and still teaching six hours of comp” (July 24, 2002).

In the initial design of the Humanities program, each faculty member involved was to teach and assess writing, and thus, students would meet their writing requirements with their own Monday/Wednesday/Friday section leaders. According to Johnson, it did not take long before it was obvious that this plan would not work. He explained,

That did not work in that there was such a disparity in grading standards from one teacher to another; some were, you know, very strict; others were very lax. Some were very precise in terms of insisting on grammatical structure, accurate spelling. Others were more interested in what they called content [...] We decided that we really needed one

person who would deal with the Humanities writing sections. (July 24, 2002)

Soon after the inception of the Humanities curriculum, one English professor was given the task of teaching writing and grading all the freshman and sophomore essays. She came to the Tuesday/Thursday lecture sessions several times a semester to teach writing skills. This incredible woman did all the writing work for several years before Walker hired an adjunct professor to help her. In 1974, the adjunct professor was given a full time position.

Since its inception, administrators and faculty have seen advantages and disadvantages of the Humanities curriculum change in regards to the writing component. Although some writing instruction occurred in large group situations, effective writing instruction in the early years was intended to occur in one-on-one sessions with the designated writing professor. Writing instruction functioned this way through the 1970s and 1980s, but one result was teacher frustration and burnout because of the incredible demands to meet the needs of so many students and to grade such a large numbers of papers. As mentioned earlier, from 1970 to 1974, one professor taught all writing sections and graded all essays. Gradually the Humanities department hired more individuals to help with the instruction and the grading, but it was still a formidable task.

The 1970s and 80s: More Courses

Walker continued to take steps to improve student writing. In the late 1970s, Humanities 100 was added to the curriculum as a three-hour course to help those students ill-prepared for the freshman Humanities course. It

incorporated much of the freshman course material, including composition, and counted toward graduation hours. The students met with one professor five days a week in small group sessions, and they attended the lecture sessions occasionally. The goal was to help prepare the students for the rigors of the actual Humanities courses. In the mid-1980s, Humanities 100 was divided into two courses, one with an emphasis on reading (Study Skills) and the other with an emphasis on writing (Fundamental College Writing); neither counted toward graduation credit. Fundamental College Writing, which is still taught today, is described in the 2005-2006 *Catalog* as “A course providing extra instruction for students who demonstrate writing skills below the college level. The course includes work in basic sentence structure, paragraph structure, and grammar. Students also practice organizing and developing essays” (p. 98). Students whose ACT score is below 20 or SAT verbal score is below 490 are automatically placed in Fundamental College Writing and Study Skills.

The 1990s and Beyond: Additional Changes

In the year 2000, the Humanities faculty determined that students who did not earn a “C-“or above in freshman Humanities writing needed additional assistance. It was also decided that those students could not move on to the sophomore level Humanities writing until assistance was received. Thus, a one-hour course, English 103, was designed for those students who did not achieve a “C-” or above in the writing component of freshman Humanities. This course provided “intensive writing instruction and practice designed to enable the student to achieve writing competency” (*Catalog, 2001-2002*, p. 176). It did not

replace Humanities 100, which addressed the needs of students with extensive writing deficiencies, but instead it provided supplemental writing instruction for those students who needed more practice and instruction.

Walker College Humanities professors worked hard to incorporate writing into the Humanities curriculum and to create a true writing-across-the-curriculum experience for students. However, because only minimal class periods were set aside for writing instruction (four to five per semester) in the original plan, the writing professors often felt the instruction was ineffective. Several changes occurred in 1996. The writing professors began to meet students one hour per week in small groups. This weekly meeting allowed the faculty to become better acquainted with the students and to help them more, but this change still did not provide the contact hours necessary for effective writing instruction.

To address this problem, the writing faculty proposed a radical curriculum change that was accepted by the administration in the spring of 2002 with the new changes implemented in the fall of 2002. Instead of lectures on various topics related to history, art, music, and philosophy on Tuesdays and Thursdays (the previous format), the first semester freshmen and the second semester sophomores enroll in a three-hour writing course (Humanities 101W and Humanities 202W) in which the writing professors concentrate on writing, both formal and informal. The grades are separate from the section (the Monday Wednesday, Friday meeting) grades, and the focus is on analytical reading and writing and critical thinking. Instead of one contact hour per week with the students in small groups (the format introduced in 1996), professors now have

three hours in a designated class. Students use one syllabus for the entire week, and the writing assignments are still based on the Humanities readings, thus integrating student reading for the Humanities course with the writing for the course.

The faculty members who teach the new writing classes are very excited about the possibilities this change has allowed. The response has been very positive, both from students and from faculty. The students seem to learn more and seem to be happier with this format than with the past situation. The consensus among the writing faculty is that the students see their composition work in a more serious manner since they view it as two separate, three-hour courses. The professors feel that they cover the material better in the three-hour format, and they are able to do a wider variety of writing assignments with the students. The faculty members have shifted their focus from strictly essay writing to more “writing to learn” exercises and more process writing. They believe they are able to better prepare students for writing in all their courses.

Due to the curriculum change to two three-hour writing courses, English 103 was taught for the last time in the fall of 2003. Beginning with the school year 2003-2004, students who did not earn a “C-” or better in the first semester of writing (the freshman class, Humanities 101W), have been required to retake the course instead of taking English 103. This decision was made because the nature of Humanities 101W provides more instruction than English 103, and thus it is more beneficial to the students.

Problems

This brief overview of the history of Walker College reveals that writing has always played a role. The administration has continually supported at least six hours of coursework designed to improve student writing. Unfortunately, a closer look at the situation at Walker College reveals many problems. English professors have taught all writing courses until the fall of 2002 when a journalism professor was asked to teach one class. However, the professors have been either adjunct or masters level only until 2001 when a PhD in English was hired. Each year the Walker College sophomores take the ETS Academic Profile. In the last several years, our students have performed slightly above the national average on the writing and the critical thinking sections of this exam, in spite of the fact that their ACT scores are considerably higher than the national average (see Academic Profile Analysis). In 2002, entering freshmen had an ACT average of 23.77 and in 2003, the average was 23.22 (Mee, Oct. 9, 2003). The Academic Profile mean for writing was 116.73 in 2003 with the national average at 114.31. This is compared to Walker's scores of 117.11 in 2002 and 116.88 in 2001. A new testing instrument accounts for some variability, but the scores are still lower than desired. In addition, the college has mandated in their Institutional Effectiveness goals that 70% of all sophomores pass the writing component of Humanities with a "C" or better. Although 82.01% received a grade of "C" or better in the 2001-2002 school year, this average has not always been as high. The Academic Dean and the faculty are obviously concerned about these scores and want to make changes to improve the skills of the students.

Other research has also uncovered students' writing deficiencies. In 2000, the then new Academic Dean commissioned two Humanities faculty members to read 50 sophomore-level essays written by students who were at that time seniors. The professors read the essays independently and gave each a ranking based on six general areas, one dealing with grammar and mechanics, two addressing the thesis, and three concerning organization and critical thinking. The results from this study were abysmal. The researchers ranked 23 of the 50 students at the "D" or "D-" level. They ranked only three students above a "C+" level. This was distressing news, but not too surprising. One of the researchers commented about the results, "But I wasn't surprised that they were writing 'C' to 'C+.' Sometimes I think that's the best we can do, for them to write a tiny bit above average as sophomores" (Myra³, Jan. 8, 2004). Although this professor had expected these results, she was obviously very disappointed with the averages.

Walker College is not unlike the colleges and universities mentioned in *The Chronicle* article. Often our students come to college unprepared to do the writing required of them, and often we fail to teach them how to write adequately once they arrive. One professor related in an interview, "the first word that comes to mind in describing the students' writing is 'poor,' but that's not really fair.... There are some who have poor writing, but the majority on average, I'd say are

³ Myra (pseudonym) was interviewed Jan. 8, 2004. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use her interview in my research.

just mediocre” (Bresson⁴, July 11, 2003). Our own Academic Dean describes our students’ writing abilities as “inadequate,” and he confesses about only about half of our students are prepared to write in their field when they leave Walker (Brown⁵, Jan. 8, 2004).

As a composition professor, I desire to see our students do better on their sophomore exit exam. More importantly, however, I want to be sure that they are prepared to write well and to think critically when they graduate from our school. I believe the changes that we have made on the freshman and sophomore levels are first steps in the right direction to providing more instruction to our students. However, Walker College has not done enough to ensure that our students get the attention they need. Of the five professors who teach writing, only one has a doctorate degree, and she was hired in the fall of 2001. I am one of the five, and I will finish my degree in 2006. Due to the nature of our academic needs, we have never hired a composition/rhetoric professor, although that may be one of the most important steps we could take.

Who is Responsible?

However, another issue needs to be considered. One reason for the failure to teach writing successfully is the prevailing attitude that writing instruction is the responsibility of the English department. I firmly believe that the responsibility for teaching writing and critical thinking should not fall squarely on the shoulders of composition teachers. I agree with John Bean (1996), author of

⁴ Bresson (pseudonym) was interviewed July 11, 2003. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

⁵ Brown (pseudonym) was interviewed Jan. 8, 2004. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom, who asserts, "the writing competence of our students is a shared responsibility, not one to be held over the heads of the English department" (p. xvii). Blumer, Eliason, and Fritz (2001) agree that

more faculty need to be involved in a systematic way that ensures each student receives a cohesive writing education that reflects the goals of the institution and the student's chosen discipline, that connects the academic dots of classes, and that explicitly demonstrates to students ... the connections between learning and writing. (p. 27)

Students need more writing practice than they receive in their basic writing courses, and they also need to be taught the writing skills in the major they choose. They should enter their upper division courses prepared to write intelligently and ready to learn the nuances of their chosen fields. Howard and Jamieson (1995) assert,

The language of each discipline, therefore, amounts to a way of approaching the world. Newcomers become members of a community through the acquisition and application of language. To become members they must think in the same frameworks that the community does and ask questions that it deems meaningful. (p. 9)

Unfortunately, in some courses, professors assume that the students have learned all they need to know in their earlier general education writing courses, and thus, they do not take students to the next level – writing in their discipline. Some professors fail to realize that student writing is improved through continual

practice and that a student's skills can regress with lack of demand for the skill. Some professors also fail to consider the importance of writing as a learning tool, one which can be used to increase student comprehension of the subject taught.

Students should be asked to write in all classes, and Richard Light's (2001) study on student success revealed that "students identify the courses that had the most profound impact on them as courses in which they were required to write papers, not just for the professor, as usual, but for their fellow students as well" (p. 64). Light (2001) believes, "the best time to emphasize writing is during the junior and senior year" (p. 59). Although Walker College is attempting to rectify its problems with student writing at the freshman and sophomore levels, it also needs to consider ways to improve the teaching of writing in upper division courses. We fail our students if we only provide writing instruction in their first two years of college. Students need to write on a continual basis to improve their writing and thinking skills.

Students as Active Learners

Many of the ideas found in constructivism and in the WAC movement can be used to improve student learning and teacher satisfaction. The idea that students are actively constructing their knowledge is an important concept for teachers. Constructivists and WAC proponents believe that students are thinking beings who can learn. What a wonderful assumption with which to begin teaching. The educator's role is to engage the students, to provide a means to make them active participants. According to constructivists, students are capable of learning, of making many decisions about what they want to learn, and of

becoming part of the learning community. Writing is a tool that can help teachers create the appropriate environment to encourage students to be successful learners. Maxine Hairston, author of *Successful Writing* (1992), believes that when students write they become “active learners, not simply sponges for information” (p. 1).

CHAPTER THREE

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Although writing continues to be important at Walker College, many of the current professors are not knowledgeable about using writing in ways other than assessment of student learning, as in research papers. In the fall of 2001, I did research for a qualitative research class to discover how the faculty viewed writing and how they used writing in their classes. I was surprised that the six professors I interviewed did not use writing as a tool for learning. They were unfamiliar with concepts such as writing prompts, mini-themes, and journals. Three of the six used very little writing, and the remaining three assigned research papers or longer projects. None of these professors used informal writing assignments. Process writing was a new idea to them, and none used peer review or team projects. They were all concerned about their content and the time it took to teach that content. This small study revealed that these professors at Walker College were unfamiliar with the basic tenets of the Writing Across the Curriculum movement, tenets that could greatly improve their pedagogical practices and aid in student learning.

The 1970s and the Beginning of the WAC Movement

Although Walker College offered a writing-across-the-curriculum model with its creation of the Humanities program, it was not a deliberate intention to do so since the movement we now call WAC was really just beginning in the years of the first Humanities courses. From the beginning, the WAC movement has revolved around two major beliefs: writing is a primary tool in learning (write to

learn), and students need to be able to write in all content areas (writing in the disciplines). WAC has resulted in the use of such things as journals, free writes and portfolios, with the fundamental idea that the more students write the more they learn, whatever the subject matter. A review of the early leaders and theories will illustrate the benefits of WAC for campuses such as Walker College.

The writing across the curriculum (WAC) movement has been an influential and unpredictable educational adventure. At various conferences and workshops, I have discovered that at some institutions, WAC came in as a powerful force and has remained strong. In others, it came in strong and then fizzled in a short period of time. In some schools, the WAC movement has yet to be felt at all. But regardless of the impact WAC has had on individual institutions, the movement itself appears to have tremendous staying power and great influence on the way many professors view the teaching of writing. As Parks and Goldblatt (2000) write,

From its inception in small liberal arts colleges to its broad application in land grant universities and Ivy League schools, WAC has challenged teachers in every discipline to think more about the context and nature of student learning than they might within the traditional content-driven model of college teaching. (p. 584)

The writing-across-the-curriculum movement is a natural ally to constructivist philosophies. With a strong emphasis on student-centered curriculum and process writing, early WAC advocates drew many ideas from

constructivism, especially social constructivism and the focus on language as a social construct.

The WAC movement can be traced back to the early 1970s in the United States, although its presence was felt earlier in England. To understand why the WAC movement occurred, it is necessary to look back at the history of writing instruction in general. In the early years of American higher education, composition courses did not exist. Instead, professors assumed that students came to their institutions prepared to write on a college level. But in the late 19th century, schools such as Harvard developed independent composition courses housed in the English department “because of faculty dissatisfaction with the writing performances of students in higher level courses” (Thaiss, 1998, p. 1). Although these new composition courses put an emphasis on writing, they also released faculty from outside of the English department of their responsibility to teach writing and created further separation of disciplines. Russell (1990) writes, “The resulting lack of student writing not only freed the faculty from much paper grading and interaction with students, leaving more time for research and service within their specific discourse communities, but in a deeper sense, it allowed faculty to ignore other disciplines” (pp. 55-56).

Unfortunately, the development of specific courses to teach writing did not eliminate student writing deficiencies. Professors teaching these courses were not always able to provide the writing instruction necessary, especially in the 1960s and 1970s when open admissions and social changes brought hundreds of new, unprepared, often first-generation college students to American college

and university campuses. The realization that “students graduated with bachelor’s degrees without ever having written a college paper” accented the questionable condition of writing in higher education (Howard and Jamieson, 1995, pp. 4-5). The climax of this perceived failure was made public in a 1975 *Newsweek* magazine article entitled, “Why Johnny Can’t Write.”

Overall, in the 19th century in American higher education, composition courses were “asked to bear most of the burden for development of written communication skill in all students” and yet apparently “bore little relevance to the communication demands of most fields” (Thaiss, 1998, p. 1). Many acknowledged a writing crisis among American students.

James Britton: Language for Learning

It was into this crisis that the WAC movement found its roots. Barbara Walvoord, (1990) an early leader, summarizes,

WAC goals at the local level were variously influenced by faculty frustration over students’ lack of writing skills; by impulses to assess students; by the reform vision of James Britton’s British group, who urged the use of expressive writing and more broadly the integration of the child’s language into the classroom; by ‘process’ pedagogy; by theories which emphasized how novices learn discourse conventions; and by liberation pedagogy embodied, for example, in the writings of Paulo Freire. (p. 61-62)

Art Young (1999), another early WAC leader, agrees that its direct lineage can be traced back to England with the “language for learning” movement of the

1960s led by James Britton, Nancy Martin, and their colleagues in their work for the British Schools Council Project. Britton's work is, in many ways, the foundation for the write-to-learn emphasis found in WAC. He sees language as the primary tool for organizing reality. He (1972) believes, "Language is a highly organized, systematic means of representing experience, and as such, it assists us to organize all other ways of representing" (p. 21). He argues that language can turn "confusion into order" and enable "us to construct for ourselves an increasingly faithful, objective and coherent picture of the world" (Britton, 1972, p. 105).

Britton explored the relationships between thought, language, and learning. He believed that we use language to communicate with each other, but we also use it to organize our thoughts. He concludes that "language is our principle means of classifying" (Britton, 1972, p. 23). Once we organize and classify our world we can make sense of it. Thus, for WAC proponents, Britton's ideas made sense in that writing, a primary form of language, could be used to organize thoughts and to help students think through ideas. Writing could be used as a tool for critical thinking because it helps students sort through issues and organize them.

Britton (1972) distinguishes between two roles of the individual: the participant, who is "participating *in the world's affairs*" and the spectator who is "on holiday from the world's affairs, someone contemplating experiences, enjoying them, vividly reconstructing them [...]" (p. 104). The "participant" is one who writes to communicate to others, is one who writes research papers and

reports. The “spectator” writes for herself, to think about issues, to make discoveries.

Drawing from these two designations, Britton and his colleagues (1977) define two categories of writing important to the WAC movement: the transactional, “language to get things done, to inform people...to advise or persuade or instruct people” and the expressive, “the kind of writing that might be called ‘thinking aloud on paper’” (pp. 88-89). Transactional writing is the mainstay in educational institutions where research papers, reports, business communications, etc. are the assignments required. However, Britton and his colleagues see expressive writing as the precursor for all other types of writing as well as an end in itself. In expressive writing, the individual is the primary audience, and he “draws on the whole store of his experience, and his whole social being” (Britton, et.al., 1977, p. 47). Britton (1972) continues, “In considering language as a mode of representing experience, our main stress has been upon its use in turning confusion into order, in enabling us to construct for ourselves an increasingly faithful, objective, and coherent picture of the world” (*Language and Learning*, p. 105).

Thus, in a constructivist way, Britton believes students can use expressive writing to help organize experiences and to reorder their thinking. As expressive writers, students can reflect and reconsider. After writing in an expressive mode and thinking through a subject, they can then write in the transactional mode where they can address a wider audience with greater confidence. Britton and his colleagues highly encourage the use of expressive writing before moving to

transactional writing, so students can spend time paying attention to and thinking about the issues they must tackle in their writing. As Britton (1972) writes, “In language in the role of spectator we operate on a different principle. We select and arrange our material first to please ourselves...” (p. 124).

Again, for WAC proponents, this use of writing as a method of encouraging students to think is foundational. Professors who use writing-to-learn assignments believe that the process of writing is crucial to the process of thinking. Writing is a way of enabling students to learn material better by processing it through the mental activity that takes place when writing. As students move from expressive to transactional writing, the role of the teacher is one of a guide, helping students as they think and write.

Janet Emig: The Importance of Process and Guidance

Janet Emig, (1983) another early leader in the history of WAC, writes “that the teaching of writing was deformed in the past as it is in the present by concentrating on what the teacher does, not on what the student is experiencing” (p. 1). She agrees with Britton that writing is a mode of exploration and discovery, and thus, an impetus for learning. In her studies of the brain she concludes, “Writing serves learning uniquely because writing as process-and-product possesses a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies” (Emig, 1983, p. 123). Emig (1983) asserts that writing is more valuable than speaking “because writing is often our representation of the world made visible, embodying both process and product, writing is more readily a form and source of learning than talking” (p. 125). Emig

(1983) built upon the work of Lev Vygotsky, A.R. Luria, and Jerome Bruner, who were convinced that writing is an impetus for “higher cognitive functions” (p. 123). She, too, agreed that writing was a method of thinking, of achieving higher cognition. WAC proponents agree with Emig that writing is a valuable tool for student thinking and learning.

Perhaps Emig’s most important contribution for WAC supporters, however, is her emphasis on process writing. She is a strong advocate of pre-writing as a method of thinking. Emig (1983) quotes Newman, “*Never attempt to write on any subject, until you fully understand it*” (p. 10). She speaks out strongly against traditional writing instruction in which the student receives a grade as feedback. She (1983) argues that “there is no room for writing as discovery” in the traditional classroom (Emig, 1983, p. 16). Instead she advocates, like Britton, that the teachers act as valuable guides for the students: “The time in the writing process of students where teachers can make a difference is different from the time we usually enter [...] . If we can be present when a student is first formulating his discourse [...] we can help him as [...] a collaborator” (Emig, 1983, p. 59). As collaborators, teachers can provide an audience for students and help them understand where confusion occurs for the reader. Emig (1983) also speaks out strongly against the traditional emphasis teachers place on “frivolous” matters, instead advocating that teachers concern themselves with what is really important in writing—the process. She considers what most composition teachers do “neurotic activity” since they spend so much time on

pointing out student errors, when in fact, no evidence exists to support this activity as helpful to the students (Emig, 1983, p. 94).

According to Chris Thaiss, Emig's argument was attractive to educators. Thaiss (1998) sums up Emig's central theories and her appeal to WAC supporters:

Her reasoning was to some extent based on neurophysiology—writing uses more of the brain than any other language mode, thus learning is more thoroughly reinforced. Her argument was also rhetorical—writing forces great care in thinking because it gives the reader the opportunity to ponder and criticize. It is also graphical—as a visual record of thought, writing constantly gives feedback to the writer/thinker and thus leads to refinement of thought. (p. 4)

Scholars like Britton and Emig challenged teachers to look carefully at the way they taught writing and encouraged them to become active guides to facilitate student thinking and learning.

Just How Important is Writing?

Many scholars have advocated the extensive use of writing for various reasons. One of the most important reasons is that writing helps students think. First emphasized by Britton (1972, 1977) and Emig (1983), others have also concluded that writing is a primary tool for student learning (Howard & Jamieson, 1995; Bean, 1996; McLeod & Miraglia, 2001). Emig (1983) in her studies, concluded that “writing involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain” (p. 126). Chaffee (2002) writes, “**Writing**, with its power to represent our thoughts,

feelings, and experiences symbolically, is the most important tool our thinking process has. Used together, thinking and writing enable us to create and communicate meaning” (p. 4). Hairston (1992) agrees that “writing helps us absorb and master new information” (p. 1). Not only do students learn material better when writing is involved, but, according to Nilson (1998), they “retain it longer” (p. 123). She believes “the power of writing is that it forces students to *actively think* about the material” (Nilson, 1998, p. 123). As a teaching tool for active learning, writing can play a tremendous role.

Interestingly, students understand the value of writing, and they rate the instructional benefits of a course according to the amount of writing assigned. Howard and Jamieson (1995) assert that writing “increases their sense of commitment and participation in a course” (p. 2). Light’s (2001) study of college and university students reveals that students believe that the courses that require the most writing are the most intellectually challenging. Pobywajlo (2001) reports the same conclusion when discussing a 2000 Association of American Colleges and Universities study: “when students are not required to write often, they get the message that little is expected of them...” (p. 13). In a study done at Roberts Wesleyan College in New York, students listed the following advantages of using writing in their courses: writing “promoted understanding [...] facilitated reasoning and problem solving [...] was a way to reinforce learning [...] helped retention [...] and promoted independent learning [...]” (Rose, 1992, pp. 65-68). Students realize the value of writing as a learning tool, and their course evaluations have reported that writing helps them understand course material (Herrington, 1981;

Rose, 1992). In my own personal teaching, students have agreed that simple assignments such as journals have helped them learn and retain material better.

Light (2001) was surprised to discover that students care deeply about writing and that they want help to improve in this area. He found that students appreciate writing for professors, but they also desire to write for their classmates. Students value the relationships that develop when they communicate with professors through writing. Burkam (1992) believes that regular written communication actually alleviates many of the tensions that students feel concerning their school work. This advantage may be one reason students care about their written work; they may realize that increased communication opens doors to their professors.

Perhaps the primary reason students care about writing, however, is that they realize that writing is one way to enter into the academic discourse of the university and the field they have chosen (Bazerman, 1985, 1988; Bartholomae, 1986). Howard and Jamieson (1995) write, "By perceiving writing as a conversation, students learn to see themselves as part of the ongoing process of making knowledge [...]" (p. 6). Howard and Jamieson (1995) assert that each discipline has its own language and that students become part of that discipline by learning and using that language. When students write in their chosen fields as their professors do, they become part of the academic community, and obviously, this is an important transition for students. They also realize that acquisition of the language will be required once they enter the work force.

Not only does the use of writing in the classroom result in positive rewards for students, it also increases faculty satisfaction and effectiveness (Howard and Jamieson, 1995; Pobywajlo, 2001; Herrington, 1981). Bean (1996) acknowledges that “professors who successfully integrate writing and critical thinking tasks into their courses often report a satisfying increase in their teaching pleasure: class discussions are richer, students are more fully engaged in their learning, and the quality of their performance improves” (p. 1). After participating in writing-across-the-curriculum workshops and learning how to incorporate writing in their courses, faculty often revisit their assumptions about teaching and make substantial changes (McCarthy & Walvoord, 1988; Young and Fulwiler, 1986). According to Fulwiler (1984), one administrator confessed that faculty workshops for the incorporation of writing helped improve his “overall faculty performance” (p. 123). The administrator revealed that he was impressed by “the potential for *faculty development*” that resulted from work done to help faculty with writing in their courses (qtd. in Fulwiler, 1984, p. 123). Not only do students become more active learners, but professors improve their teaching and experience more fulfilling classroom encounters when writing is added to the curriculum.

Professors have also discovered that the use of writing has positively changed their classroom environment. Anson (2002) records that faculty who use writing acknowledge “that students become more active learners, more thoughtful readers, and more engaged participants in class...” (p. x). McLeod and Miraglia (2001) write about this phenomenon: “writing disrupts the traditional pattern of classroom instruction...” (p. 16). According to Fulwiler and Young

(1990) “the intellectual and social rewards of writing are powerful. In classroom terms, this leads to innovative practices: placing students at the center of their own learning, shifting to participatory methods, and valuing student diversity” (p. 79). Students in classes that emphasize writing are no longer passive knowledge gatherers. As previously mentioned teacher effectiveness increases with the use of writing, and student learning is enhanced.

Many scholars advocate the use of journals and/or portfolios as ways to improve classroom teaching and increase faculty satisfaction (Fulwiler, 1980; Selfe, Petersen & Nahrgang, 1986; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1983; Ford & Larkin, 1978). Rose (1992) writes of her experience with math journals, “As teachers read the writing, they are exposed to individual needs, common difficulties, and feedback on the course; with this information, teachers can become more responsive to short-term adjustments in the course and long-term improvements in teaching” (71). Writing improves student engagement and learning, and thus, often increases the overall effectiveness of the professor.

An additional benefit for both students and professors is the relationship building that often takes place when writing occurs (Pobywajlo, 2001). Light (2001) discovered that seniors were deeply appreciative of the one-on-one time they spent with their professors while working on a capstone research project. They considered their close working relationship as one of the highlights of their college career. Sibley, a math professor, experienced the same relationship building when using writing in a math class:

The more mathematically ambitious students come more frequently

to consult with me, giving me a chance to know students who sometimes have had no need to seek help. Further, when I write letters of recommendation, I find it much easier to write something special about the students who have written papers for me. I have a broader understanding of these students, as well as a specific context in which to discuss their strengths and weaknesses. (p. 53)

In a survey of 401 community colleges, Stout and Magnotto (1988) discovered that faculty interaction was one of the three benefits of writing across the curriculum mentioned by students.

However, many other benefits are obvious when writing is used in the college and university classroom. Fulwiler (1987), Howard and Jamieson (1995), and Berlin (1987) view writing as an aid to reading. Many scholars suggest that course writing is essential in assessment (Nilson, 1998; Pobywajlo, 2001; Rose, 1992) and can even help in retention due to the improved relationships between faculty and students (Pobywajlo, 2001). John C. Bean (1996) in his book, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* addresses expressive writing, journals, and other write-to-learn assignments, and his book is a valuable guide for all professors. Bean strongly believes that the act of writing changes students from passive to active learners. Writing requires the students to become engaged with the classroom material whether it be reading textbooks or responding to lectures. He encourages teachers to make writing an integral part of the classroom experience. Bean (1996) remarks "that we are teaching not simply a way of

writing, but a style of thinking” (p. 43). He (1996) encourages professors to create assignments that create “cognitive dissonance,” assignments that force students to think about a subject and to gain a new perspective on it (Bean, p. 27).

With all these advantages, one would conclude that colleges and universities emphasize writing in the classroom and that students are proficient writers. But a closer look reveals that this is not always the case.

Putting the Theories into Action

Writing to Learn

Growing enrollments, writing deficiencies, teacher frustrations, and this new way of thinking about writing resulted in radical changes in higher education. Individuals such as Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, Art Young, Toby Fulwiler, and Barbara Walvoord have led the movement that is now referred to as the writing-across-the-curriculum movement. They have adopted and adapted the information provided by Britton, Emig, and others to greatly change the world of academic writing. These WAC advocates have focused on two important ideas: the expressive writing to learn (as first emphasized by Britton and Emig) and writing to communicate (Britton’s transactional writing). The first emphasis resulted in a movement to bring writing into the classroom as a tool for learning. The use of free writes, journals, and process writing was encouraged. The latter resulted in an emphasis on writing, not only in English classes, but in all classes. According to Chris Anson (2002), author of many articles and books on writing across the curriculum, “The movement [...] had its beginnings in a conviction:

writing belongs in all courses in every discipline” (p. ix). This emphasis encouraged all professors to teach their students to write in their disciplines.

Art Young and Toby Fulwiler were among the earliest proponents of writing across the curriculum in the United States. Teaching at Michigan Technological University, they strongly advocated the use of writing as an effective tool for learning in all disciplines. Young (1999) sums up their conviction:

One way to think about the classroom uses of writing is to consider writing as a valuable tool for learning as well as for communication. If we are willing to consider making such a distinction, then we can talk about designing certain writing assignments primarily to help students learn the material of the course and other assignments to help them communicate what they have learned to others. (p. 9)

This approach to writing is one that most professors can accept, although Young (1999) cautions against creating writing assignments that are merely “add-ons” (p. 5). Simply assigning an essay is not enough; professors must make sure that the writing assigned is applicable to the course material and that it encourages students to think. Writing assignments should not be “busy work,” but rather specific, intentional learning experiences. Good writing assignments require a great deal of thinking and planning on the part of the professor.

Toby Fulwiler also advocates the use of writing as a learning tool. He (1987) asserts that it is often the “act of writing/thinking” that “helps students synthesize material for themselves and so increases its value” (*Teaching with*

Writing, p. 18). He and Young strongly believe that writing can play an important role in this synthesis in any discipline, not just in English classes. The importance of writing as a learning tool cannot be overestimated. William Zinsser, (1988) author of *Writing to Learn*, agrees with Young and Fulwiler that we “write to find out what we know and what we want to say” (viii).

Writing in the Disciplines

Expressive writing, used to help students learn, is one strand of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement; the second strand, the transactional, is defined by John Bean (1996), as the Social Constructivist strand. Social Constructivists believe that knowledge is created by individuals in communities. Bean (1996) writes, “Knowledge is ‘known’ through the discourse of the community that creates it” (p. 48). Thus, the second role of writing across the curriculum is, as Bean (1996) continues, “to initiate students into the particularized discourse communities of the academy” (p. 49). Many scholars (Maimon, 1981; Bruffee, 1984, 1993; Williams, 1990) see the writing in each discipline as distinct unto itself. Students need to be taught how to write as biologists, historians, psychologists. Bartholomae (1986), author of “Inventing the University” asserts, “there is, to be sure, an important distinction to be made between learning history [. . .] and learning to write as an historian” (p. 145). Bartholomae (1986) argues for writing in the disciplines:

The student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience, as though he were a member of the

academy or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist [...] .

(p.135)

Peter Elbow, an early proponent of expressivist writing, also argues that students should be able to write in their disciplines and about their disciplines. He asserts, “although we may be unsatisfied unless students can write about what they are learning in the professional discourse of the field” teachers “should be equally unsatisfied unless they can write about it *not* using the lingo of the discipline” (Elbow, 1991, p. 137). He believes if students can do both kinds of writing, they have mastered the course material.

Writing must be taught by those in the discipline, by the experts who know how to do it. This teaching of writing in individual subject areas is quite a shift from the earlier days of allowing only English professors to teach writing. WAC emphasizes the role of each teacher as guides to bring students into their particular domains.

Some Tools of Writing across the Curriculum

Journals

Drawing from the ideas of Britton and expressive writing, Young (1999), Fulwiler (1980, 1987), Anson and Beach (1995), Yancey (1995), and John Bean (1996) have encouraged many write-to-learn methods, including journals, reflective essays, and portfolios. They see the value of process writing to provide students with the opportunities necessary to think through writing. Fulwiler’s (1987) admonition to help students become better learners through the use of journals is especially intriguing: “Journal writing won’t make passive students

miraculously active learners; it does, however, make it harder for students to remain passive” (p. 15). Anson (1995), working with Beach, agrees that journals are invaluable learning tools that help students delve “into the material of our courses more deeply, with more sophistication” (p. vii).

Journals provide a place for students to ask questions. Brooks and Brooks (1996) believe that “in order to search for meaning, students must have the opportunity to form and ask questions” (p. 54). Teachers can encourage students to write any questions they may have in their journals. These questions can then be incorporated into the curriculum at appropriate times to be answered by the student, the class, or by the teacher. The teacher can also use the journal questions by answering with additional questions to guide the student’s thinking.

Journals can be the place for expressive writing. When Britton and his colleagues (1977) studied the writing of high school seniors, they discovered that 84% of the writing was transactional and less than 4% was expressive.

According to Toby Fulwiler (1980), author of *The Journal Book*, “journal writing works because every time students write, they individualize instruction; the act of silent writing, even for five minutes, generates ideas, observations, emotions” (p. 16). Students need a place where they can think and write.

Journal writing has also been seen as a way to improve student reading, a skill in which most students need to improve. Berlin (1987) asserts, “Most college teachers today, within and without the English department, would agree that students need additional experience in interpreting literary texts” (pp. 2-3).

Pat Belanoff (1987) has used journals to encourage students to think differently about reading and writing:

My basic purpose in all this is to help students realize that whenever they read, they interpret; that, in fact, reading is interpretation. What I've discovered is that the greater their awareness of this becomes, the more rewarding it becomes to them to follow through on their interpretations: they begin to own their interpretations. (p. 107)

John Bean (1996) encourages professors to make writing an integral part of the classroom experience, and for him and others, journals can play a vital role in that process.

Portfolios

Many WAC proponents have also encouraged the use of portfolios within individual classes and across the curriculum. Kathleen Yancey (1997) has contributed much to the use of portfolios for learning and for writing assessment. Drawing from the work of Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, Yancey has written several articles and books about portfolio use, including *Situating Portfolios: Four Perspectives* (1997) and *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* (1998). She agrees with Elbow's (1993) conclusion, "Portfolios permit me to refrain from grading individual papers and limit myself to writerly evaluative comments—and help students see this as a positive rather than a negative thing, a chance to be graded on a body of their best work that can be judged more fairly" (p. 193). Portfolio use has increased, and as Thaiss (1998) acknowledges, "the portfolio [.

. .] has become in recent years an important vehicle for writing assessment both in classrooms and in large-scale (e.g., statewide) testing situations” (p. 56).

Writing-Intensive Courses

Many schools bridge the gap between writing to learn and writing to communicate by writing-intensive classes, classes outside the English department with a certain pre-determined number of written assignments. According to McLeod (1987), the primary goal of these courses is to introduce “students to the writing tasks of their chosen disciplines” (p. 22). Although the intentions are good, I believe the use of writing-intensive courses may send the wrong message to students. The very act of designating some courses as using writing tends to imply that others do not. It can insinuate that some professors see writing as important and others do not. Instead, writing should be a vital part of each course.

Writing to learn and writing to communicate are both crucial aspects of a college education. The WAC movement realizes this assessment and actively promotes the use of both in all educational institutions. McLeod (1988) asserts “the ultimate goal of all WAC programs is to establish writing as a teaching and learning tool throughout the entire postsecondary curriculum, integrating it completely into every class and every discipline. We are out to change the world” (p. 5).

WAC and Small Liberal Arts Institutions

The WAC movement began in the 1970s with small liberal arts schools like Walker leading the way. Maimon’s six-week faculty seminar at Beaver

College is often viewed as the first writing-across-the-curriculum workshop and the example that other schools followed. Historically, liberal arts colleges have been strong advocates for writing. Young and Fulwiler (1986) write, “liberal education at its best has always acknowledged the significance of writing; students have been asked to do a great deal of written work, and that work has often been subjected to careful analysis” (foreword). McLeod (1988) acknowledges that WAC programs can work anywhere, but that many scholars think of “the small, homogeneous liberal arts school as the ideal model for WAC programs” (p. 3).

WAC is also a natural fit in general education courses, especially at liberal arts colleges. Pobywajlo (2001) explains the close connection:

Writing-Across-the Curriculum programs and general education programs share common goals [...] both aim to broaden intellectual interests, give students practice in different modes of inquiry, and improve critical thinking, reading, and writing across the disciplines [...] in hope that students gain the “ability to think like educated persons.” (p. 9)

Liberal arts colleges, due to their very nature, should be leaders in the writing-across-the-curriculum movement. The emphasis on writing helps not only the students, but also the entire academic community. Young and Fulwiler (1986) see the importance of writing in such schools: “When writing becomes a cornerstone of a liberal education, a humanistic activity for discovery and commitment... then it nurtures and is nurtured by a community of scholars” (7).

Writing Across the Curriculum and Walker College

It would appear that Walker College would be the perfect place for an active writing-across-the-curriculum program. However, a comparison with other similar schools reveals that Walker is lagging behind in the emphasis on writing. For the past several years, I have been involved with a WAC project through the Appalachian College Association, a granting foundation made up of thirty-five small Appalachian colleges and universities much like Walker. The WAC project has included up to sixteen of those schools, and I have had considerable interaction with representatives from those schools and have actually done several projects with individuals from many of those schools.

A report given to the funding foundation in 2000 concluded that many of the WAC schools had made progress in their emphasis on writing. Many had revamped their curriculum to integrate more writing, and a couple had actually created a writing handbook that was specific to their schools. Twelve of the schools had active writing centers, with several staffed by full-time professors. One college was allotting six hours release time to a professor "to lead the effort to support and develop writing and communication-based activities" (Maharaj-Boggs). Several of these schools worked together each summer to train student writing center tutors. At the time of the final WAC report, all the student tutors at one college were certified. Five schools worked together to create an on-line tutor-training manual. Eight schools had faculty workshops to encourage the use of writing. Many of the schools had WAC directors who were granted release time to guide their campuses. Several schools were moving to a portfolio

approach, with Queen College requiring a portfolio “in each major field of study” (Maharaj-Boggs). When compared to these other, similar institutions, it is obvious that Walker College lags behind in their emphasis on writing across the curriculum.

CHAPTER FOUR

My Research

A Look at the Literature

Although limited research has been done in the area of writing and faculty beliefs, the conclusions are similar. Most studies reveal that while professors strongly believe that all students should be able to write, most agree that students have poor writing skills (Beaver, 1990; Masse and Popovich, 1998). Professors believe that they do not have the time or the training to assign or to assess writing in their courses (Adams, 1985; Faery, 1993; Graves, 1978; Neill, 1982; Masse & Popovich, 1998). Faculty members also have concerns about their own writing abilities (Graves, 1978; Robertson, 1981; Masse and Popovich, 1998). Unfortunately, many professors believe that writing is something that only the English department does (Adams, 1985).

Other research has focused on the use of writing-across-the-curriculum practices. Barbara Walvoord and colleagues (1997) studied faculty in three WAC programs. Their research, recorded in the book *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs* published in 1997, primarily dealt with faculty changes as a result of WAC workshops, but they acknowledge that the research that has been done has not addressed why teachers do what they do. The only exception is a study done by Carneson (1994), which concludes, according to Walvoord (1997), that teachers have “very sensible reasons for decisions” (p. 11). However, Carneson’s study focused on elementary and secondary school teachers, not college professors. The study

completed by Walvoord and colleagues (1997) had a different focus: to investigate “how teachers change over time” and to discover “what factors influence those changes” specifically in regards to WAC workshops and implementing WAC pedagogies (p. 15). Their research involved faculty at the University of Cincinnati, Towson State University, and Whitworth College, three institutions with writing-across-the-curriculum programs. They concluded that faculty who involved themselves with WAC did so as part of their own academic growth, to aid them in their teaching skills. These professors were actively involved in their own faculty development even before their involvement in writing across the curriculum workshops; they were “early adopters.” Although this research project is helpful in understanding the role WAC plays in faculty pedagogical changes, it did not specifically address the reasons faculty do not use writing.

However, several studies are applicable to my research. One conducted by David Kember and Lyn Gow (1994) concluded that professors fall into two categories: knowledge transmitters or learning facilitators. Depending on which side they fall, professors’ teaching methods are very different. Knowledge transmitters believe that content is vitally important, so they typically lecture to deliver important information. Learning facilitators, on the other hand, are more interested in helping students learn, so they actively engage students and motivate them to learn on their own. These teachers are more likely to use more interactive approaches, such as writing-across-the-curriculum activities. Interestingly, Kember and Gow discovered that the students who want to learn

are able to do so better with faculty who fall into the learning facilitator category. These professors encourage deeper learning, and even their curriculum supports their teaching approach. However, Kember and Gow (1994) conclude their research by acknowledging the difficulty of changing faculty attitudes because “existing conceptions have often been formed as a result of lengthy careers in academia” (p. 71).

A second study done by John Braxton, Mardy Eimers, and Alan Bayer (1996) also focuses on faculty teaching practices. They questioned whether faculty accepted or rejected teaching improvement programs based on accepted academic norms. They specifically looked at the area of improving college teaching. These researchers concluded that “Without supportive norms in place, implementation of such recommendations are dependent on the inclinations of faculty” (617). They discovered weak normative support for improvement of teaching, implying that professors are more concerned about their knowledge base in their area than in imparting that knowledge to students in a constructive way. The researchers considered this finding one of the most significant of their entire study. Their conclusion was that “faculty did not consider it ‘inappropriate’ if they avoid reading about college teaching, bypass professional development opportunities to enhance their own teaching, and/or refuse to incorporate new teaching methods or procedures into their own classrooms” (Braxton, Eimers, Bayer, p. 619). If professors do not have strong normative support to improve teaching methods, they are less likely to feel motivated to do so.

Deborah Swanson-Owens reached a similar conclusion in her 1986 study. She attempted to identify the reasons faculty resisted writing-across-the-curriculum practices even though they realized that writing provided thinking and learning opportunities. Swanson-Owens (1986) acknowledged that “teachers are not passive transmitters of knowledge but rather active and adaptive agents who filter curricular innovations [...] through complex meaning systems” (p. 71). Swanson-Owens (1986) suggests that “potential disjunctions between outsider and insider perspectives” exist and that faculty perspectives are not always taken into consideration when making curricular changes (p. 94). The various studies imply that faculty can do more to aid student learning, but that they frequently remain resistant to the changes that would be necessary to do so.

Although considerable research has been done pertaining to writing across the curriculum, few have focused specifically on faculty attitudes towards the use of writing in their classes. My desire was to look into what Swanson-Owens (1986) calls the “complex meaning systems” to see why faculty did or did not incorporate writing into their courses. I hoped to discover why some professors have adopted WAC pedagogies and others have been reluctant to do so.

Methodology

A Qualitative Approach

I chose to use qualitative research methods in my study because I was interested in discovering how faculty viewed writing and how they made meaning of their past experiences with writing, especially their own academic backgrounds

and their faculty development training. I also chose qualitative methods because I desired to create a descriptive study that focused on individual stories. I was interested in what Jack Douglas (1970) calls the “meaningful stuff,” the “forces” that move individuals (cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3-4). I agreed with Merriam (1998) that “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 1).

Qualitative research has a long history that reaches back to the ancient world, a history as old as “recorded history,” according to Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p. 4). In the early part of the 1900s, scholars used it extensively in the sociology work of the Chicago School (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Although it has critics, it has been the method of choice for many scholars, including the distinguished researchers John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Emile Durkheim. Contemporary education researchers Harry Walcott, Egon Guba, Yvonna Lincoln, Robert Stake, and Elliot Eisner have also been advocates of this research method (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). According to John Creswell (1998),

Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration without apology or comparisons to quantitative research. Good models of qualitative inquiry demonstrate the rigor, difficulty, and time-consuming nature of this approach. (p. 9)

Although many different strands of qualitative research exist, most scholars agree on several characteristics. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), Morse and Richards (2002), and Creswell (1998), qualitative research is concerned with context and process, is descriptive and inductive, and emphasizes meaning and the role of the researcher.

Qualitative researchers use natural settings. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) assert that qualitative researchers “go directly to the particular setting in which they are interested to observe and collect their data” (p. 431). Once there, they spend many hours observing, interviewing, and collecting data. Their goal is to see how individuals live and to understand their situations. This characteristic describes my research study. I concentrated my efforts at Walker College, interviewing professors in their offices or other locations on campus.

Process is the second defining characteristic. Bogdan and Biklen write, “Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products” (p. 6). Jack Douglas comments that qualitative researchers, as phenomenologists are interested in “the ‘forces’ that move human beings, as human beings rather than simply as human bodies” (cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3-4). Their interest takes them to unstudied places and to people who often do not have a voice. These researchers want to see how others make sense of their world. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) conclude that “*for the qualitative researcher, all perspectives are worthy of study*” (p. 9). My goal was to study the reasons behind the behaviors of Walker College professors and to understand them and their work.

Qualitative research is also descriptive; the researchers use many words instead of numbers, and they tell stories. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) explain that these researchers “seek to portray what they have observed and recorded in all of its richness” (p. 432). Qualitative researchers use rich descriptive language and gather their data through interviews, observations, and a variety of documents. I enjoy writing, and thus, the freedom to describe experiences in a rich context intrigued and excited me.

Another word to describe qualitative research is inductive. As Morse and Richards (2002) write, “All qualitative methods seek to discover understanding or to achieve explanation *from* the data instead of from (or in addition to) prior knowledge or theory” (p. 2). Qualitative research is often seen as discovery; there is flexibility to allow the researcher to change directions as the data dictates. I was curious about what I would find, and because I did not feel comfortable making too many predictions, the inductive nature of qualitative research appealed to me.

The emphasis in qualitative research is on making meaning. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) explain,

Quantitative researchers usually base their work on the belief that facts and feelings can be separated, that the world is a *single reality* made up of facts that can be discovered. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, assume that the world is made up of *multiple realities*, socially constructed by different individual views of the same situation. (p. 16)

Qualitative researchers have to be aware of researcher bias and the misuse of data. To counter that concern, qualitative researchers have to be diligent to make “sure they capture perspectives accurately” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 7). They must be careful to explain their procedures and their own personal biases. They must work hard to check the validity of their data and to present that data honestly. The above characteristics explain why qualitative research is the most applicable for my study. Although I had a few theories about why some professors used writing and others did not and why Walker College should have a premier WAC program and does not, I was not confident enough about my assumptions to support a hypothesis. Therefore, I agree with Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) who state, “qualitative researchers want to know what the participants in a study are thinking and why they think what they do” (432). Thus, the inductive method used in qualitative research made sense to me. As Taylor and Bogdan (1998) report, “Qualitative researchers develop concepts, insights, and understandings from patterns in the data rather than collected data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses, or theories” (p. 7). As Morse and Richards (2002) assert, “experience is considered to be an individual’s perceptions of his or her presence in the world at the moment when things, truths, or values are constituted” (p. 44). Qualitative’s inductive approach allowed me to see how faculty members viewed and interpreted their experiences. I collected data, but more importantly, I interpreted data to see if obvious patterns would lead me to understand my colleagues, the work they do, and the role writing plays in that work.

I also liked the flexibility that a qualitative research design afforded. Although I had preconceived questions to ask of my participants, I anticipated that those questions could change as the study progressed. I like talking to people, and the interview process greatly appealed to me. I desired to “empathize and identify with the people” I interviewed, and as a faculty member at the same institution, I believed that I already had some understanding of their views (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 7).

My research can best be described by what Merriam (1998) calls “basic or generic” qualitative research because it included “description, interpretation, and understanding,” and I planned to identify “recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories” (p. 12). I hoped to learn enough about my colleagues to be able to understand what they did with writing and why they did it.

In many respects, my research could also be considered a case study with a “within-site” (Creswell, 1998) emphasis because I concentrated my efforts on my campus alone, with only past and present Walker College professors as participants. Merriam (1998) concludes that “Case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluation programs, and for informing policy,” and in many ways, I planned to do all three (p. 41). I interviewed twenty-three professors. I had already interviewed the present and past Academic Deans in an attempt to trace the history of writing decisions made on our campus. Although this focus was limited, I believe the transferability of the data to other institutions of higher learning will not be only possible but will also be very helpful. My work should advance what is already known about writing

and teaching practices and help academics understand more about faculty perspectives.

The Process

Although I began my research with a phenomenological “strong, orienting framework,” (Creswell, 1998), I used interviews to gather my data. I eventually want to use my findings in a more action participatory action research model, but for my research, I was more interested in learning about my fellow faculty members than in enacting change. Interviewing individuals was the best method of gaining the information I needed. My primary reason for doing this research project was to gain data-based understandings that could later be used to improve writing at Walker College. As one of the change agents, I greatly desired to see improvement in student writing, but I was convinced that changes must occur in teaching methodology and administrative guidance and perhaps curriculum before that can happen. I also realized that I was not completely sure why some faculty did not use writing as a tool in their teaching repertoire; therefore, I was seeking understanding in this research. I believed that once the conversation began faculty members could and would devise ways to help improve the teaching and learning that takes place on our campus. Although I had ideas about ways to help professors teach using a writing mode, I had to first determine whether they needed and wanted help and then discover how they best believed that help could be delivered.

Thus, my role as researcher was a unique one. On the positive side, I am a member of the community being studied, and I count the individuals

interviewed as friends. I hope they have been and will continue to be honest with me about their concerns. On the other hand, I am a writing professor, and that may have caused some discomfort at times. Morse and Richards (2002) warn of the danger of being an insider and a researcher: “the disadvantage of the insider’s taken-for-granted assumptions, commitments, labels, and ways of seeing” (p. 74). I wondered if my biases would create problems in my research findings. I was concerned that my enthusiasm for writing might create an unnecessary burden in the interview process. Would my colleagues see me as the “writing guru” who looked down upon them if they did not use writing? These were issues I continually addressed. Would those interviewed avoid certain responses because they believed they would reflect on my teaching of writing or on their teaching in their subject area? Perhaps, and this is another issue I confronted with each interview. I hoped to alleviate those problems by being honest with them. I also realized that I strongly believe in writing as a teaching and learning tool, so I had to be open to discovering other teaching methods that are just as effective. I attempted to practice reflectivity, so that if I needed to make changes in my interview questions or process, I did. I want the best for our students and for our professors at Walker College. I believe I convinced my colleagues that their help was valuable and that I needed their open and reflective responses, regardless of my presence in the room. At the completion of the study, I considered the responses I received and offered possible suggestions for change. In this way, my research resulted in recommendations that are, in fact, a work of all the participants in the study.

Philosophical Perspective or Paradigm

I approached my research questions from a constructivist perspective. Although I could identify with the critical theorists in their desire to enact change, I believed that my research required that I play a less active role, at least initially. The constructivist approach worked because as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) acknowledge about constructivism, “The inquiry aims of this paradigm are oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings...” (p. 100). My goal is to improve the teaching of writing on my campus, but first I had to understand how professors viewed writing and how they used it, so I was looking for understanding. The changes will come after data are collected and possible theories are discovered and discussed with the Academic Dean. As Merriam asserts (1998) “Qualitative researchers *are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed ... how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world*” (p. 6).

According to Thomas Schwandt, (1994) the roots of constructivism “reach back to the earliest philosophical arguments over a rational foundation for knowledge” (p. 125). He (1994) explains the basic tenet of constructivism:

Human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience and further, we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. (pp. 125-6)

Thus, individuals create their own reality. In my research, I wanted to see how professors made sense of their past educational experiences and how they used writing in their teaching because of these past experiences.

The constructivist perspective also works because this methodology emphasizes the social construction of knowledge and the idea that “the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the `findings’ are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). They (1994) continue, “individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between and among* investigator and respondents” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 111). I worked with my colleagues to discover how they perceived writing and how we could all use writing to benefit our students.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), constructivists see the role of values as important in research: “values have pride of place; they are seen as ineluctable in shaping . . . inquiry outcomes” (p. 114). I believed this to be true. I realized that I brought to my research my own personal experiences and biases. Merriam (1998) warns of the “bias inherent in this type of research” (p. 22). I am a professor of writing; it is obvious that writing is important to me. I want all students to be good writers, and I desire that all professors teach and use writing in their courses. I understand how to use writing as a teaching and a learning tool, and I often forget that other professors do not have this knowledge. I realized that I have a personal band wagon that I want everyone to ride, but that unfortunately, not everyone wants to do so. Thus, I had to be careful in the

research process not to turn individuals away from the very practice I wanted to encourage them to use. Even though I approached my work from an emic perspective (Merriam, 1998), I had to be careful to understand the perspectives of my participants. I also had to be honest with my research findings; I was pleasantly surprised to find that more writing took place than I assumed, but I did discover that indeed, in some classes there was no writing. I carefully documented my findings and interpreted the data that existed. My project is not values free, but I hope it reveals the values of honesty and integrity.

Data Collection

To bring this project to fruition, I interviewed professors at Walker College. I had already completed a preliminary study for a research class in which I used a purposive sample; the six faculty members were chosen on the basis of my perception of their use of writing. As Merriam (1998) asserts, “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). This is indeed what I tried to do. I chose what Patton (1990) calls information-rich cases (qtd. in Merriam, 1998, p. 61). I interviewed some professors who used writing extensively in their courses and others who did not based on what I knew about their courses and what students said about them. These initial semi-structured interviews took place in individual faculty offices at an agreed upon time, and participants chose pseudonyms for themselves. Transcripts of the interviews were made available to the professors interviewed. All taped interviews are stored in my locked office on campus, and I

did all the transcription work. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, and each individual interviewed signed an informed consent form. In this preliminary study, I interviewed six professors:

Dr. Plath is the Chair of Social Learning, a Professor of Psychology, and the Director of Counseling. He began teaching at Walker College in 1981 and is responsible for Psychology 100, a one-hour course required of all freshmen students.

Dr. Yeats was an Assistant Professor of Bible and taught at Walker College from 2000 to 2003. One of his main responsibilities was teaching Bible survey courses: Old Testament Survey and New Testament Survey, required courses of all Walker students. Dr. Yeats is extremely competent with technology, and he created amazing computer-related assignments. Unfortunately, Dr. Yeats left Walker College to pursue another position the year after I interviewed him.

Dr. Raven is an Associate Professor of Biology and has taught at Walker College since 2000. In addition to upper division science classes, he teaches Biology 110 and 111, the science courses chosen by most freshmen and sophomores.

Dr. Fitzgerald is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and has taught at Walker College since 1996. She is one of the campus counselors, and she teaches the General Psychology course, a freshmen level course.

Dr. Lewis is the Sub-Area Chair of Communications and an Associate Professor of Communications. He has taught at Walker College since 1998, and

he is responsible for teaching Speech Communication, a required course for all students who graduate from Walker College.

Dr. Poe is a Professor of Biology and has taught at Walker College since 1972 and teaches Biology 110 and 111, freshman level courses, as well as several upper division science courses.

In these early interviews, I asked the following questions and then followed up with prompts to gain information about my colleagues and their teaching:

1. How long have you been teaching at Walker College?
2. How would you describe your students' writing abilities?
3. What role does writing play in your classroom?
4. What types of writing do you assign in your courses?
5. How would you describe your writing assignments?
6. What concerns do you have about designing writing assignments?
7. Do your writing assignments encourage process writing? If so, how?
8. Do your writing assignments encourage collaboration? If so, how?
9. How many pages do you think your students write in your classes?
10. How do you feel about grading student writing?
11. What concerns you most about grading the written work of students?
12. What do you consider important when you are evaluating student writing?

13. Tell me about your educational background: did you write much in your graduate courses? Were you taught how to write in your discipline?

Did you receive help with writing your thesis? Dissertation?

14. How can we as faculty improve our students' scores in the area of writing on exit exams?

In these early interviews, I was interested in how faculty dealt with the issues of critical thinking and technology, so I asked several questions related to those areas. However, as I narrowed my research question, I decided not to continue to ask those types of questions. Even though I did use a structured interview guide with these interviews, I was flexible enough to permit the interviews to go down pertinent paths. I considered my questions to be fairly open-ended, and when I felt it valuable, I did take the participants in different directions by asking probing questions. I used the information gained from the pilot study when it was applicable to my research question.

Once I began serious dissertation work, I began interviewing more professors. In the summer of 2003, I interviewed fifteen professors and the Academic Dean. I asked them many of the questions listed above, but I added more questions related to what Walker College could do to help them incorporate writing into their classes, if they choose to do so. I used what Seidman (1998) calls "maximum variation sampling" to select these professors. This sampling technique allowed me to select participants "who reflect the wide range in the larger population under study," thus I chose professors who I believed used writing extensively in their classes, some who I felt did not, and others who I was

not sure about (Seidman, 1998, p. 46). My belief about their use of writing was based on their comments about their teaching and comments I have heard about them from their students. I attempted to choose an equal number of each of the above categories. Merriam (1998) calls this type of sampling “small, nonrandom, purposeful, theoretical,” and these words adequately describe how I chose the participants (p. 9). I considered all the professors to be friends, and they were fairly accessible to me to interview. However, one person I asked refused to be interviewed, and she gave no reason for doing so. She agreed to answer my questions by email, but not by personal interview. By the time I completed the interview process, I interviewed twenty-three professors or one-third of the entire faculty. I believe this number gave me a good representation of my colleagues.

I followed up my preliminary interviews by returning to ask additional questions of many of the participants interviewed. In the first interviews, I gathered information concerning their use or non-use of writing; later I wanted to query them to learn how they viewed writing and how they explained the ways they did or did not use writing. I asked some questions based on the answers given in the prior interviews, but this time I asked probing questions to encourage the participants to share more information with me. Since we are all friends, our interviews were very conversational. Although Seidman (1998) recommends that interviews be spaced three weeks apart, that timing was not possible for me due to my course of study and other constraints.

The second round of interviews required a different Informed Consent Form. After much thought, I concluded that my participants need to be warned of

possible repercussions of their interviews. Although I strove for confidentiality, I realized that Walker is such a small institution that it might be hard to hide the identities of the individuals, especially if I acknowledged the area in which they taught, and I wanted to be able to do that in my research because I thought that would be valuable information. I gave them pseudonyms and tried to keep their identities confidential, but that may not be completely possible. So in the new Informed Consent Form, I let the participants know that their identities may be ascertained from the information given and allowed them a chance to decline the interview if they wished. However, this possibility did not hinder my colleagues from participating in the interviews and from being honest in their responses. I also created a pseudonym for my college so that further confidentiality would be maintained.

The following questions formed the basis of my latter interviews, but again, I was flexible enough to allow us to divert into other areas if I deemed them fruitful.

To determine how faculty view writing:

1. How important do you feel writing is in your discipline?
2. If students pursue a major in your area, how important will writing be to them in their careers?

To determine their pedagogical background:

1. How were you taught to write in your discipline?
2. What influences your teaching style?

3. How do the qualities of the best teacher you knew appear in your instruction?
4. If you could give others a gift-wrapped box that contained the best qualities of your teaching style, what items would it contain?
5. What do you see as the advantages of using writing in your teaching?
6. Do you use write-to-think exercises?
7. In what ways can you enhance your students' learning through the use of writing?
8. How do you think our administration can help you incorporate more writing into your classes?
9. Who do you think should teach writing on our campus?
10. What role should the Academic Dean play in the use of writing on our campus?

To help explain their reasons for using or not using writing:

1. How comfortable are you with using writing in your courses?
2. What do you consider important when evaluating student writing?

Concluding questions:

1. What do you see as your role in improving student scores in the area of writing on exit exams?
2. If there is a disjunction between your views of the importance of writing and the amount of writing you use in the classroom, how do explain that disjunction?

As with previous interviews, I transcribed all the interviews in their entirety and gave the participants a paper copy of the transcripts. I asked them to read over the copies to make sure I had recorded their information adequately. I also made it clear to the participants that I would exclude any of the interview material that they wanted me to exclude. I coded all interviews according to themes that I discovered. I was specifically looking for information that described how faculty used writing, and if they did not, for the reasons they gave for not doing so. I initially used color coding with highlighters; I then began making notations in the margins. Although I realized that research software exists, I felt comfortable using Microsoft Word with its cut and paste features. I wrote the results as chapters of my dissertation and eventually will make recommendations to my Academic Dean.

All interview tapes have been stored in my office on campus, an office that stays locked unless I am there. All paper transcripts, as well as computer files have been stored at my private residence.

Conceptual Underpinnings

Although my research questions pertained to faculty and their use of writing, I realized that teaching practices stem from beliefs about teaching and student learning. Pedagogical issues were really at stake here. Typically, college teachers enter their profession without training, and they often do not know how to teach. Reinsmith (1992) writes, "The blunt fact is that most teachers in higher education do not come to their craft with anything other than a rudimentary sense of how teaching should progress" (p. 178). The primary

teaching strategy is the lecture because “many teachers are socialized into believing that lecturing is the normal way to teach” (Brookfield, 1990, p. 71). They usually teach in the manner in which they were taught, and what they know is limited to the lecture. Joyce (1978) acknowledges “the normal teaching styles of most teachers are extremely restricted” (p. 36).

Research has shown that college professors are reluctant to change their teaching behaviors, even when it is proven that doing so would make a difference in student learning and faculty satisfaction (Murray, 1997). Many scholars are convinced that good teaching does make a difference (McKeachie, 1997; Hativa, 2000; Hativa & Goodyear, 2002; Grasha, 1996), but they all agree that it is difficult to convince college professors to improve their teaching skills. I believe that writing is a very valuable tool in the teaching repertoire, but one that is unfamiliar to many college professors. They are unwilling to learn new techniques and new skills, and their students suffer for their lack of pedagogical growth.

Research has revealed that there are several reasons for faculty resistance to change in their teaching methods. Unfortunately, as Hativa (2000) relates, “knowledge and understanding of the material do not necessarily translate into the ability to teach it to someone else” (p. 15). Yet, many college professors believe that their knowledge in their content area makes them good teachers. Many believe that it is unnecessary to do more than immerse themselves in their material. Hativa (2000) has found other reasons for faculty resistance. Some believe “there’s nothing to be learned about teaching” (p. 41).

Many look down upon the education department and its pedagogical instructions. Others believe that students are responsible for their learning; this view allows professors to relinquish responsibility for improving their teaching skills. Murray (1997) relates, “The traditional faculty view is that it is the responsibility of the student, not the instructor, to maintain a high level of student attention and motivation in the classroom” (p. 196).

Hativa (2000) also found that some professors believe that “teaching cannot be improved—good teachers are born, not made” (p. 42). Of the reasons Hativa discovered, I consider two the most dangerous and stifling. One is the idea that the professor has to cover content, so there is not time to do anything but lecture, and the other is the belief that “my teaching is good enough; there’s no need for me to improve” (Hativa, 2000, p. 42). Both of these beliefs permit the professor to remain ineffective; professors are unwilling to even try to improve their teaching skills. Unfortunately, students are very much aware of the limitations of their professors, and many professors who hold to such beliefs receive poor evaluations from students.

When professors refuse to try new teaching methods, their students remain passive participants in the classroom. Student learning is limited, and teacher satisfaction is low. However, before professors will change their practices, they must first change their beliefs about teaching and student learning. They must gain pedagogical knowledge about teaching. Hativa (2002) acknowledges, “Even those instructors who do have sound teaching aptitudes may provide poor instruction when lacking the proper pedagogical knowledge—

when they do not know what makes effective instruction” (p. 291). Grasha (1996) believes this shift in thinking is important because *“teachers are not always willing to admit that students can learn in alternate ways”* (p. 265). Nonetheless, as Murray (1997) has discovered, “there are specific, concrete teaching behaviors that make a difference in the college classroom. They make a difference in the sense that they are causally related to student satisfaction, student learning of course content, and student motivation for further learning” (p. 195). According to Lowman (1984), few professors actually consider what students should learn and the best ways for them to learn it.

Thus, a look at faculty attitudes towards teaching and student learning played a role in my research. I contend that certain professors do not use writing because they are unfamiliar with certain teaching tools and they are limited in their views of good teaching practices. I must admit that perhaps some of them are reluctant to improve their teaching skills. My research helped me understand why.

CHAPTER FIVE

Faculty Perceptions of Student Writing

The results of the analysis of the interview data that deal with faculty perceptions of student writing at Walker College will be presented in this chapter in an effort to understand how the professors view student writing abilities and to determine if the way professors view their students' writing has an impact on how they use writing in their classes. Therefore, if a disjunction does exist between the importance the professors place on student writing and their pedagogical practices, is that disjunction a result of poor student writing? The results have been organized by the following themes: faculty perceptions about student writing in general, strong student writing, weak student writing, faculty comparisons of Walker students to students at other institutions, and faculty criteria for evaluating student writing.

Faculty Perceptions

When asked about the writing abilities of Walker College students, the response most often given was that Walker students run the gamut from very superior writers to atrocious writers. Eight professors stressed the wide variations in writing they found in their classes. Hoffman⁶ summed up what most professors believe "I would say it is variable" (June 5, 2003). Tolstoy⁷ concurred, "I think

⁶ Hoffman (pseudonym) was interviewed June 5, 2003. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use her interview in my research.

⁷ Tolstoy (pseudonym) was interviewed June 11, 2003. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

there's a wide range of abilities" (June 11, 2003). Gates⁸ reiterated, "I think it's very wide ranged" (June 24, 2003). Scalia⁹ also sees the discrepancies:

I find some that are just wonderful writers, they know how to organize, they know how to outline, they know how to use transitions, and have some flow. Others, I feel that I almost have to start at the beginning... and just help them. So it's really mixed. (July 15, 2003)

Strong Student Writing

Some professors acknowledged that good writers could be found on campus. Hoffman commented that she saw a wide variation in the ability of Walker College students, but that some were actually quite good. She responded, "Some of them are excellent writers at the level where I believe they're ready for graduate school" (June 5, 2003). Tolstoy agreed with Hoffman's assessment:

I think there's a wide range of abilities; we have some students who write very well, can write not only recognizable English prose, but with some passion, and not just communicate, but actually write persuasively. (June 11, 2003)

Sonny¹⁰, a math professor, found his students' writing to be "very acceptable" (July 8, 2003), and Scalia also agreed that although some students were not proficient, others were. He commented, "I find some that are just

⁸ Sonny (pseudonym) was interviewed June 24, 2003. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use her interview in my research.

⁹ Gates (pseudonym) was interviewed June 24, 2003). She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹⁰Scalia (pseudonym) was interviewed July 15, 2003). He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

wonderful writers—they know how to organize, they know how to outline, they know how to use transitions, and have some flow” (July 15, 2003).

Weak Student Writing

Based on these interviews, it was apparent that professors believe that most students, in general, lack the writing skills required of them. All Walker professors agreed that they had students in their classes on the lower end of the spectrum--very poor writers, and eight professors described their students as average or poor writers. Fitzgerald¹¹, a Bible professor, described these writers as “raw” (November 7, 2001); Armour¹² believed they are “not writers” (September 16, 2004); Brown¹³ considered them “inadequate, not as good as those in more selective liberal arts colleges” (January 8, 2004). Carroll¹⁴ viewed student writing as “disappointing” (September 23, 2004), and Musician¹⁵, who was a bit kinder, described their writing as “not excellent” (July 28, 2003). Two professors interviewed were not prepared for the low level of writing abilities they saw; Bresson¹⁶ commented that he “was surprised at how mediocre their writing

¹¹ Fitzgerald (pseudonym) was interviewed November 7, 2001. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹² Armour (pseudonym) was interviewed September 16, 2004). She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹³ Brown (pseudonym) was interviewed He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹⁴ Carroll (pseudonym) was interviewed September 23, 2004. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹⁵ Musician (pseudonym) was interviewed July 28, 2003. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹⁶ Bresson (pseudonym) was interviewed He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

is” (July 11, 2003). Freedom¹⁷ did not see a difference between sophomores and seniors, as far as writing abilities were concerned (July 14, 2003). Professors used the words “mediocre,” “inadequate,” and “disappointing” to describe their students’ writing.

Other faculty members were more condemning of their students’ abilities. Tolstoy claimed that some students “are pretty weak, who don’t even seem to know some of the basic forms of English grammar and have a hard time writing recognizably English sentences” (June 11, 2003). Myra concluded that her students write “at about the C+ level,” a harsh comment considering that these students perform very well on ACT and SAT exams (January 8, 2004). Poe¹⁸ concluded that he did not use writing assignments in his freshmen and sophomore classes because “we can’t decipher half the times whether they got the concept or whether they didn’t... I would have to say by and large that I almost gave up on an essay approach at the freshman level” (November 6, 2001). Yeats¹⁹ concurred, “one year I tried going with no tests at all and making all of their assignments written assignments, and that didn’t work too well because they haven’t learned to write yet” (November 7, 2001). The harshest criticism came from Hoffman who stated that some of her students do “not write as well as someone in middle school should be able to write” (June 5, 2003).

¹⁷ Freedom (pseudonym) was interviewed July 14, 2003. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹⁸ Poe (pseudonym) was interviewed November 6, 2001. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

¹⁹ Yeats (pseudonym) was interviewed November 7, 2001. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

Students Compared to Students at Other Institutions

Four of the twenty-three faculty members interviewed found Walker students to be good writers. These individuals described students' writing abilities as "quite good," "superior to what I have seen," "fair to good," and "moderately good writers." These four professors each had previous or on-going connections with other educational institutions, and thus, they made comparisons between Walker students and other students they have encountered. For example, Dominic's²⁰ complete statement was that the students "are quite good, especially in comparison to the public university from which I came. When I first came to Walker and handed out a writing assignment, I quickly learned that I was going to have to significantly reconsider my grading style because everybody was getting 'A's" (June 11, 2003). He concluded, "their writing ability is significantly greater than what I've seen in the public university where I taught" (Dominic, June 11, 2003).

Also, Dominic, a professor in one of the graduate programs, said that the graduate professors preferred Walker students over other students because "graduate students who don't come from Walker write worse than my upper division Walker students. Our graduate students that we get from Walker are our best students almost without exception; we love getting Walker students" (June 11, 2003). The same comparison held true for Lewis²¹ who commented, "As I

²⁰ Dominic (pseudonym) was interviewed June 11, 2003. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

²¹ Lewis (pseudonym) was interviewed October 30, 2001. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

compare them to other colleges where I've taught adjunct, I think overall their writing skills are superior to what I've seen" (October 30, 2001).

Although Rumphous²² considers the writing ability of Walker students variable, her experience at five other institutions has led her to conclude that they are "fairly typical for most schools" (June 3, 2003). She commented, "they belong to two categories: those who write well and those who don't," but when she compared Walker College students to those at other institutions, she believed they were comparable (Rumphous, June 3, 2003). When asked about how Walker students compare to students at the other schools where she has taught, Rumphous responded, "as far as student writing, yes" they are the same (June 3, 2003).

Raven,²³ a science professor who also sees Walker students as "very poor" writers, contributed additional information on the topic (November 6, 2001).

He commented that

This is not a reflection on Walker students. I go to a number of biology conferences where there are people from UCLA, from the University of Michigan, I mean the big name universities, and their constant complaint, even at these big name schools is the students' poor writing abilities. So it is not a reflection of the small schools or Walker. I think this is what I am able to gather from my colleagues in the biological world. It's across the

²² Rumphous (pseudonym) was interviewed June 3, 2003. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

²³ Raven (pseudonym) was interviewed November 6, 2001. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

board. (Raven, November 6, 2001)

Faculty Criteria for Evaluating Student Writing

Walker professors also commented on the criteria in which they judged student writing. Most mentioned obvious errors: spelling, punctuation, grammatical errors, sentence structure, and organization. Others were more concerned about global issues such as proofreading and spending adequate time on an assignment. Yeats stated that he had students “who could not spell their way out of a paper bag” (November 7, 2001). McCrumb²⁴ elaborated “there are a lot of errors that keep turning up—the same errors over and over again, and I really get frustrated with that” (June 24, 2003). Rumphous believes “they make mistakes, most of which they know about but they just haven’t bothered about fixing them up” (June 3, 2003). Several held the opinion that student errors are the result of not proofreading or of putting papers together quickly. As Zenia²⁵ concluded, a lack of “attention to detail is what I have noticed” (September 22, 2004). Lewis attributed students’ lack of skills to their “lack of care in terms of preparation-not doing their rough drafts, submitting rough drafts as a final product, overuse of spell check type things giving them the wrong words” (October 30, 2001). He believes if students worked on outlining, their writing would be better. Hoffman’s description was the most memorable: “they are still a little awkward; they still think writing is some kind of special magic that

²⁴ McCrumb (pseudonym) was interviewed June 24, 2003. She signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

²⁵ Zenia (pseudonym) was interviewed September 22, 2004. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

they don't know how to do" (June 5, 2003). As these examples illustrate, Walker College professors indicated that they believe grammar and spelling is a problem for students.

Summary

Although some professors see Walker students as skilled or adequate writers, all but one professor agreed that Walker College has some very poor writers. The Academic Dean believes that only about half of the students are prepared to write in their field when they walk across the stage at graduation (Brown, January 8, 2004). Zenia's conclusion is worth contemplating: "overall, I would consider them moderately good writers—not really bad, but certainly not what we need to have here at Walker because we've got room for improvement" (September 22, 2004). Walker College professors are aware of the weaknesses of our student; the next chapter will address how they are dealing with those weaknesses.

CHAPTER SIX

The Role of Writing at Walker College

The interviews conducted at Walker College reveal that many professors are engaging their students through creative, quality writing assignments. Although write-to-think exercises are almost non-existent, many assignments used prepare students for real-life writing and learning.

Examples

Many of the assignments used at Walker College would appear to be typical for college campuses. The Ecology class requires collaborative lab reports (Poe, November, 6, 2001), the Speech Communication class requires detailed outlines of speeches (Lewis, October 30, 2001), the freshman College and Calling course requires students to write a multi-page paper on the career of their choice (Plath, November 14, 2001), and Biology 350 requires two reports on the teaching of science (Raven, November 6, 2001). Yeats teaches a sophomore-level class in which “writing is critical. During the last half of the class, they have written evaluations of other students’ presentations in class plus self-evaluations of their own presentations in class” (November 7, 2001). According to Fitzgerald, in General Psychology, students “take this sort of temperament or personality questionnaire and then look at job recommendations based on their personality type ... and write about that” (November 7, 2001). In education courses, students write lesson plans, synthesis papers, and reviews of literature (Rumphous, June 3, 2003). In an upper-division Sociology class, Hoffman asks her students to write a book review: “I give them pretty detailed guidelines of

what I want, help them select a book, give them a lot of freedom about what to pick, so they write a book review that includes a summary and a critique..." (June 5, 2003). In another upper division course, Hoffman asks her students to write reaction papers; for example, they "read an article about capital punishment," and students respond to the article (June 5, 2003).

Peden, a professor in Human Performance and Exercise Science asks students in one of her classes to

survey three children's books... the books have to be related to physical activity. So they have to go out and find three children's lit books that relate to activity so that the classroom teachers will choose to use those when they are reading to their kids in their classes to let them know there is literature out there related to activity. (July 1, 2003)

She asks another class to do family health trees: "They have to go back two generations," and she "encourages them to use a computer program to create that, and then they do a summary which is what have you learned about your health history and how does that impact your health..." (July 1, 2003).

The most unique use of writing comes in their senior-level capstone class required of all students. The professor, Tolstoy, worked extensively with writing while a graduate student at Duke University, and he is known on campus for his innovative writing assignments. All seniors are required to keep a journal; however, Tolstoy uses his journal in a very different way. In their journals, students respond to the reading they have done. The journals are then passed around in the student's assigned small group. Students are required to respond

not only to the reading, but also to their classmates' responses. As Tolstoy recounted,

They journal every day. . . they write on the reading material for that day everyday, plus they're writing on other people's entries. They're reading other, three other entries by their peers and commenting on those, so I always hope that will encourage them to write well because they are not just writing for themselves or for me, but they are writing for each other. (June 11, 2003)

Students are required to read, they are encouraged to think about their reading, and they are expected to belong to a community of scholars who are actively engaged with the material. In addition, Tolstoy asks the students in this capstone course to write a group paper; four students "have to think about it and talk about it together" and then write one paper together (June 11, 2003).

Tolstoy also includes the same thinking and writing component in his final exam. Here the students are given four essay questions two weeks in advance, and then they are asked to write the answers in a two-hour time slot during their final class period. Their responses are, according to Tolstoy "supposed to be an argument... supposed to attempt to persuade the reader of how they think about this particular matter on the basis of their own convictions, and that's really an important thing to be able to do" (June 11, 2003). Since the students only have two hours to write, they are practicing another very important skill – thinking. Tolstoy relates, "part of the discipline is to say you can't say everything... you have thirty minutes to say the most important things you have to say and to say it

well” (June 11, 2003). Obviously, in the senior capstone course at Walker College, students are challenged to think and to write. Tolstoy knows how to incorporate writing and thinking in his classroom.

Another interesting writing assignment is found in the course, Children with Special Needs, a master’s level education class. Dominic has his students assume the identity of a person with special needs for a day. They may be in a wheel chair, or they may be blind. Afterwards they write about their experience. Dominic defines this assignment as a “experiential type of paper,” which asks students to enter into their special needs experience in an unique way (June 11, 2003). The writing part of the assignment asks the students to respond to that experience. Dominic also assigns an observation paper in his Child Development course. According to Dominic, “the idea behind that just to get them out observing live kids in some setting, and it’s a very informal paper, which actually makes it a lot of fun” (June 11, 2003).

Another innovative writing assignment occurs in the Theories and Personalities course. Here Fitzgerald presents the students with a particular case, and they have to write about that case from the viewpoint of a designated personality theorist. According to the professor, the students not only have to understand the case, but they have to be extremely knowledgeable about the theorist assigned to them in order to think through the case as that theorist would. This assignment is actually asking the students to assimilate information into a new context, definitely a higher cognitive learning skill, and according to Fitzgerald, “that’s probably my best example of ... this was really good; this is a

good writing assignment. They learned something, and I don't have that in every class..." (November 7, 2001). The writing they do helps them to organize and present their new knowledge.

Lewis, professor of Speech Communication, requires his students to do two writing assignments: a dyadic encounter paper and a report on non-verbal communication. In the first assignment, the students write a four-to five-page paper discussing what they have learned about another student after spending five hours with him/her. The students are to use the terminology they have learned, such as "soft disclosure," for talking about communication skills. In the second assignment, students view a film in class and then write a five-page paper on the use of nonverbal communication they witnessed in the film. After reporting on the nonverbal communication, they discuss how effective it was.

Several courses require writing assignments that reflect what students will be asked to do in the work force. Scalia asks his pre-law students to write legal case studies (July 15, 2003). Armour's nursing students "have a write-up every week on their patients, and it's a big write-up correlating everything they've done—the lab work, the clinical pictures, the assessment, what went on with the patient..." (September 16, 2004). In the Diet Analysis, Exercise, Health, and Disease course students evaluate an individual's exercise habits and then write an exercise prescription. According to Carroll, the course professor, they are to write the final product as something they could hand to the customer, "to somebody who has come into [the] workplace" (July 1, 2003). Other courses, especially education courses, require lesson plans and article critiques. One

education course uses Praxis-type essay questions on the exams to help prepare the students for this licensure exam. According to Peden, “what we’ve done is I meet with our faculty, and we go over the Praxis test questions that are on line, and actually we try to incorporate those into our exams, so that they are very similar so the kids get a chance practicing...” (July 1, 2003). The Music Methods class requires that each student construct a band handbook that could actually be used by a high school band director. Bresson asks his communications students to write “in more of a creative sense, like they write scripts for screen plays or treatments, that is, a short summary of a film or TV show that they would like to direct...” (July 11, 2003).

Examples of the Types of Writing Used at Walker College by Professor

Peden	Praxis practice questions on exams, book reviews, journal critiques, health family trees, written exams, health journals
Sonny	Summaries and responses to journal articles
Bresson	Analysis of films, scripts of screen plays
Freedom	Response to first clinical experience, survey of skill levels, research papers
Scalia	Legal case studies, research papers
Frank	Financial analyses, answers to text book questions, essay exams, research papers
Musician	Band handbook
Myra	Argumentative research papers, essay exams
Armour	Weekly journal entries, patient care plans
Zenia	Journal entries, financial statements, research papers
Carroll	Research papers
Poe	Ecology lab reports, short answer exams

Raven	Teaching of science reports
Lewis	Dyadic papers, speeches
Yeats	Scripture work with commentaries
Plath	Career papers
Fitzgerald	Research papers, summary papers
Rumphous	Lesson plans, literature reviews
Hoffman	Research papers, book reviews, reaction papers
Tolstoy	Journals, essay exams
Dominic	Observation papers, thesis work
McCrumb	Summaries of articles, research papers, thesis work
Gates	Critiques of articles

Results: The Lack of Writing at Walker College

The interviews revealed that many professors use writing at Walker College. Some assign research papers, article summaries, and course journals. Others, such as the ones mentioned above, are creating different types of writing assignments. However, the interviews also revealed that some professors use very little writing, and a few do not use writing at all in some of their courses. For some, writing was not important in their content area. Unlike Rumphous who commented, "I do think that everybody needs to have writing. I know that in many classes there's no writing, and I don't really understand how that can be," some professors acknowledged that they did not see a need for writing in certain courses (June 3, 2003). Hoffman asserted, "There may be plenty of math classes

where working problems serves the same function for math as writing papers might for English or sociology, so there are probably classes where ... or maybe music where performing is what you need to work on, your technique and your performance” (June 5, 2003). Sonny, a math professor, believed the critical thinking/writing connection belongs in the sciences, not in math “because they are having to write out solutions or testing or going through this experiment.... And I think it would be more important in there for it to be concise, writing to the point, and a little more specific than what I use it for in the classroom” (July 8, 2003). Bresson, a communications professor, agreed that writing is not important in all fields:

I think that most fine arts people don't feel that writing is probably the most important thing. They prefer to focus on other forms of self-expression. I would say that most of the classes that a student takes at Walker is going to have some kind of writing.... I don't know if PE classes... that seems a bit of a stretch to me. I just think maybe that there are some subjects where writing is ... a writing component would not be the most appropriate way to test. (July 11, 2003)

However, when asked about other areas where writing would not be used, Dr. Bresson concluded, “No, PE is about the only one I can think of. I can think about how science can incorporate writing; I can think about pretty much everything... I don't see how ... in a PE class you can assign essays, but it does seem like a stretch. It seems like an unnecessary twisting of ... the subject matter to fit it, and I just don't think it's the best fit” (July 11, 2003). Scalia agreed that sometimes it

is hard to make writing work in a class: “There are some classes where I don’t think there’s any writing. I know for my own, in my own experience, Business Law I’ve had a hard time integrating a lot of writing” (July 15, 2003). Brown, the Academic Dean, is also convinced that writing is not seen as important in all areas: “I think there are a lot of fields that you don’t have to write well to earn a graduate degree. Those fields don’t valorize writing” (January 8, 2004).

Examples of Limited Writing

Although many of the professors did use writing in their classes, some did not or did very little. When asked what role writing played in his courses, Armour responded “a small part, a small part” (September 16, 2004). She continued, “We focus on other things probably more than writing—technical skills and cognitive abilities” (Armour, September 16, 2004). She did report that since the nursing exam consisted of multiple choice questions, the nursing department tended to emphasize that type of testing instead of essay exams. Yates acknowledged that “writing plays a very little role at this point in my freshman classes” (November 7, 2001). He continued, “In the freshman class, writing assignments are pretty well limited to their short answer and essay questions on their tests” (Yates, November 7, 2001). Gates responded to the same question by saying her communications course required a medium level of writing; she only asks her students to write one short paper, “a critique review type paper” (June 24, 2003). She continued, “Because I am in a discipline that we use a lot of technology, I don’t probably have as much writing as some of the other courses...” (Gates, June 24, 2003). Frank explained that his sophomore business classes were “not

my writing-intensive courses” (July 28, 2003). However, students do have essay exams in the course, and they do answer questions at the end of the chapters in their textbooks, so he does require some writing of his students. Hoffman concludes that she does a “minimal use of writing” in Introduction to Sociology; the students “have no written paper to write except for make-up and extra credit stuff” (July 28, 2003). Although Scalia does use writing in some courses, he commented,

There are some classes where I don't think there's any writing. I know for my own, in my own experience, Business Law . . . I've had a hard time integrating a lot of writing. I have them do briefs; I haven't had them do anything beyond just kind of one-page summaries of cases that we read, and I'm not sure why that is. I just haven't done it. It's not a class that feels like a writing class. (July 15, 2003)

Dr. Musician reported,

You know, the classes that I teach, I would say for the most part, I don't require a lot of writing. . . . In Jazz History I really don't have them write a lot in there; we do a lot of listening and watching, and the Pop Music, you know, we really don't... we rarely have time to cover the whole bulk of music from 1900 to present anyway. So I would say not a lot of writing but some. (July 28, 2003)

When two science professors, who chose to be interviewed together, were asked about their writing requirements, their response was “none” (November 6, 2001).

Mixed Messages

The irony of the situation at Walker College is that all professors claim writing is extremely important, and most when asked how we could improve our students' writing, suggested that they should write more. Plath commented, "I think we can improve writing by having students do writing and evaluating their writing, discussing their writing with them" (November 14, 2001). Gates concurred when asked about the advantages of using writing in her teaching:

I think definitely make the student learn how to do some research and learn how to write. I mean within the communications aspect of the industry, writing is one of the most important things; no matter what avenue they take, they're going to have to write. So they need all the experience they can get. (June 24, 2003)

She continued later in the interview, "Give the students more experience in their writing styles, having different people review their writing.... I think that the more diverse writing activities they can do, the better off they're going to be. I don't see how it could possibly hurt" (June 24, 2003). Unfortunately, this same professor confessed early in the interview that she did not use writing much in her courses because she used a lot of technology. Professor Musician also reported that he did not assign much writing, but announced later in the interview, "I don't see how anyone can get by without writing... out in the job market you know once you write a paragraph, and it's bad, I think that's automatically going to throw you out of contention for a position, and I think it's very important. I think it's a tell-tale

sign of your education” (July 28, 2003). As a professor of future music teachers, he elaborated,

I think it's fundamental, you know, regardless of what you're teaching, I think you have to be able to write, and I think it's something that I see with younger teachers in the public school system and even students here, students everywhere, high school students. I think it's something that's lacking, you know, that communication, that writing. To be able to construct a paragraph logically, I mean, you're going to have to write regardless, regardless of where you are, and I think as a music teacher, band director, whatever in music, you're, yes, you're going to have to write, you're going to have to do that. (July 28, 2003)

Summary

After talking to twenty-three professors at Walker College and reviewing the information gathered, it is obvious the professors believe that student writing ability varies across the campus. In addition, the interviews revealed that the professors' use of writing varies also. The extremes are present in both situations: Walker College has great student writers and atrocious student writers, and Walker College has professors who are using writing in creative, thought-provoking ways and professors who do not use writing in their courses or who use limited writing in their classes. The remaining chapters will be devoted to discovering in more detail why the professors who use writing do so and why the professors who do not use writing do not include it in their box of teaching tool.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Time in the Educational Bottle

“The bottom line is if you are teaching four different preparations, at some point you are going to slack off in some of your classes” (Hoffman, June 5, 2003)

After interviewing twenty-three faculty members at Walker College about their use of writing, the time dilemma was readily apparent. All twenty-three professors alluded to the time factor, usually several times in the course of the interviews. Time was the number one theme running throughout all the interviews, and only two of the twenty-three professors mentioned their use of time in a positive manner. All professors concluded that time was a factor in their use of writing in their courses.

Heavy Loads

Most faculty members believed that their workloads were too heavy to use writing. Although sixty students per classroom may not seem like too many students, it is a large number where the teaching load is four or five courses per semester, often each with a new preparation and with no teaching assistants. Although most classes are not this large, some are. Frank²⁶ sums up his situation: “They’re large classes, and I’ll have sixty students or so, and it’s just me, so I don’t have the luxury of expecting a great deal of writing because I don’t have the time by myself to do it” (July 28, 2003). Hoffman made a similar observation: “I really don’t have time to give a big assignment in this class with thirty students. When would I read it? So as long as we’re teaching four

²⁶ Frank (pseudonym) was interviewed July 28, 2003. He signed an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to use his interview in my research.

preparations apiece, then I think that a lot of teachers will resist having more writing assignments because it is a lot more work” (June 5, 2003). Yeats reported that time was the reason his assignments in his upper division courses are not designed to help with writing skills:

I don't have time for students to write, pre-write, and write, and rewrite with my input along the way when I've got ten assignments over a five, a six weeks' span for thirty-six students. The time's just not there to do it; the luxury's not there to do that. (November 7, 2001)

Yeats also alluded to the fact that time was a reason for his reluctance to assign research papers. He commented,

If you're going to give students sufficient time to research, to choose a topic, research, give you a bibliography, rough draft, rewrite, and so forth, it comes down to the end of the term, and you don't really have much time to respond to their writing, and I found that I didn't feel like I was teaching them anything. (November 7, 2001)

Musician believed that “time constraints” are the “reason we don't require more writing” on our campus (July 28, 2004).

Time to Grade Assignments

The time issue was articulated most clearly when faculty members discussed the grading of writing assignments. Most felt strongly that writing assignments were too time consuming, and thus, they were concerned about creating assignments that they did not have time to assess adequately. Armour acknowledged that her only concern about grading student writing was the time

factor (September 16, 2004). Lewis agreed, "I have 100 Speech students; I really don't want to read a whole, large number of papers" (October 30, 2001). He also concluded that a lack of time was a reason for not concentrating on critical thinking issues in his speech class, a class designed especially for freshmen: "I don't know where I would have time to put it in through all we do in Speech class" (October 30, 2001). A nursing professor, Freedom, who stated that she was committed to writing in her classes, understood the time commitment: "I know it takes me longer to do a lot of the stuff I do because it takes a lot longer to correct and read papers and essay responses than to have a little piece or send it over for your test, that Scantron stuff, which I never use" (July 14, 2003). Sonny believed large class sizes made it more difficult to use writing: "if I've got thirty kids in a classroom, it's difficult to do a lot of writing along with the other because if you're going to look at it . . . it takes time, and it makes it more difficult for me" (July 8, 2003). A science professor, Raven, also concluded that time was a factor: "What's your comment on incorporating more writing? Cause I'm not seeing it. Speak for yourself on this; I don't speak for you. It's going to take more time on our part, like you say, it takes time to read these things, so the time's gonna enter in somewhere" (November 6, 2001).

Rumphous, an education professor, acknowledged that she attempts to be an effective professor by returning papers in a timely fashion, but she admitted that grading requires a great deal of time, and she has to focus on grading papers when she gets them. When asked what concerns she had about grading written work, she responded,

Time. I always felt very strongly about getting feedback to the students right away. I don't like having long periods without getting feedback to them, and that means that when I have a bunch of papers coming in, that's all I do; everything else gets put out of my life until those papers are graded, and I hate that. It's not much fun for me or for anyone around me. (June 3, 2003)

Plath, a professor who teaches our freshman level College and Calling (previously Introduction to College and Careers), a course required of all freshmen, believed that the large student numbers and the heavy requirement in his freshman class resulted in less written work in his other courses: "There is virtually no writing requirement in Dev. Psych. That's a class typically of 40 to 50 students, and frankly, I don't want to read all those research papers on top of the Intro. to College and Careers research papers" (November 14, 2001). He continued to express concern about the heavy demands made on our time at Walker College, especially for those who hold area chair positions:

I lots of times take a very selfish stance, a very self-preserving stance and follow that old "kiss" rule of keeping it simple, stupid, and I do things that require short answers, that are easy and quick to evaluate. I don't find myself being able to allot the time to learn new technology because of stamping out administrative fires and area fires, and scheduling classes, and ordering books, and going to meetings of six committees that I'm on. It's just, it's impossible to do everything well, so I've... it's funny, not funny, it's ironic that I think a lot of us tend to devote time most to the most

conspicuous things, and most of my most conspicuous things are the things that are non-academic, they're administrative. My academic time, my time in class, my instructional ability, my reading for instruction should be primary, and most of the time it's secondary to administrative, staff, and committee requirements. (Plath, November 14, 2001)

Hoffman also commented on the demands of small college teaching environment and the grading of writing. She explained,

The faculty I know actually do give writing assignments and do sometimes feel overwhelmed with those four preparations and all the committees and everything . . . the more writing assignments you give, the more you increase your work load, and you get to a certain point, you get to about fifty or fifty-five hours a week, and you say, "Enough already, this is really, really full time, and I don't have the energy for this. So I guess if you have four preparations, and in some classes you have fairly large enrollments, then you are in respect discouraging more in-depth writing assignments" (June 5, 2003).

The Academic Dean is quite aware of the time component in grading writing assignments: "One of the problems that I think is faced by the people who aren't in the Humanities is the difficulty of grading, evaluating, and the amount of time that's involved in doing that properly and giving feedback on writing skills, and that is a huge problem" (Brown, January 8, 2004).

Other faculty members were reluctant to assign writing projects because they did not have the time to check student sources or to make comments about

student errors. Raven, a science professor, was concerned about plagiarism: “I don’t have time to go out and see where they might have plagiarized this report, and I don’t have time to track that down” (November 6, 2001). Bresson commented on student errors: “I’m not going to correct the punctuation errors. I’m going to circle it or just make a slash or something, but I’m not going to do that; I don’t have time for it” (July 11, 2003).

Covering Content

Although most professors interviewed were concerned with the time they needed to create and grade writing assignments, several were more concerned about getting their content covered in their courses. For them, writing was detrimental to achieving their goal of imparting content. Dominic concluded,

I think that a Child Development class in which there is so much information to get across in a very short amount of time. . . I could teach Child Development across three semesters. . . you are trying to convey so much information in a limited amount of time that isn’t necessarily integrated, that writing is not as useful as a tool in that class.” (June 11, 2003)

Frank, a business professor concurred, “when the semester gets going and your syllabus is out there before you, and you have competencies you have to achieve, it’s getting really tough to do what some would view as more, some of the more creative things that writing requires. It’s very challenging; it’s very challenging” (July 28, 2003). Musician was clear about the importance of teaching his content area:

I know we could spend more time, and we might be able to do more writing assignments and things like that. I think, it's almost like that with everything I teach; it's just that you hit the ground running . . . you just don't have time in a semester . . . to cover it all. That's what I look at when I look at a syllabus, or I'm going to make out a syllabus for a class. I'm trying to think how much time do I have to cover it, how many weeks do we have, and I try to plan it out, and sometimes we don't make it. (July 28, 2003)

When Raven was asked during the interview if writing could be used to cover the content material, he responded, "Time is a critical element that we don't have much of" (November 6, 2001). He continued, "And it takes additional time to do that" (Raven, November 6, 2001).

The Academic Dean is also aware that professors will be loyal to their subject areas. He elaborated about professors' time: "to add writing as something they see as extraneous to that when you have only X amount of time to get students from point A to point B is expecting a lot, and I think you know their allegiance is going to be to their field" (Brown, January 8, 2004).

Students Also Lack Time

Four professors stated that their rationale for not assigning writing was not only due to their lack of time, but also to their student's time shortage. Dominic commented that he "honored" his students' time (June 11, 2003). Sonny said that he believed his students were "bombarded with so much outside reading" (July, 8, 2003). Rumphous (June 3, 2003) reported, "I am not sure that I even want to

do more than I'm already doing because I think I am doing as much as the students can handle." Peden was concerned about covering content, but she was more concerned about her students. She commented,

It's not that I don't have more time, it's the kids don't have more time. I think a lot of my classes are pretty demanding time wise just because . . . all the stuff I have to get into those courses. . . . I think it is unfair for me to add many more writing assignments especially for those who are poor thinkers and writers because of the amount of time it takes. (July 1, 2003)

Limited Time to Provide and Receive Help

Several faculty members demonstrated an interest in helping students with their writing, but once again, time seemed a problem. Tolstoy, the professor of Walker's capstone senior course, communicated his concern about helping students: "you have to be able to have the time to sit down with each student and talk through their own prose, and that's incredibly time intensive" (June 11, 2003).

The factor of time also entered in when the professors were asked about assistance with using writing in their courses. Every professor except Sonny (he reported that a workshop might help but concluded, "but with what I do, I don't think so," July 8, 2003) was interested in getting help with using writing in their teaching, eight agreed that they were concerned about the time they had to invest in faculty development or other forms of assistance. Raven believed that "some workshops . . . could help stimulate our vision of what we might want to do down the road. If you could share those kinds of things that would obviously

expand how we would think about incorporating certain strategies,” but he also added, “everybody’s busy these days” (November 6, 2001). Lewis concurred with this assessment. He began by suggesting that training could be helpful and explained that he has actually volunteered to teach his fellow professors: “I’d like to do some of these seminars or lessons on communication across the curriculum and talk to them [faculty] about different ways in which they can deal with classes besides lecture, different techniques they can use” (October 30, 2001). Later in the interview when asked the best format to do such instruction, he reported, “Not too much because you are overwhelmed, but little by little by little, you know, forty-five minute lessons on such and such... a minimal faculty retreat” (October 30, 2001).

Sociology professor Hoffman believed area-specific or discipline-specific workshops would be beneficial, but she acknowledged, “Almost anything I can think of takes extra time, and that’s really the bottom line” (June 5, 2003). Gates agreed. Although she felt that workshops would be helpful, she concluded that scheduling would be difficult: “You just run into so many conflicts if you start trying to do things morning and afternoon and weekends; you never know. It’s a difficult thing to figure out when would be the best time to do something like that” (Gates, June 24, 2003). Frank summed up what seemed to be the general consensus:

I have mixed emotions about anything like that because you know I don’t have time to go to some of the workshops that we have on using a computer in the classroom ... and we get crunched more and more... part

of what I get bogged down with is just keeping up with my classes and what I'm having my students do to the extent that who has time to meet and talk about what everybody else is doing, as valuable as that would be.

(July 28, 2003)

Concerns about the Direction of Walker College

Along with the concern about time, several professors were worried about the future at Walker College. Several mentioned that the changes being advocated by the administration would not permit them the time necessary to support writing across the campus. As Frank acknowledged,

I think our Dean continues to press for larger classes. That is working against an increased use of writing by definition. My emphasis has to be on content; it just simply has to be on content, that's what I'm here to teach. It is a luxury to be able to integrate a significant amount of writing.

That's just the sad reality of it." (July 28, 2003)

Dr. Peden commented on the Dean's continued process of consolidating courses; the result of course, is more content to cover and less time to do so (July 1, 2003).

Is Time Just an Excuse?

Two professors, Freedom and Tolstoy, used writing extensively in their courses and feel successful doing so. Both acknowledge the time commitment, but they are convinced that writing is valuable enough for student learning that they must use it. Dr. Freedom speculated about the use of writing:

It does take more time. I mean, it would be much easier to just have your

lecture together, have your tests organized together, hand your tests out, . . . once you do that once or twice, I could be very comfortable and not have all that to do. But if you're using these different strategies and writing and papers and all this stuff . . . every single semester is different. You don't get to just sit there. You have to work your syllabus every semester; you don't get to just change the date on it because you have to modify things, and the students are different." (July 14, 2003)

Dr. Freedom described herself as "just naturally someone who spends a lot of time," but she saw writing as important enough to spend her time using it in her courses.

Dr. Tolstoy was the second professor who refused to let time be an excuse for not using writing. He, too, uses writing extensively in his course. When asked if he saw time as an issue when he considered writing, he commented,

It's always an issue, and you're never going to get over that again unless people see the value of it and realize that this could really help, that this is something they want to be able to do but don't know how to do, then you make time for it . . . that the only things you make time for are the things that you know are valuable . . . If it's not something you want to do . . . then you're going to be too busy." (June 11, 2003)

Although Walker College faculty do not feel a pressure to publish or to earn name recognition, they are required to serve on many committees and to help the small college function. They appear to be very conscientious about their

jobs. They do give a large amount of their time to the college, and for some, it is obvious that time does play a part in their decision of how much writing they use in their courses. But could it be that other issues are preventing them from using writing?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Whose Responsibility?

The Walker College faculty interviewed unanimously agreed that writing is important. Perhaps, however, their practices reveal a different story from their words. Writing may be important, but not all professors believe that they should be responsible for the teaching or the enhancing of student writing skills.

Lack of Preparation

Fourteen professors acknowledged that the Humanities courses should teach Walker students writing skills. However, several professors believed that students should come to college prepared to write adequately, and they shifted the blame to students' prior educational experiences. Hoffman explained, "I honestly don't see it as my job to teach them how to write. I think when they come to college they should know basically how to write" (June 5, 2003). She continued, "this may be an unpopular opinion, but I think students should arrive at college knowing the basics of how to write a sentence that makes sense, a paragraph that makes sense; they should know the basics of verb-noun agreement and all that stuff" (Hoffman, June 5, 2003). Rumphous concurred, "I think it is more the students coming in. Those who are good, we can hone; those who are weak, it's who, like you say, whose job is it to teach someone who can't write by the time they're eighteen, nineteen years old?" (June 3, 2003). Carroll also feels frustrated with ill-prepared students: "It is disappointing that things that I really expect from students that I really feel like they should have before they

even get here, so in terms of what we need to do, it's kind of remedial from my standpoint" (September 23, 2004).

Scalia was more condemning of the students at Walker College: "some of them come to us just so deficient from their high school experiences and from not reading.... It's frustrating to come across the students who just can't or don't care or don't put in the time or really just don't get it, and I'm not sure what we can do to help them more" (July 15, 2003). Raven agreed,

We can't decipher half the time whether they got the concept or whether they didn't. I once tried that [writing] ... at a similar school to try to incorporate that in—it was nightmare. Any I would have to say by and large that I almost gave up on an essay approach at the freshman level.

(November 6, 2001)

Raven, a biology professor, also admitted that lab reports were so poorly done by freshmen that he has resorted to using questions from textbooks instead of the reports (November 6, 2001).

Zenia also believes that students lack the desire to put time into learning how to write effectively. He attributed the problem to student laziness: "I think part of their problems is laziness. I have this growing frustration over the past five or six years in the amount of laziness on the part of them. I think they have the ability to reason and to think critically, but they just don't want to take the time. Too much effort..." (Zenia, September 22, 2004). Raven agreed with this assessment: "Unfortunately, I think I see each year a little bit more when students come into lab—there isn't much innate curiosity left in the world. They

basically want to be spoon ... it's easier to be spoon fed, and so this is something that... we work on" (November 6, 2001). His science colleague, Poe continued "I think that for myself over the last, say, twenty years, I've seen a decrease in work ethic" (November 6, 2001).

Lack of Reading Skills

Tolstoy agreed with Scalia that the lack of high school training, especially with reading skills is part of the problem. When asked who should teach writing at Walker College, he responded,

Part of the issue is whether you can teach writing. I think there are days when there are reasons to think that it's going to be pretty hard to teach writing to students who don't read. And so, I think a lot of our writing problem is really a reading problem. I haven't done the study, but I suspect that it has been done, and I suspect you could do it again that shows a very clear correlation between our good readers and our good writers and our poor readers and our poor writers. (June 11, 2003)

Tolstoy continues by referring back to a lack of literacy and adequate teaching in high schools:

And that to me is the frightening part given that a lot of... people are reading less and less, which means it's going to get worse and worse. Quite apart from what they are doing in high school, and there's little that gives me confidence that our high schools are doing better... we are becoming a less literary culture in general. (June 11, 2003)

Writing Should be Taught in the Humanities

Most professors interviewed, however, believed that writing instruction should be the responsibility of the Humanities department and that students should have mastered writing skills after the Humanities sequence. As Hoffman explained, “the typical student doesn’t know how to start writing a paper. And why don’t they; they’ve taken writing courses?” (June 5, 2003). Dominic agreed, “in terms of teaching the mechanics of grammar, I very much think that’s something for the Humanities curriculum to do” (June 11, 2003). McCrumb elaborated, I suppose those people in the freshman area who are getting them first are the ones who need to introduce them to it [writing] and make sure that they have a grounding so that if they can’t form a complete sentence then that’s a real place to get it” (June 24, 2003). Rumphous assumed that the Humanities courses were sufficient: “I think probably in Humanities is where they get their real basic writing concepts” (June 3, 2003). Carroll accepted this assessment: “I figured just in the Humanities alone they probably had enough writing assignments to bring them into those minimal categories at least” (September 23, 2004). The Academic Dean agreed that Humanities should be the primary location for the teaching of writing: “It probably should still stay there [Humanities courses] at least writing instruction” (Brown, January 8, 2004).

More Work Needed in the Humanities Writing Program

Raven not only believed that Humanities should do all the writing instruction, but he also felt that the program should be expanded to provide more instruction. He commented, “I don’t know what percent is spent on writing, but I

think whatever it is, I'd like to see that expanded, maybe at the expense of other things out there" (November 6, 2001). He believed that our students need more help at the freshman and sophomore level and suggested that the Humanities professors do a better job:

If we could somehow get the freshmen and sophomores up to speed more quickly, I really think that's the key. And that is our target, I think, to get those folks who come in with really poor skills at least get them up to acceptable levels. And exactly how you go about doing that, that's probably your camp. (November 6, 2001)

Another professor, Armour, concluded that the Humanities instruction was not sufficient for her students. As a nursing professor, she acknowledged, "what you do in Humanities doesn't help us much with nursing" (September 16, 2004).

Should Everyone Be Responsible?

Some professors, however, did realize that writing instruction belongs to every professor, no matter what the area, and those individuals accepted responsibility for helping students write. Some agree with Rumphous "that every teacher has an obligation to teach their students to write within the discipline" (June 3, 2003). Hoffman concurred, "I see it as my job to help them find a content and to give them clear enough directions about what kind of structure I want that they know how to start" (June 5, 2003). She continued, "I'm not teaching them how to write--how do you make a sentence or a paragraph that makes sense, what is cohesiveness—that sort of stuff I expect them to have already learned even though some of them haven't. I'm teaching them what are

the kinds of things sociologists want to know” (Hoffman, June 5, 2003). Frank’s response was much the same: “I don’t teach it [writing], but I raise its visibility, its presence from an application standpoint.... I do not teach writing per se; I teach an application of writing in an economic context” (July 28, 2003).

McCrumb believed she has found the right balance for writing in her classroom. She explained, “I don’t think I teach writing as much as I teach improved writing, but I think I make them conscious of their writing. By the time they come to my class most of them have some idea about how to write, and I make them more conscious of what they’re doing and the importance of it and how it fits in.... I don’t teach it, but I think I encourage it maybe” (June 24, 2003).

McCrumb saw the responsibility of each faculty member:

I think everybody who deals with students needs to have a part in supporting that [reading and writing] and encouraging that and making sure that they don’t forget what they’ve learned. ... You don’t have time in some of the content things to sit down and teach sentence structure, but you do have time to say, “This is a sentence fragment; it’s not acceptable.” (June 24, 2003)

McCrumb gets frustrated with fellow professors when they resort to multiple choice exams and refuse to give writing assignments to their students. She viewed this as avoiding their responsibility as teachers.

Faculty Autonomy

Although some individuals believed that each professor should be responsible for writing in their courses, some were also quick to point out that

faculty should not be forced to add writing to their curriculum. Some like Peden, argued for faculty autonomy:

I'm not going to put that on another faculty. I know there are some of my courses where I have so much content, and everybody keeps telling me I can't add courses, I need to consolidate. I'm not going to say to some area you have to teach writing. That's their choice. If they think they can, the most important thing is teaching your subject matter, and if they think they can do that without writing and don't have the time to do it, I'm not going to say they need to teach writing. (July 1, 2003)

A Need for a Writing Center?

Ten of the professors interviewed mentioned a writing center, or at least made reference to a place where students can get help. Gates explained that we need to "make sure that faculty and students know of a resource... let them know that that resource is there and they're willing to help" (June 24, 2003). Freedom, a new professor on campus, commented, "I'm disappointed, frankly, that Walker doesn't have a writing center" (July 14, 2003). Professors realized that students need help, but they want to send them elsewhere for that help. Gates described,

I really don't know what the directive for a writing center would be, but I think that any student who is given the task of writing of any assignment that's dealing with writing, if they have questions about it, having a place where they can go aside from an instructor would be beneficial to them.

(June 24, 2003)

Zenia concurred,

Ideally, I would like, it would be nice if we just simply had... a writing center. I would like to review the papers in this class for content. I am not an expert in grammar or composition. That's important. They need to know how to do that. I would like for somebody else to do that in conjunction with me. I read for content—you know, you're weak here, you need to bring out more here and there—but the grammar or the composition part, let somebody else do it. (September 22, 2004)

Rumphous believed the center should be staffed by competent adults:

I would like there to be some place where they could go where they're dealing with adults, and I don't think other students should be helping them in this particular topic, and I don't want them to write their papers or anything like that, I just want them to help them begin to see how to do this. (June 3, 2003)

Walker College has had a writing center in the past, but several years ago it was replaced by student tutors. Many of the faculty members interviewed were not aware of the changes made or of the resources presently available to the students.

Although many Walker College faculty members assume that the Humanities courses are providing adequate writing instruction for freshmen and sophomores, at least eight professors are taking students beyond that initial training and providing writing instruction in their given areas. Some see their responsibility to teach students the methods of writing unique to their disciplines, and they enhance student learning by commitment to written communication.

However, other professors are content to let the Humanities program take full responsibility for writing instruction.

CHAPTER NINE

Faculty Concerns

Comfort with Grading

When I began this research project, one of my assumptions was that the grading of student writing would influence whether or not professors used writing in their courses. Tolstoy agreed with my assessment: “which I suspect is part of the disincentive for assigning writing is that they’re not sure how to evaluate it” (June 11, 2003). However, the rest of the professors interviewed did not consider the grading issue a reason for not assigning writing. Although grading did not keep professors from making assignments, only five individuals interviewed felt comfortable with grading student writing; the rest of the faculty members admitted to various degrees of discomfort.

The five professors who felt comfortable had individual reasons for feeling so. Musician felt comfortable but acknowledged that he did not grade “on punctuation, sentence construction, grammatical errors, and things like that” (July 28, 2003). Sonny, a math professor, also acknowledged that he did not create formal assignments, and that he did not “grade for grammar” (July 8, 2003). Peden was very comfortable with grading student writing because she had previously taught English and Grammar at another institution of higher learning. McCrumb concluded, “I don’t have a problem with it [grading]. I usually give two grades. I usually give one grade for content, and I give another grade for grammar and spelling and punctuation and sentence formation and all that good stuff” (June 24, 2003). Bresson, the fifth professor who felt comfortable with

grading student writing, explained why this way: “Because I teach in the fine arts, I don’t or because I teach a fine arts subject, I’m not looking for truth with a capital ‘T’ in their writing because the fine arts are subjective ultimately, a matter of taste often” (July 11, 2003).

Discomfort with Grading - Subjectivity

This level of comfort did not carry over to the rest of the professors interviewed, however. Instead when asked how they felt about grading student writing, their comments ranged from “a little uncomfortable” (Fitzgerald, November 7, 2001) and “grading is a difficult thing” (Gates, June 24, 2003) to “fear, loathing, and dread” (Hoffman, June 5, 2003) and “it’s tedious, extremely tiresome, but I don’t know any way around it” (Rumpous, June 3, 2003).

The primary reason for discomfort among these professors was the perceived inability to grade fairly. The word used most often was “subjective.” Scalia commented, “I generally hate it [grading]. It’s subjective. It’s hard. You know, and I have criteria... but it’s still subjective” (July 15, 2003). Carroll agreed, “I come up with my rubrics for how much weight to put on different factors, and I keep shifting those around. And it’s... I feel like it’s kind of subjective”

(September 23, 2004). Myra explained her inability to be precise when grading:

I know that I can tell the difference between “A” and “B” writing, and “B” and “C” writing, and “C” and “D” writing. The fine points always trouble me, but I have come to a point where when I assign the grade I walk away and don’t look back because then I just eat my heart out. So occasionally I give a “B-“ when it’s truly a “C+” and a “C-“ when it’s truly a “D+” or visa

versa, and I hate subjectivity, but yet I've built in subjectivity... grading papers is torture for me...." (January 8, 2004)

Plath summed up his dilemma:

Just equity. It's difficult to grade in an, I think, in an equitable way, written assignments, narrative assignments... sometimes some of the problem is knowing who's written them and having preconceived notions about the writing ability of a student and lots of papers I'll try to read without knowing who has written those papers. (November 14, 2001)

Zenia agreed, "subjective is tough for me because I like to be fair rather than having my opinion in it... and I'd be biased, and I don't want to bias it" (September 22, 2004).

Poe seemed to express clearly what most of these professors were feeling:

It's very difficult for me to do. I tend to grade on a ... I always try to put the papers in a competitive situation, and then I wind up saying, 'Gee, I don't know which one is better than this one, you know, better than that,' and I go back and forth and back and forth. It takes me a long time to do it.

(November 6, 2001)

Discomfort with Grading – Grammar Issues

Another reason for the discomfort is the faculty's perceived inability to grade the grammar and other technical issues. As Lewis reported,

My shortcomings are as I can recognize from the grammatical things, but I'm not always confident in my own recognition of it. And so therefore, I

sometimes let them slide with things because I'm just not sure, and I don't have the time to go look it up and make sure that I am right. (October 30, 2001)

Gates also felt inadequate when it comes to grading for grammar issues:

"sometimes I'll look at things and I'll think, I don't know if that's right or not, and sometimes I will take the time to look it up and check and grade appropriately and then other times if I don't have the time, then I just, I will maybe circle it..." (June 24, 2003). Both of these professors felt inadequate to grade the grammar issues, but both acknowledged that they did not always have the time to check the questionable work. Dominic was more open about his weakness as a grader: "my biggest weakness is grammar and mechanics... so a lot of my students can write and proofread better than I do" (June 11, 2003).

Even when professors felt comfortable with grading grammar issues, they often still felt uncomfortable about how much of the grade should reflect grammatical errors. As Fitzgerald acknowledged, "even knowing how much to balance, how much to weigh things like punctuation and grammar versus the overall message.... I'm a little uncomfortable with that because... I think should I be putting as much emphasis as I am on ... things like grammar..." (November 7, 2001).

Rubrics as an Aid to Grading

Five professors mentioned the use of rubrics to aid in their grading, and although they were not always completely happy with them, they did believe the rubrics helped to eliminate the guesswork of the grades that are not always

obvious. As Yeats confirmed “I have a very difficult time making discrimination in the middle. I try to overcome that by using rubrics, by being very specific about what the demands are, and what the expectations are. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn’t” (November 7, 2001). Fitzgerald acknowledged the use of a rubric: “My spouse has helped me because being a high school teacher, my spouse uses a rubric, and so all these different things are being assessed... and I’ve actually gone a bit in that direction” (November 7, 2001).

Scalia has a less precise system, and he agreed that it did not work perfectly:

I’ll state the criteria, so it’s not uncommon for me, you know, to have a little score card as I’m grading and kind of say, “well, here’s a 75 for research and here’s a, you know, a 90 for this area,” you know, and at the end kind of add that up and see where I’m at, but it’s not a science. (July 15, 2003)

Although grading student writing did not appear to be a deterrent to assigning writing, most professors felt inadequate or uncomfortable with doing the necessary work. Although I was somewhat surprised that no one considered grading a reason for not using writing (although time spent grading was a deterrent), I was not surprised that most had issues with it. This discomfort reflects what I have encountered when meeting with other faculty at writing seminars, conferences, and retreats.

Faculty Concerns with Writing Abilities

The other assumption I made when beginning this research project was that some faculty members would be uncomfortable with their own writing

abilities, and thus they would be hesitant to use writing in their classes. On this front I may be correct, and actually several professors mentioned that they believed other professors did not use writing because they did not know how to write themselves. As Tolstoy explained,

I suspect some people don't emphasize it [writing] because they don't write well themselves.... I suspect there are plenty of people who write well enough themselves to get by but don't feel competent to be telling students how to write better, and so, it's one of the last things they want to do.... They don't want to do that because none of us like having our own weaknesses exposed. (June 11, 2003)

McCrumb concurred, "I would guess there are probably a few who are not comfortable enough with their own writing to feel like they could critique somebody else's" (June 24, 2003).

Freedom was more forceful in her comments about her colleagues: They might not know how to write themselves. I mean, I don't know this; I have no experience in terms of this impression, but this is just plain common sense and good psyche mental health, too, but there are people who are not going to feel confident because they don't write well themselves, and they're not necessarily creative thinkers... . Their teaching style is to lecture; that's what they're comfortable with. They've got it down. (July 14, 2003)

Frank believed, however, that this inexperience is applicable across the academic realm: "I think it is naïve to presume that just because one is a college

professor that they are competent in writing, particularly in a teaching-emphasis institution like Walker” (July 28, 2003).

Although a few professors at Walker College said that they were skilled writers (Peden, Carroll, Tolstoy), many acknowledged their weaknesses. Though I had assumed that some professors failed to use writing in their classes because of their own sense of inadequacy, only three individuals actually addressed this concern. Poe, a biology professor, reported, “I am not the best writer in the world, so I’ll have to admit that right here on tape. I’m a very poor writer, so I struggle with the students, and the kids know I do, so sometimes it becomes a cooperative effort with all us” (November 6, 2001). As mentioned previously, Dominic acknowledged his weakness in grammar and mechanics. He commented, “I actually wanted to be a writer growing up, and then I realized just how bad I was” (June 11, 2003). Carroll commented, “I never was a writer myself; I’m still not really” (September 23, 2004). When asked if this fact influenced whether he used writing assignments, he admitted, “I’m sure it does whether I realize it or not. I mean, if I wrote more... if that was just a normal thing for me I’d probably encourage them to do it more” (September 23, 2004).

What Do They Do in Humanities?

Walker College professors had different views of the Humanities program and what it has to offer as far as writing is concerned. Although most professors interviewed seemed knowledgeable about the writing curriculum, a few were not. The writing staff is very committed to teaching students how to write concise, academic prose; the professors encourage expository writing based on the

readings students do in Humanities with the goal that this type of writing will serve them adequately across the curriculum. The writing professors stress critical reading and thinking skills. In the second semester of composition the students write a twelve- to-fourteen page research paper using the MLA style, although they are told about other forms of documentation. They are tough on our students when it comes to format, grammar, mechanics, and style. Lewis had kind words to say about the writing program, “I mean we beat the snot out of them from the freshman year. In terms of those kinds of things [writing in the Humanities], I don’t see how you can change that to improve it” (October 30, 2001). However, not all Walker College colleagues understand what occurs in the writing program. Peden, a professor in the Human Performance and Exercise Science area, acknowledged that in the courses in her area, supposedly unlike the courses in the Humanities, are

not looking for flowery; we’re looking for words that are ... good descriptive words and quantitative, and it’s different—it’s a different style of writing, and you have to teach kids how to do that well because if you turn in this, you don’t want anything flowery because you know, you are just looking for very concrete kinds of stuff. (July 1, 2003)

She continued, “I’d like to see something scientific writing because I think a lot of our kids... we have a lot of kids in scientific areas, and I don’t know if we spend enough teaching... “(Peden, July 1, 2003). Armour agreed, “Except what you do in Humanities doesn’t help us much with nursing” (September 16, 2004). Raven, a professor in the science department, also alluded to the type of writing done in

Humanities: “So what we [science professors] really emphasize are those critical thinking skills...that lead to the key point, what is this all about rather than worrying about the creative writing piece...” (November 6, 2001). He continued, “One thing maybe that I want to clarify is perhaps in the Humanities department you look at creative writing perhaps differently than I do. In the science department ... creative writing doesn’t mean using a lot of adjectives when you don’t need to” (Raven, November 6, 2001).

Yeats, a professor in the Bible department, reflected upon some valuable concerns related to the Humanities curriculum. He acknowledged that he did not use writing in his freshman classes, but he also noted that one reason was that he was not sure about what his students were capable of doing at that point:

I don’t know what I should be able to expect from my students at various levels based on their writing instruction they’ve received in the Humanities program because I don’t know the content of that, what skills have been discussed, what students’ writing experience has been. Since I don’t really know very much about how the writing instruction is done in the freshman and sophomore Humanities, I don’t... have a gauge, an external gauge for judging the quality of student writing relative to their progress through writing instruction in the Humanities. (November 7, 2001)

His suggestion that the Humanities professors distribute handouts or send emails explaining the writing curriculum and expectations seemed to be not only a logical, but a valuable idea.

Frank, a business professor, seemed to be knowledgeable about the writing program, but he was concerned that maybe the scope was too limited. He suggested a radical idea: “I think our writing staff should be made up of people from different disciplines... because our students think differently depending on their career direction, depending on their background, depending on the major they’ve chosen... and someone writing for the Humanities writes differently than someone for business” (July 28, 2003). He was concerned because our writing staff is composed of English professors. Instead of replacing individuals we presently have, Dr. Frank suggested we add more writing professors from outside the English/composition area.

Institutional Support

Regardless of their abilities, many faculty members felt strongly about the role Walker College plays in supporting writing. Although Dominic commented, “I think it’s [writing] very valued campus wide” (June 11, 2003) several questioned whether the administration at Walker really did encourage writing as much as a liberal arts college should. Fitzgerald believed, “Writing isn’t something that necessarily gets talked about a whole lot” (November 7, 2001). Myra, a former professor of writing, saw the lack of writing support through the treatment of the writing faculty: “we need to raise the writing instructor to a level of respect.... I believe that there’s still this sense that the writing instructor is kind of a wiper of butts” (January 8, 2004).

Tolstoy was the most critical of Walker College. When asked how we could improve our students’ writing abilities, he commented,

You have to be convinced as an institution that writing is critical to what we do as an institution. I'm not sure we're there yet. Maybe we're on our way, but I'm not sure we share that across the college yet that writing is a critical part of what we do here and that students who leave here ought to be able to, ought to have a competency in writing and that we ought to be working on ways of helping our students write better... . I don't know if institutionally we are sending a message that says that writing should be a component of nearly every course we teach here, that we should send a clear, consistent signal to students across the curriculum that writing is part of what we do as an educational institution... I think we have to decide as an institution how important we think writing is. I think staffing wise we're still sending a kind of mixed message. I think we're trying to say that we take writing seriously, but we're not, we don't have the luxury of putting our money where our mouth is at this point... it feels like no one's saying we have to do it better, we'd like to do it better, but right now we are trying to figure out how to do it better with the limited resources we already have which means probably making hard choices about doing something well. (June 11, 2003)

Plath was also concerned about the value Walker College places on writing and what changes would come as a result of this study. He commented, I'm glad that you're researching this area; I'm glad it's been requested. Maybe that is a sign that the College as an institution is interested in enhancing these things. Yet, on the other hand, I hope it does not raise

our expectations that something will be done, and nothing happens. So something needs to happen as a result of this; there needs to be a product other than a thesis that sits on a shelf. It's been done, we know the problem, and for this reason or that, it cannot be done. The expectations have now been raised, so we need to do something.

(November 14, 2001)

So what needs to be done? Where should Walker College go from here? Several possibilities are addressed in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to answer the following research questions: What is the relationship between the importance faculty at one small liberal arts college place on student writing and their actual pedagogical practices? If a disjunction exists between the two, how can it best be explained? In this chapter, answers to the research questions will be discussed, as well as suggestions for further research.

Discussion of the Research Questions

How Important is Writing at Walker College?

The first research question addressed the importance Walker College faculty members placed on writing. The data indicated that the professors viewed writing as a valuable life skill that all students should have when they walk across the stage at graduation. The professors stressed the importance of writing in various careers and saw the importance of writing for communication. These results were consistent with those of other researchers (Beaver, 1990; Masse and Popovich, 1998). Although the professors believed that writing skills are critical to a college education, they also viewed some of their student writers as weak, and the data revealed that professors' use of writing did not match their strong emphasis on the importance of writing.

Do Pedagogical Practices Reveal the Importance of Writing?

The data revealed that professors not only believe that writing is important, but eighteen of them also use it in their teaching. The professors with

whom I conversed used creative, pedagogically sound writing assignments. However, four professors used writing in a very limited way or not at all. And although eighteen professors did use writing, they did not use it extensively. The data revealed that there is indeed a disjunction between what some of the professors at Walker College believe about writing and their classroom practices, and several reasons surfaced for that disjunction.

The Reasons for the Disjunction

Limited View of Writing

This study has shown that Walker College professors have a limited view of how writing can be used in the classroom. This limited view can be tied to the “sage on the stage, guide on the side” phenomenon. Most professors believed they were the only ones capable of imparting knowledge to their students. For at least four professors, writing is seen as an add-on, something they do not have time to use because they have so much content to cover. Peden, a professor in the Human Performance and Exercise Science area did not want writing to be mandatory because “there are some classes that have too much content ... and I’m not for any professor being required to add something” (July 1, 2003). Other colleagues agreed and alluded to the fact that they were primarily responsible for content coverage, and thus, they did not have time to assign written work.

In each of these cases, the professors viewed writing as an extra thing to do, as opposed to viewing writing as a way to help them do what they already do or as a way to help the students learn on their own. These professors did not view writing as a valuable tool that could be used to help students discover and

sort out information for themselves. It appears that these professors view writing as a separate entity from their content.

Three of the faculty members interviewed acknowledged that lecturing was their primary mode of operation. Zenia acknowledged, "I tend to lean towards lecture [rather] than tell me what you think or try to put it in some context of some point I'm trying to get across..." (September 22, 2004). The professors felt pressure to cover the material, and as the "sage on the stage," their classes were content driven rather than student driven. They did not see that writing would add a valuable student component to their courses.

It appears that these Walker College professors as well as others would fall into Kember and Gow's (1994) category of knowledge transmitters, those who believe that content is extremely important; thus, they tend to concentrate on delivering that content, usually in a lecture format. Kember and Gow (1994) acknowledge that it is difficult to change some professors because they are entrenched in the way they have always taught, and they are reluctant to change.

The limited view of writing found at Walker College is not too surprising. Segal and colleagues (1998) discovered a similar disjunction: "We assume that the rhetorical knowledge we have created in our analyses is self-evidently beneficial, but those communities do not always regard [sic] it as such. Sometimes it is bluntly rejected" (p. 73).

Pedagogical Vision – Writing as a Tool for Thinking

Some faculty members view of writing leads to a limited pedagogical vision, which might be another reason for the disjunction between beliefs and practices. Interestingly, only four of the professors, Tolstoy, Peden, Myra, and Zenia, mentioned a connection between student writing and student thinking. Tolstoy believes a direct correlation exists between language and thinking, and he insists that he can only know what his students are thinking if they can articulate their ideas in writing. Zenia, too, mentioned critical thinking in connection with writing, and he is convinced that the problems that Walker students have with writing are really problems related to their ability to think. However, only Tolstoy and Myra indicated that writing could be helpful in developing critical thinking skills.

I was very surprised when I asked questions pertaining to the use of writing as a thinking tool in class. Although four professors saw a link between writing and thinking, none of the participants were familiar with Emig (1983) and Britton's (1972) ideas of writing as a method of helping their students to think about their course material. None of the professors interviewed understood the idea or used writing in that way, and most amazing (as Glaze and Thaiss confirmed), the two education professors did not use any write-to-think exercises, although one professor taught students how to do so in an education course! Sonny, a math professor who teaches math for education majors acknowledged that he did not use journals in his classes, but that he points "those things out to them, these things that they need to do in employing these in the classroom" (July 8, 2003). He realized the importance of innovative teaching strategies using

writing, but he did not use them in his own teaching. It would seem that the education professors would be on the cutting edge of strong pedagogical strategies to support learning and would model these in their own teaching, but this did not prove to be the case with writing strategies at Walker College. Although the education professors knew that writing was important as a tool for thinking, they did not use it to help their own students think. Another professor, Hoffman, concluded in her interview that a person could not be a good thinker unless she could write, and even though she did assign written projects, she did not use writing as a tool for thinking in her classroom practices.

After asking questions about using writing as a thinking tool, four of the faculty members got excited about the possibilities, but none were aware of how to use writing in this manner. Overall, write-to-learn exercises were again seen as add-ons, something extra to do. Myra, an English professor, discussed how writing prompts were used in her graduate program, and she saw them as valuable in the context of her own graduate studies, but she did not transfer that value to her own teaching. She, too, was very concerned about covering content and not having time to do anything she considered extra.

Two faculty presented contradictions in their interviews concerning in-class writing. Although Frank acknowledged that he did not use writing exercises in class to stimulate discussion, he admitted later in his interview that “writing empowers them to participate more than anything you can have them do” (July 28, 2003). Carroll also presented a similar contradiction by indicating that he did not use writing exercises in class, but then commenting later in the interview that

students need to be writing. Apparently neither of these professors was aware of the mixed messages they were sending.

The Walker College professors I interviewed seemed to feel fairly comfortable using writing in Britton's (1977) "transactional" mode, writing "to get things done, to inform people... to advise or persuade or instruct people" (p. 88-89). However, the data suggest that they do not use writing in the "expressive" mode, the writing that is used to increase student thinking. Only four professors understood the direct connection between writing and thinking and demonstrated an understanding of the fact that the use of expressive writing increases the level of critical thinking the students are asked to do. The other professors did not use writing to help students think. It was surprising to me that when I asked professors if they used writing in their courses, they said "yes" if they assigned a research paper, and they said "no" if they did not. In several incidences, I discovered that they did use writing more than they thought, but they had a very limited definition of writing.

Before Walker College can become a true writing-across-the-curriculum institution, the faculty must buy into the idea of using writing as a tool for learning. As Nilson (1998) concludes, "While thinking may not always be expressed in writing, writing is *always* an expression of thinking" (p. 143). For WAC advocates, the concept of writing as a tool for thinking is fundamental.

Grammar Concerns

Three Walker College professors I interviewed struggled with the balance between grading grammar and content. When asked about writing skills, these

three professors responded that they tended to primarily consider grammatical and spelling types of issues. Lewis noted, "I find myself slipping into grading their grammar" (October 30, 2001). They were concerned that students get all the rules right.

This feeling of inadequacy to grade student writing is not limited to Walker College. Tandy and Smith (1990) report,

Thus many faculty feel a strong obligation to contribute to the literacy of their students, without being at all clear on how to go about doing so. Most faculty outside of English are dismayed at the poor quality of student writing, but feel they lack the training or "authority" to judge, mark, or evaluate it. (p. 246)

Teaching from Past Role Models

Another possible reason for the disjunction could be that perhaps the professors continue to teach as they have been taught instead of looking outside the box for new methods and ideas. Baxter Magolda (1999) believes, "As teachers, we reproduce the teaching practices we experienced as learners" (p. 237). Freedom and Hoffman clearly illustrated this point. Freedom claimed that it is much easier to use the same methods and materials year after year instead of searching for new ways to teach the material. She believed that most faculty members are content to lecture because that is how they were taught, and they are comfortable with that mode of transmitting information. Hoffman concluded that she does not attend writing workshops any more because the information presented is not usually addressed to her area of sociology. Two other

professors, Myra and McCrumb, stated that some of their professors in graduate courses used innovative write-to-think exercises in class, but they did not imitate those teaching methodologies in their own classrooms.

College faculty members do not seem to follow innovative teaching trends. My research was consistent with Glaze and Thaiss (1994) who state,

Teachers teach the way they have been taught, no matter what they might be told in methods classes. One major source of resistance comes from the college and university faculty in whose classes teachers have sat. Even in methods courses, prospective teachers often find that professors lecture about `interactive teaching styles' but don't exemplify them" (p. 13).

The Walker Academic Dean echoed this idea:

It's my assumption that most of us learn how to teach mostly by mimicking our graduate faculty. When we went to graduate school we mimicked our best teachers. That usually means we're mimicking one or two people, but there's a host of other ideas, and part of it is that we just don't get exposure, and we don't go shop around other classes; we don't see other syllabi. Most faculty live fairly narrow. I'm fortunate; I see a lot of syllabi. I talk to a lot of people; I talk to a lot of other campuses, so I see a lot of variety, but I think most faculty don't realistically. Of course not, they're teaching their courses; they have to do what they have to do.

(Brown, January 8, 2004)

Inexperience with New Teaching Strategies

During the interviews, Walker College professors revealed their inexperience with adopting new teaching strategies. Although eight faculty members assigned collaborative work, they admitted feeling uncomfortable with using it because they have been unable to come up with a means to achieve grade equity. When I asked if they allowed for process writing in their assignments, they all asked me to define the term. After I provided an explanation, only three professors acknowledged that they allow their students to write more than one draft of a paper. Four commented that reading students' papers once was all they had time or the desire to do.

Perhaps the most critical response to the question about creating assignments that allowed for process writing and discussion came from Bresson who considers allowing students to talk about their writing in class a waste of time: "I've thought about that, but then I'm always held back in actually putting that into practice by the fact that deep down inside I think that's a waste of class time.... I guess I think that's what they ought to be doing anyway at home or in the dorm" (July 11, 2003). Again, he felt pressured by the amount of material he had to cover and believed that spending time to assess student writing in class was not a valuable way to spend his class hours. But, again ironically, later in the interview when asked about the advantages of writing, Bresson indicated that writing forced students to think in a structured way, and he stated that writing enabled students to "discipline" their brains (July 11, 2003).

The study done by Braxton, Eimers, and Bayer (1996) concluded that

professors are more concerned about teaching their content areas and are less concerned about innovative teaching practices. They concluded that professors make changes when they deem changes to be appropriate. Kember and Gow (1994) agreed that professors do what they do because they are entrenched in academic habits that have been passed down through the generations. It would appear that Walker College professors are also reluctant to change because of their concerns about content issues and their lack of motivation to try something new. If the old method works, why change it?

Who Teaches Writing?

Another reason for the disjunction that appeared in the data revolved around the “teaching” of writing. Fourteen Walker College professors believed that Humanities should be responsible for the teaching of writing, and thus, they did not feel a need to help students improve their writing skills. Three professors were hesitant to use writing and were reluctant graders of writing because they saw their role as the “grammar Nazis,” and not as writing teachers. Seven professors actually noted that they were weak in grammar and mechanics and implied that they felt incompetent to help students with writing. Howard and Jamieson’s (1995) work revealed similar concerns. They reported that many professors feel unqualified to teach writing, but they stress that:

Most contemporary theorists and many practitioners believe that many or all writing skills can and should be taught and that the teaching is especially effective in the context of “real” writing in the disciplines rather than in assignments concocted in decontextualized composition courses.

(Howard and Jamieson, p. 3).

The Need to Grade Everything

Closely tied to faculty concerns about teaching writing was the idea that everything that students wrote had to be graded. Two professors in particular mentioned a strong compulsion to grade everything students wrote regardless of the purpose of the assignment. Armour, a nursing professor, agreed, "I'd have to read it. I would feel compelled to read it if I had them write it down" (September 16, 2004). Both of these professors believed that it would be unfair to the students if they did not read and respond to every assignment. It may be that if the professors viewed writing as a tool for thinking, they could learn to use it differently and perhaps would not feel compelled to grade everything that students write.

Unclear Expectations of Who Promotes Writing

When asked about who should encourage faculty to use more writing, five of the faculty responded that it should be the Academic Dean. Dominic suggested that for young, untenured professors, the Dean's encouragement would result in change. Freedom also saw the importance of the Dean's involvement and commented that without his encouragement, the faculty would not make changes to use more writing. These professors indicated that the Academic Dean could do more to raise the presence of writing on the Walker campus. Zenia agreed with these colleagues and acknowledged that the Dean could do more to promote writing use, but he expressed concern about whether the Dean would take on that challenge. He indicated that the Dean could

mandate writing in all upper division courses, but questioned whether he would implement that type of a change if it were mandated.

On the other hand, the Academic Dean did not feel that the impetus for writing across the curriculum should come from his office. He explained that the faculty should be responsible for changes that occur in the general curriculum. The faculty should indicate a desire for change in the use of writing on campus. He concluded that it was not his prerogative to ask faculty to include writing in every course and acknowledged that he would have a hard time selling the faculty on such an idea. He was willing to encourage faculty to review the general education requirements in order to ascertain what role writing plays, but he was not in favor of a mandate from his office that would dictate how faculty should use writing on campus.

The Dean was not alone in his concerns about mandating writing. BeMiller and colleagues (1990) at Chico State report, "As for faculty, ours at Chico State, like faculty everywhere, object to anything they construe as meddling in their classrooms, and the notion of including writing as part of course requirements continues to meet with as much indifference or hostility as support" (p. 132-33).

Gates, one participant in the study, agreed with the Dean and confirmed that the writing initiative should come from the faculty. She believed that a mandate from the Dean would not be effective, but that faculty should be concerned enough about students to help them learn how to write well.

Faculty Autonomy

Regardless of who initiates a possible change in writing, five professors were clear that they valued their autonomy. The Walker College faculty who participated in this study were resistant to being told what to do. McCrumb noted, "I don't think you can really force people because if they don't want to do it, they're not going to do it" (June 24, 2003). McCrumb alluded to the problems of having a mandate from the Dean; she recalled her past experience as a business consultant and warned that major changes from the top down are often met with extreme resistance. Change, she believed, is better from the bottom up; thus, she concluded that changes in our curriculum should come from the faculty. She continued by suggesting that the movement start with the Humanities area and then move to the education area.

Writing-across-the-curriculum proponents (McLeod, 1989; Fulwiler and Young, 1990) agree that changes incorporating writing should come from the faculty. McLeod (1989) writes, "As faculty change, so does the curriculum" (p.340). However, she also acknowledges that encouraging faculty change is often difficult: "But changing attitudes and changing actual classroom practice may be two different things. Faculty resistance to change can be profound" (McLeod, 1989, p. 343).

Lack of Accountability?

Although Walker College faculty seemed to value their freedom in the classroom, at least two professors viewed this freedom as perhaps excessive and alluded to the fact that we may need more accountability mandated from the administration. Two participants were concerned that professors had too much

freedom and no one to answer to when it came to their work on campus. Myra was the most critical, and she implied that faculty can do whatever they want and that no one really requires that the Walker College professors do what they do not want to do. She believed that faculty could do as much or as little as they wanted, and no one cared.

Zenia made a similar statement and commented that he basically did his job without any input from the Dean or anyone else. He acknowledged that he liked the freedom he was granted at Walker, but he saw the Dean as one who took a “hands-off approach,” and felt that this strategy may not always be a good thing (September 22, 2003).

Implications for Walker College

The irony of the situation at Walker College is that when asked about the role of writing, each individual said writing was very important. However, at least six of those same professors confessed that little writing occurs in their classes. But I agree with Adams (1985):

If we believe that writing is inseparable from learning and central to the study of all disciplines, it makes sense to activate that belief and to teach writing directly and reinforce it in all courses rather than to teach it as a discrete ability to be learned in a special way (p. 3).

So where does Walker College go from here? After years of writing instruction and numerous changes in the writing curriculum, some Walker College students still struggle to achieve decent writing scores and still fail to learn the skills necessary to succeed in graduate school and, presumably,

society. The 2005 National Survey of Student Engagement Means Comparison Report again revealed that Walker professors assign fewer essays than other schools like Walker. The goal is for all Walker College graduates to be articulate, concise, intelligent writers. Obviously, it would be nice to have every faculty member committed to writing excellence. However, only a few faculty members interviewed demonstrated positive attitudes toward writing and used meaningful writing assignments in their classes. Two of those professors are exemplary examples.

Examples of Faculty Involvement with Writing

Armour has been a nursing professor at Walker College since 1996. In her interview she discussed her concerns with teaching to the NCLEX exam, the professional exam for nurses. She explained that even when writing is used in nursing classes, it never amounts to more than 10 to 15% of the final grade because the majority of the students' work involves taking multiple-choice exams. Armour struggles with the type of exam her students must pass to enter the profession. In the course of the interview, she explained that she had added a writing component to all of her classes for the first time this year. In one class, the students write in weekly journals in which they respond to prompts she gives them, and in the other classes, the students do weekly, extensive patient care plans. If the students do an inadequate job on the patient care plans, they have the opportunity to rewrite them and address the professor's comments. Armour stated that she is mainly a lecturer by practice, and she concluded some classes are better suited for a lecture method of instruction. But she acknowledged that

she is assigning more writing this year than ever before. When asked about the reasons for these changes, she responded,

Because the other things weren't working.... Multiple, objective kinds of things, workbook stuff, and doing some other kinds of ways to get them to look at their material before they came into class. I hate doing quizzes.... They [the students] weren't coming prepared, having looked at the material, and they are. They are in order to answer these questions ... they have to at least looked at it and thought about it. (September 16, 2004)

When asked if she was pleased with the results of her pedagogical changes, she responded, "I'm very, very pleased" (September 16, 2004).

The second professor to exhibit enthusiasm for what writing can add to a classroom was Zenia who has been an accounting professor at Walker College since 1988, and by his own admission, had not used writing in his classes in the past. He said, "I think that in the past [there has] been a deficiency in the Business area, maybe in the Accounting area" (September 22, 2004). In his Introductory Accounting class the students were writing journal entries and financial statements. Until this year, he did not assign writing in his upper division courses, but he recently began assigning research papers in all his classes. When asked about his reasons for the change, Zenia explained, "Being in the doctoral program myself and writing and writing and writing, and now I'm also hearing from some of the students doing graduate school... I feel like I'm not preparing them as much as I should" (September 22, 2004). He also identified

another reason for using writing with his students, “they [students] reach a level where they hit a plane, and if they’re not fed, if they’re not required to push and do any more writing or any more, expand on critical thinking, they just sort of level off” (September 22, 2004). As he continued the interview process, he noted that he had undergone a “paradigm shift.” His graduate school experience has helped him reevaluate his teaching methods. Zenia also was able to see the connection between writing and reading: “I would think that the more they ... write, and they write critically, that would help them to learn to read critically ...” (September 22, 2004).

The epiphany Zenia has experienced was a result of his work in graduate school. Zenia was the only professor interviewed who had not finished a PhD, so it would be expected that the other participants should already know what Zenia was currently learning.

Implications for Other Institutions

Walker College is not that different from other small liberal arts colleges and universities; thus, the findings from this research are applicable to other institutions as well. Actually, I would argue that professors and students are similar at all colleges and universities, no matter what the size. I would assume that most professors are pressed for time, that they have not received any formal training as to how to teach, and that in many institutions students arrive with weak writing skills. Most professors are desirous of doing a good job, no matter what they teach or where they teach. Thus, the recommendations for Walker College would benefit other institutions of higher learning as well.

Implications for Further Research

Although the following topics have been addressed in the literature in the past few years, I would suggest that further research is possible and even recommended.

Teaching Professors to Teach

One area in particular stands out as needing more research, and that is the area of preparing professors of higher learning to teach. Through my own personal experience with students I have realized that some professors are not good teachers, and some of my own colleagues confessed their feelings of inadequacy during the interview process. My background includes licensure to teach in the public schools; thus, I have had many education courses, but that is not the case for most college and university professors. I believe there is a need to look at how professors are trained for their jobs and a need for suggestions as to how to improve their teaching abilities. I have also witnessed some contempt for education classes, so a look into faculty attitudes may be insightful, too. Do education classes actually help prepare college and university professors for their jobs? Are faculty members open to workshops that focus on pedagogy? Do those workshops help professors become better teachers?

Also, it is generally believed that professors model their teaching practices after professors they admired. Another interesting study could determine whether or not there is a correlation between how professors in graduate school teach and how their students teach once they become college or university professors.

Do faculty members really imitate those professors they admired as students?

Do they learn how to use writing from their graduate professors?

Why Johnny Can't Write, Even Though He is a College Professor

Another area for additional research is the area of professors and writing. My data suggested that professors did not always view themselves as good writers, that they often feel uncomfortable with writing and interacting with students and writing, and that their educational backgrounds did not provide the training they needed to become competent writers. How can individuals write dissertations and not learn how to write? A look at what is expected of graduate students would be advantageous, as well as research into the role writing and writing instruction plays in graduate programs. Rather than examining how writing is used in graduate programs, this research would address how much assistance professors received with writing when they were in graduate school and whether or not that assistance empowered them to be confident teachers of writing.

Are Students Changing?

My colleagues and I have whined and complained for years that students are coming to us less prepared. We are convinced that they are reading less than they did in the past and that they are coming to us with weaker writing and critical thinking skills. Although our experiences are anecdotal, I believe that our perceptions are accurate, and some scholars agree (Howard and Jamieson, 1995). Therefore, I would like to see research that delves into the reading,

writing, and critical thinking skills of freshman students to determine if their abilities are declining, and if so, what explanations exists for this decline?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WALKER COLLEGE

After interviewing faculty and administrators for three years and thinking about their responses for endless hours, I have concluded that Walker College is a viable academic institution with a faculty of hard-working individuals who care deeply about their students and their profession. I also believe that changes can be made to improve our institution, especially in the area of writing and learning. Some of these changes can be implemented immediately; others can be goals for the future.

Becoming a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Campus

Walker College needs to create a culture that values writing, not only among students, but also among faculty, and I think the best way to create that culture is to become a true writing-across-the-curriculum campus. The Humanities curriculum is a wonderful place to start, but there is a need to create an environment where writing is seen as a communication tool and also as a thinking tool. Writing needs to be seen as valuable in the disciplines, and professors all across the campus need to be instructing their students in the subtleties of writing in their areas. Students need to be able to write coherently and to engage in written dialogue with others in their fields when they graduate. Various deliberate changes can move Walker College toward becoming a true WAC institution. The following sections will discuss possible short-term and long-term changes that will help Walker College move towards a WAC campus.

Changes to Consider Now

Changes in Hiring Practices

The first and perhaps easiest change to implement on Walker's campus concerns hiring practices. Young and Fulwiler (1990) and McLeod (1989) believe that WAC programs that are the most successful begin with the faculty and not the administration. Walker College could encourage a writing climate by consciously hiring individuals who are invested in writing either through their own work or through their interest with student writing. The college hires at least one new faculty member each year and often several new members, and these hiring processes provide opportunities to highlight the importance of writing on our campus. Typically, individuals who apply for positions have published, but the Dean and the hiring committee could focus on writing within teaching within job descriptions for advertisements and in the interview process. The candidates' position on the use of writing and the purpose for writing should be made clear in the interview. Walker committee members should ask probing questions to determine whether the candidates view writing as a valuable tool for learning, whether they have plans for using writing in their courses, and how they will address this skill with their students. As Tolstoy commented in his interview, the committee and the Dean should question whether the candidates are competent writers themselves and whether they would be capable of assisting Walker students' writing in order to support them in becoming better writers. This emphasis on writing in the early hiring stages would help promote a culture of writing on campus.

The second change that should occur related to hiring practices concerns the hiring in the Humanities writing area. Although no positions are currently open, when a writing position does become available, the Dean and the hiring committee should strongly suggest that the position be filled by an individual with a PhD in composition/rhetoric. However, I realize that this change may not be easy to implement. I was on the committee that hired a recent candidate in writing, and we did interview several people with composition/rhetoric backgrounds. The problem was in our job requirements. Walker needed an individual who could teach both writing and sophomore Humanities courses. It was very apparent that the individuals with composition backgrounds were too limited in their areas of expertise, and they could not meet the Humanities need. However, the faculty member hired did have a PhD, and she had taught composition courses, so she was a good match for our needs. Thus, a dilemma: Will Walker College ever be in a position where a composition person could be hired to do just composition work? Although that person's expertise could be very advantageous to the campus, the nature of the small campus requires that professors must fill many roles. One desirable goal would be to reach a point at which the college could afford to hire a composition faculty member who could bring in needed expertise that would benefit all the students on campus and also provide support for the faculty. This individual could perhaps oversee a writing center as well. As Tolstoy commented in his interview, this hiring would require a serious commitment to writing on the part of the faculty and administration.

Changes in Faculty Loads

The second immediate suggestion would be for the administration to seriously look at the obligations placed on Walker College professors. Lowman (1984), author of *Mastering the Techniques of Writing*, takes a dim view of professors who use a lack of time as an excuse not to use creative teaching methods, including writing. Lowman (1984) writes, "Faculty can be overworked, but they rarely are. More commonly, they feel overwhelmed by the variety of things expected of them..." (p. 213). As a professor at Walker College, I can affirm that we work hard, and the time constraints are a serious issue for most of us. Although every faculty member interviewed mentioned time as a serious issue on the Walker College campus, nine professors indicated that they would use more writing if their work loads were not so heavy. They mentioned large classes and excessive teaching loads as reasons for not using writing in their courses. As a part of this faculty, I realize that the workload is extreme, and that a forty-hour plus week is the norm. Using writing and grading papers adds substantially to the hours needed to do a good job. Although I do not envision a situation where all the classes on campus are small, I would recommend that the administration visit the work load issue and determine if some changes could be made to alleviate this problem in any way.

Faculty Development and Training

It appears that Walker College professors are a willing group, but that they need training to learn valuable teaching methodologies. McLeod (1987) and Fulwiler and Young (1990) stress the importance of preparing professors to incorporate writing into their courses. Again, the fact that these Walker College

professors are not using many of the pedagogical tools available is not too surprising. As Bresson related, "One of the sad things about teaching, about being a professor, about teaching on the college and university level is that most of us are not... we've never learned how to teach. We get this from our own graduate school experiences, good or bad, and I was not an education major, and I don't really know how to teach" (July 11, 2003).

The professors interviewed were, for the most part, unaware of innovative strategies for implementing writing in their courses. They were quite comfortable with assigning research papers, case studies, and other commonly assigned written projects. They know their subject matter, but with the exception of the education faculty, they have not had any formal training as teachers. Their inexperience results in lack of knowledge about methods of using writing as a thinking tool. Further, they are relatively inexperienced with the use of journals, dialectical notebooks, free writes, writing prompts, and other typical WAC methods of encouraging student thinking. Baxter Magolda (1999) explains why faculty members do not often change their teaching methods: "Despite growing dissatisfaction with the perceptions of authority and knowledge... educators often stay with those models because they lack specific alternatives" (p. 26).

Perhaps Walker College can do more to provide those alternatives to the professors. Although the professors were concerned about time issues, they all seemed willing and ready to receive training in methods to incorporate writing in their classes. They were all open to learning about new, innovative ways to

teach, and their willingness was a good indication of their desire to be the best teachers they could be.

Walker College has a faculty willing to learn, so faculty workshops and training could be beneficial. The administration should make a deliberate attempt to provide training for faculty. One possible strategy would be to arrange for the professors to attend a retreat each fall where various pedagogical topics would be presented and discussed. This retreat could provide an excellent opportunity to introduce professors to new ideas concerning writing and critical thinking. The ideal situation would be to bring an outsider in as a retreat facilitator because Walker College is often like a bubble set apart from the outside world, and a new voice with new ideas would be very beneficial. However, Walker College does have a Director of Writing in Humanities, and that individual should be capable of leading a short faculty workshop or retreat, as am I.

Writing workshops during the school year would also be helpful. These workshops could be topical, and they should be short, perhaps limited to one hour. In the past, Walker College has had good attendance at computer workshops that have been held during the lunch hour, and writing workshops could be conducted in that time frame also. These workshops should be voluntary, and although it is difficult to predict attendance, the professors interviewed seemed interested in learning new ideas they could use in their courses. Three professors specifically mentioned that they would be interested in workshops directly related to pedagogy; thus, these individuals clearly demonstrated a desire to improve their teaching methods. I would recommend

that the administration work with the Director of Writing in the Humanities and me to plan and implement several writing workshops for faculty members. After these workshops have been held, we could meet again to evaluate their success prior to making further plans. One of our sister colleges holds a retreat each spring, and the faculty are treated to a wonderful, off-campus experience where guest speakers come in and talk about the use of writing. This endeavor is expensive but is funded from the money earned by the selling of the campus' writing handbooks. Although I do not envision Walker College doing anything quite so elaborate due to lack of personnel and funding, if Walker College professors would be open to spending some uninterrupted time discussing ways to improve our students' writing skills, it would be possible to create an on-campus "retreat" for the purpose of learning strategies for incorporating WAC on the Walker campus.

Another option for faculty development and training would be release time for professors who desire to work with writing-across-the-curriculum methods to revamp their courses to incorporate more writing. Again, this is a wonderful idea, but time and money are issues here, and I realize that it would be difficult to grant release time to any professor. Walker faculty members are already stretched pretty thin.

Standardized Writing Assessment Tool

Faculty development workshops could result in a campus-wide discussion of writing and its validity for Walker College. Two professors suggested the creation of a standardized writing rubric that could be used in every course.

Although I envision developing such a tool as potentially troublesome because it would be difficult to come to a consensus as to what is important, I do think a discussion of how to assess writing could be beneficial to the faculty. I would suggest that each area chair lead a discussion what writing skills they believe are crucial for students. These discussions could result in the development of a suggested rubric that highlights what the professors see as important in writing. Even if the rubric is not used by every professor, the dialogue could help the faculty get a clearer vision of how writing should be used and what students should know and be able to do when they graduate.

In the beginning of my research for my PhD, I visited with professors in three different areas on campus. I talked to the faculty in these areas about their use of writing as an area, and I was struck by the fact that these individuals who had worked together daily for years had never talked together about writing. The discussions were enlightening and encouraging, and I think a need exists to start a dialogue among the Walker faculty.

A Change of Attitude about Writing

The ultimate goal of the faculty workshops and continuing discussions would be a change in faculty attitudes towards writing. Baxter Magolda (1999) explains the importance of viewing students as learners and of situating learning in the experience of the students. But this change is also possible for professors. The administration at Walker College needs to reach professors where they are and address their actual teaching needs. One way to accomplish this would be to provide the professors with concrete evidence that some student writing is weak

and that some students come to college ill-prepared to do the writing required of them. One method of accomplishing this would be for the faculty to collaboratively engage in analysis of anonymous freshmen essays using a writing rubric. In addition to providing faculty with practice reading freshmen essays and scoring them based on a rubric, this would provide faculty with the opportunity to discuss the overall strengths and weaknesses of incoming students. The workshop should stress that students need continual help to improve their writing skills and that freshman and sophomore composition classes are not enough. Writing skills must be reinforced throughout the entire four years of college.

I would also suggest that the workshops focus on writing across the curriculum in such a way that every discipline can see the validity of writing in every course, especially as a tool for thinking and learning. Since professors seem to value their freedom, it is important to present them with new ideas in such a way that they can be empowered to take ownership of them.

Curricular Changes

Although opposition to a mandate from the administration requiring writing in every course is likely, it might be possible to develop a college-wide policy requiring that each program area have a certain number of courses that are writing intensive. I do not recommend designating specific writing-intensive courses. Although I realize that the implementation of writing-intensive courses in every plan of study has been successfully accomplished at many colleges and universities (Cornell University, East Tennessee State University, and the University of South Florida, for example), it is possible for such writing-intensive

designations to send the wrong message about the course and the professor. I would recommend for Walker College that the administration simply look at the courses in each area with the intention that several of the upper division courses have a substantial number of written assignments of different types such as research papers and case studies. With careful analysis, each program area could make assure that students in that area are exposed to several courses that require writing. It is a possibility that these classes already exist in most areas, but a deliberate look at the curriculum would be valuable to help assure that all students would take a number of courses with a number of writing assignments within their programs of study.

The Role of the Administration

Although three professors advocated that the Academic Dean at Walker mandate writing across the campus, I must agree with the Dean and those who suggested that the impetus for writing must come from the faculty. Most WAC scholars also recommend that writing initiatives come from the faculty (Fulwiler and Young, 1986, 1990; McLeod, 1988; Thaiss, 1998). It would be preferable for Walker faculty to decide to implement a writing focus across the campus on their own and were offered workshops that were conducted effectively. Through workshops, professors might see how they could effectively use writing in their courses.

However, it would be helpful if the administration provided support by making the topic of writing more visible on campus by stressing the importance of writing as a necessary skill that all students must gain. The incorporation of

writing across the curriculum could be encouraged through workshops and by making writing more of a priority in hiring practices. Support for making writing prevalent in specific courses across each major would also be beneficial. Writing could be made more visible through administrative support for conversations about writing on campus.

Conversation with Humanities

One of the most surprising results of my study was the confusion that many professors had concerning what is done in the Humanities writing program. As a professor in that area, I was struck by how little those outside my area knew about the details of what is required of students. Their insistence that Humanities professors must be asking students to write creative, flowery essays made me realize that the Humanities area needs to communicate more effectively what we actually do.

This communication could be valuable for several reasons. First, if the professors understood what Humanities faculty members required of freshmen and sophomore writers, then they could better assign writing projects that would not only encourage and support what we are trying to do, but they could also feel comfortable that their students could do the tasks asked of them.

Secondly, if other professors clearly understood what Humanities faculty are doing, they could suggest changes in our curriculum if we are not meeting the needs of students have in their areas. For example, if their students are struggling to use APA documentation correctly, we could add a lesson on the use of APA documentation. Opportunities should be provided for Humanities faculty

members to meet with leaders in all the discipline areas to precisely identify expectations for students in the area of writing.

Thirdly, when professors communicate across area lines, understanding is often improved. Perhaps if the faculty understood what the goals of the Humanities professors in their courses, they would be more sensitive to what is and what is not accomplished in Humanities. Perhaps it would be possible to establish collaborative partnerships with area faculty in a shared endeavor to teach students how to write.

An Emphasis on Reading

Fulwiler, in his book *Teaching with Writing* (1987) emphasizes the connection between writing and reading, and three professors interviewed in this study noted that reading was a critical element in the skill of writing. The professors believed that Walker College could assist students in their writing if reading was more valued. I agree. Reading and writing are closely connected. These three professors, as well as two others interviewed, felt that professors needed to hold the students more accountable for their reading. Perhaps a campus-wide discussion about reading would be beneficial as a complement to discussions about writing.

Changes to Consider in the Future

Although the ideas suggested above can be considered immediately, I would advocate that the administration and faculty consider two other issues in the next two to three years.

A Writing Center

Many academic institutions have writing centers, places where students and professors can go to receive help with writing issues. Some of these are highly effective, while others are poorly funded and hang on for dear life. Obviously, writing centers require a commitment on the part of the institutions because they require financial support including faculty and staff to oversee their operations. One ideal solution is a faculty member who can take care of the day-to-day workings and also train the tutors who work there. Most institutions use students as tutors, and well-trained students can do a good job helping other students.

I was surprised by how many professors interviewed at Walker College mentioned a writing center. Ten individuals implied that a writing center would be a very valuable asset to the campus environment. Noted rationales ranged from providing help with writing for students (as well as for faculty), to taking the pressure off faculty who do not have time to help students with writing, and to sending a clear message that writing is important on campus. One new professor was extremely surprised that Walker College did not have a writing center; she just assumed a small liberal arts college would see the need for such support.

Scholars agree that writing centers can be beneficial on college campuses. Barnett and Blumner (2001) stress the natural connection between a writing center and a writing program such as the one found at Walker College:

In addition to pedagogic philosophies, the writing center and writing program should share the same or complementary goals. Both want to produce the best independent student writers they can. Both want to

advance critical thinking skills and show students how writing shapes learning. Both also want to prepare students to step into the academic and professional writing community. (p. 169)

Walker College has had a writing center in the past, but it has not been a priority on campus. The students who served as tutors in the writing center had limited preparation for their work, and the faculty member in charge did not have enough time to dedicate to the cause. While some students benefited from the center, it was not well attended. Eventually, a tutoring system was established, and the writing center went by the wayside.

A writing center run by a faculty member with expertise and the time to teach student tutors and provide adequate support for their work can be very effective. Walker College currently lacks the resources to hire someone to oversee the center, and unless someone is clearly designated to take on that role, the center will flounder. Walker College also lacks the physical location for such a writing center. In addition, the administration does not necessarily favor student tutors, and unless tutors are very well trained and provided continuous support, disaster can result.

Although I would like to eventually see a writing center on campus, funding is a problem. Although Walker College does not have the money to hire a writing center director, the campus does have a professor who teaches developmental writing courses. If the administration revamped the responsibilities of the developmental writing professor, it would be possible for this professor to oversee a writing center. Walker College does pay tutors under the auspices of

Student Success (a grant-funded program to help students achieve academic success) to help students with essays. More information needs to be transmitted to the students and the faculty about such services with the goal of helping more students. For now, the use of these tutors seems to be the best route for Walker College, but in the long-term future, the possibility of adding a well-supported writing center should be re-addressed.

A Portfolio Requirement

I mentioned the possibility of a portfolio requirement for students to several of the professors I interviewed, and the response was generally favorable. Yancey and Weiser (1997) strongly encourage the use of portfolios for assessment. Although portfolios require a tremendous workload from faculty, they have been used very effectively as exit requirements at many colleges and universities. I would suggest a conversation with colleagues about the validity of portfolios for our small campus. It would be possible for Walker College to require that each student submit a writing portfolio at the beginning of their last semester. A possible requirement of this portfolio would be for it to contain one written piece from their general education courses and two pieces from their major courses. The students would choose their best pieces of writing for the portfolio requirement. The University of Charleston became a portfolio institution several years ago, and the administration and faculty have been very pleased with the changes in the abilities of the students.

The advantages of such a portfolio are many, but two are most important. First, the portfolio requirement would send a clear message that writing is valued

at Walker College and that Walker is a true writing-across-the-curriculum campus. Secondly, since students would be required to have several high-quality pieces of writing to put in their portfolios, professors would be encouraged to create assignments that qualify for the portfolio. Thus, portfolios could be used as a subtle approach to getting faculty on board with writing.

However, there is a cost in implementing such a plan. Obviously, faculty members would need to read and assess the portfolios. Walker College has a limited budget and limited faculty resources, so these issues could possibly be challenges to overcome. If there was some extra money connected with faculty work in reading and assessing student writing portfolios, some faculty would be more willing to participate, and actually the financial resources would be minimal for the institution. This idea would only be viable if a large majority of the faculty supported it; however, it is a topic worth discussing with faculty across the campus to determine whether or not there is interest in pursuing writing portfolios.

Further Thoughts

A limited budget and very limited time resources are concerns that must be faced at Walker College. Professors are stretched, and they are leery of anything that increases their workloads. The majority of the suggestions above can be addressed without spending additional money, and if implemented carefully, will not require much additional time for faculty. The major goal is to get professors to see the value of writing for their students, and I believe that once they realize the tremendous needs of Walker students in the area of writing and

are presented with ways to meet these needs, they will be glad to make necessary changes. Will everyone come on board? Of course not. But with some deliberate planning on the part of the administration and help from the writing professors, positive changes can be made at Walker College—changes that will not only benefit the students, but that will also benefit the faculty. I am convinced that some innovative teaching practices would actually energize and revitalize some courses and programs on our campus.

Summary

This final chapter examined the results derived from my research. After completing twenty-five (twenty-three professors and two administrators) interviews, I have made many conclusions about professors and writing at Walker College. The faculty of Walker College believe that writing is an important life skill and that students should know how to write effectively when they graduate. However, I discovered that my colleagues do not commonly use writing in their courses, and they seldom use it as a tool for thinking and learning. They are not familiar with research done by Young, Fulwiler, McLeod (1987, 1988, 1989, 2000, 2001), Thaiss, Yancey, Elbow, and Maimon (1981). Their reasons for not using writing creatively range from a lack of competency and confidence to a lack of time and a desire to cover content.

Although these recommendations are specific to Walker College, all of them could be beneficial to other institutions of higher learning. The problems of weak student writing and the lack of faculty utilization of writing as a teaching and a learning tool are not unique to Walker College but are obvious on other

campuses as well. Walker College is a long way from being a true writing-across-the-curriculum campus, but with intentional work on the part of the administration and the faculty, the college can made tremendous strides towards helping our students become writers who would make the institution proud. And in the process, the professors just might find more enjoyment in their jobs!

REFERENCES

- Ackerman, J.M. (1993). The promise of writing to learn. *Written Communication*. 10. 3, 334-370.
- ACT. (2003). Colleges value grammar more than high schools, survey shows. *Activity*. 41, 2. <http://www.act.org/activity/spring/2003/index.html>.
- Adams, B. (1985). Writing for learning: How to achieve a total college commitment. Paper presented at the annual National Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. ED 258 666.
- Anson, C. & Beach, R. (1995). *Journals in the classroom: Writing to learn*. Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon.
- Anson, C. (Eds.) (2002). Reflection, faculty development, and writing across the curriculum: The power of scene. In Anson, C. (Ed.), *The WAC Casebook: Scenes For Faculty Reflection and Program Development* (pp. ix-xiii). Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Barnett, R. , Blumner, J. (2001). *The Allyn and Bacon guide to writing center theory and practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bartholomae, D. (1986). Inventing the university. *Journal of Basic Writing*. 5, 134-165.
- Bartlett, T. (2003, January 3). Why Johnny can't write, even though he went to Princeton. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A39-40.
- Baxter Magolda, M.B. (1999). *Creating contexts for learning and self-authorship*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP.
- Bean, J. (1996). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating*

writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Beaver, J. (1990). Writing across the entire curriculum: A status report on faculty attitudes. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the North Eastern Educational Research Association. ED 327 871.

Belanoff, P. (1987). The role of journals in the interpretative community. In T. Fulwiler (Ed.), *The Journal Book*. New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook.

BeMiller, S., Bueler, L., Fox, T., Lams, V., Leonard, J., Nordhus, A., et.al. California State University, Chico. In *Programs that Work*. Fulwiler, T. & Young, A. (Eds.). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Berlin, J. (1987). *Rhetoric and reality: Writing instruction in American colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois UP.

Better English. MSDE. 1 Nov. 2002.

http://www.mdk12.org/practices/good_instruction/Projectbetter/elangarts/ela-70-72.html

Blumner, J. S., Eliason, J. & Fritz, F. (2001). Beyond the reactive: WAC programs and the steps ahead. *Plymouth State College Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum*. 12, 21-36.

Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An Introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Braxton, J.M.; Eimers, M.T.; Bayer, A.E. (Nov./Dec. 1996) The implications of teaching norms for the improvement of undergraduate education. *The Journal of Higher Education*. 67, 603-625.

- Britton, J.; Burgess, T.; Martin, N.; McLeod, A. & Rosen, H. (1977). *The development of writing abilities*. London: Macmillan Education LTD.
- Britton, J. (1972). *Language and learning*. New York: Penguin.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1990). *The skillful teacher: On technique, trust, and responsiveness in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brooks, J.G. & Brooks, M.G. (1999). *In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms*. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Bruffee, K. (1984). Collaborative learning and "The conversation of mankind." *College English*. 46.
- Bruffee, K. (1993). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence and the authority of knowledge*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, UP.
- Bulletin of Walker College, 1924-25*. (1924). Johnson City, TN: Muse-Whitlock, Company.
- Bulletin of Walker College, 1926-27*. (1926). Johnson City, Tn.: Muse-Whitlock, Company.
- Bulletin of Walker College, 1940-41*. (1940). Walker College: Walker College Press.
- Bulletin of Walker College, 1947-1948*. (1947). Walker College: Walker College Press.
- Bulletin of Walker College, 1960-1961*. (1960). Walker College: Walker College Press.

- Burkam, D.T. (1992). Teaching mathematics within the writing curriculum. In Sterrett, A. (Ed). *Using writing to teach mathematics*. (pp. 118-120). USA: Mathematical Association of America.
- Carneson, J. (1994). Investigating the evolution of classroom practice. In Constable, Farrow, and Norton, 101-12.
- Catalog of Walker College, 2001-2002*. (2001). Walker College, Tn: Walker College.
- Catalog of Walker College, 1922-23*. (1922). Johnson City, Tn.: Muse-Whitlock Company.
- Chaffee, J., et.al. (2002). *Critical thinking, thoughtful writing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Childers, P., Gere, A., & Young, A. (1994). *Programs and practices: Writing across the secondary school curriculum*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton/Cook/Heinemann.
- Condon, W. (2001). Accommodating complexity: WAC program evaluation in the age of accountability. In Thaiss, C.; McLeod, S.; Soven, M. & Miraglia, E. (Eds.), *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs*. (pp. 28-51). Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Constable, H., Farrow, S. & Norton, J. (Eds.) (1994). *Change in Classroom Practice*. Washington, DC: Falmer.
- Cornwell, C.A. (1989). *Beside the Waters of the Buffalo: A History of Walker College to 1941*. U.S.: Overmountain Press.

- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dooley, Michael. Where is John Genung when you need him? Retrieved March 19, 2003, from <http://www.tarleton.edu/~popken/dooley.htm>
- Doolittle, P.E. & Hicks, D. (in press). Information technology, constructivism, and social studies teacher education.
- Elbow, P. (February 1993). Ranking, evaluating, and liking: Sorting out three forms of judgment. *College English*, 55. 2, 187-206.
- Elbow, P. (1991). Reflections on academic discourse: How it relates to freshman and colleagues. *College English*. 53. 2, 135-155.
- Emig, Janet. (1983). *The web of meaning: Essays on writing, teaching, learning, and thinking*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.
- Faery, R.B. (F/W 1993). Teachers and writing: The faculty writing workshop and writing across the curriculum. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. 31-42.
- Ford, A.G. & Larkin, J.E. (1978). The portfolio system: An end to backsliding writing standards. *College English*. 39. 8, 950-955.
- Fraenkel, J.R. & Wallen, N.E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. 5th ed. Boston: McGraw/Hill.
- Fulwiler, T. & Young, A. (Eds.). (1990). *Programs that work*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

- Fulwiler, T. (Dec. 1980). Journals across the disciplines. *English Journal*. 14-19.
- Fulwiler, Toby. (1987). *Teaching with writing*. New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook.
- Fulwiler, Toby, Ed. (1987). *The journal book*. New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook.
- Glaze, B. & Thaiss, C. (1994). Resistance as inspiration in a language and learning program. In Childers, P., Gere, A., & Young, A. (Eds.). *Programs and practices: Writing across the secondary school curriculum*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton/Cook/Heinemann.
- Grasha, A.F. (1996). *Teaching with style: A practical guide to enhancing learning by understanding teaching and learning styles*. Pittsburgh: Alliance Publishers.
- Graves, D.H. (1978). Balance the basics: Let them write. New York: Ford Foundation. ED 192 364.
- Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hairston, M. (1992). *Successful writing*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Hativa, N. (2000). *Teaching for effective learning in higher education*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Hativa, N. & Goodyear, P. (Eds.). (2002). *Teacher thinking, beliefs, and knowledge in higher education*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Hativa, N. (2002). Becoming a better teacher: A case of changing the pedagogical knowledge and beliefs of law professors. In Hativa, N. &

- Goodyear, P. (Eds.) *Teacher thinking, beliefs, and knowledge in higher education*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Herrington, A.J. (1981). Writing to learn: Writing across the disciplines. *College English*. 43. 4, 379-387.
- Howard, R.M. & Jamieson, H.S. (1995). *The Bedford guide to teaching writing in the disciplines*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press. Johnson City Press. January 1, 2005.
- Joyce, B.R. (1978). *Selecting learning experiences: Linking theory and practice*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kenney, E.A. (1992). A reply to questions from mathematics colleagues on writing across the curriculum. In Sterrett, A. (Ed.), *Using Writing to Teach Mathematics*. (pp. 17-21). USA: Mathematical Association of America.
- Kember, D. & Gow, L. (1994). "Orientations to teaching and their effect on the quality of student learning." *The Journal of Higher Education*. 65. 1, 58-74.
- Knoblauch, A.L. & Brannon, C.K. (1983). Writing as learning through the curriculum. *College English*. 45. 5, 465-474.
- Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.
- Little, L. (March 2003). Why Johnny Can't Write. *Administrator*. 23.3, 4.
- Lowman, J. (1984). *Mastering the techniques of teaching*. San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mahala, D. (Nov. 1991). Writing utopias: Writing across the curriculum and the promise of reform. *College English*. 53. 7, 773-789.

Maharaj-Boggs, S. (2000). *Final report for the Culpeper WAC project*.

Maimon, E. (1981) et al. *Writing in the arts and sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop, 1981.

Masse, M.H. & Popovich, M.N. (Autumn 1998). Assessing faculty attitudes toward the teaching of writing. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*. 50-64.

McCarthy, L.P. & Walvoord, B.E. (1988). Models for collaborative research in writing across the curriculum. In McLeod, S.H. (Ed.). *Strengthening programs for writing across the curriculum*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McKeachie, W.J. (1997). Good teaching makes a difference—and we know what it is. In Perry R.P. & Smart, J. C. (Eds.). (pp. 396-410). *Effective teaching in higher education*. New York: Agathon Press.

McLeod, S. (1987). Defining writing across the curriculum. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. 11. 1-2, 19-24.

McLeod, S.H. (Ed.). (1988). *Strengthening programs for writing across the curriculum*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McLeod, S.H. (1989). Writing across the curriculum: The second stage and beyond. *College Composition and Communication*. 40. 3, 337-343.

McLeod, S. & Maimon, E. (2000). Clearing the air: WAC myths and realities. *College English*. 62, pp. 573-583.

- McLeod, S. & Miraglia, S. (2001). Writing across the curriculum in a time of change. In McLeod, S.H. et.al. (Eds.) *WAC for the new millennium: strategies for continuing writing-across-the-curriculum programs* (pp. 1-27). Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Morse, J.M. & Richards, L. (2002). *ReadMe first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Munter, M. (March 1999). Whacking WAC. [Electronic version]. *Business Communication Quarterly*. 62. 1, 1-2.
- Murray, H.G. (1997). Effective teaching behaviors in the college classroom. In Perry, R.P. & Smart, J.C. (Eds.). (pp. 171-204). *Effective teaching in higher education: Research and practice*. New York: Agathon Press.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2004). Means Comparison Report.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2005). Means Comparison Report.
- Neill, S. B. (1982). Teaching writing: problems and solutions. AASA Critical Issues Report. Arlington: American Association of School Administrators. ED 219 776.
- Newman, J.H. (1998). John Henry Newman, The idea of a university. Retrieved December 4, 2001 from the World Wide Web:
<http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/group1/Newmanlink1.htm>
- Nilson, L.B. (1998). *Teaching at it best: A research-based resource for college instructors*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co., Inc.

- Parks, S., & Goldblatt, E. (May 2000). Writing beyond the curriculum: Fostering new collaborations in literacy. *College English*. 62. 5, 584-606.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Perry, R.P. & Smart, J.C. (Eds.). (1997). *Effective teaching in higher Education: Research and practice*. New York: Agathon Press.
- Pobywajlo, M. (2001). "Changing attitudes about general education: Making connections through writing across the curriculum." *Plymouth State College Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum*. 12, 9-19.
- ReinSmith, W.A. (1992). *Archetypal forms in teaching: A continuum*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Register of Walker College for the Scholastic Year 1893-94*. (1893). Cincinnati: Elm Street Printing Company.
- Register of Walker College for the Scholastic Year 1896-97*. (1896). Richmond, Va.: Press of J.L. Hill Printing Company.
- Register of Walker College for the Scholastic Year 1901-02*. (1901). Nashville, Tn.: M'Quiddy Printing Company.
- Robertson, L. R. (1981). Stranger in a strange land, or stimulating faculty interest in writing across the curriculum. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English. ED 211 996.
- Rose, B. (1992). Using expressive writing to support mathematics instruction: Benefits for the student, teacher, and classroom. In Sterrett, A. (Ed.).

Using writing to teach mathematics (pp.63-72). USA: Mathematical Association of America.

Russell, D. R. (1990). Writing across the curriculum in historical perspective: Toward a social interpretation. *College English*. 52(1), 52-3.

Schwandt, T.A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 118-134). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Segal, J., Pare, A., Brent, D. & Vipond, D. (Sept. 1998). The researcher as missionary: Problems with rhetoric and reform in the disciplines. *College Composition and Communication*, 50, 71-90.

Seidman, Irving. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the Social Sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Selfe, C.L., Petersen, B.T. & Nahrgang, C.L. (1986). Journal writing in Mathematics. In Young, A. & Fulwiler, T. (Eds.). *Writing across the Disciplines*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Sibley, T.Q. (1992). Three R's for mathematics papers: 'riting, refereeing, and rewriting. *Using writing to teach mathematics* (pp.53-54). USA: Mathematical Association of America.

Stout, B.R. & Magnotto, J.N. (1988). Writing across the curriculum at community colleges. In McLeod, S.H. (Ed.). *Strengthening programs for writing across the curriculum*. (pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Swanson-Owens, Deborah. (1986). Identifying natural sources of resistance: A study of implementing writing across the curriculum. *Research in the Teaching of English*. 20. 69-97.
- Tandy, K.S. & Smith, R.L. (1990). Minnesota writing project. In T. Fulwiler & A. Young (Eds.), *Programs that work*. NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. 3rd ed. London: John Wiley and Sons.
- Thaiss, C. (1998). *The Harcourt Brace guide to writing across the curriculum*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace.
- Von Glaserfeld, E. (2002). *Radical constructivism: A way of knowing and learning*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Walker College catalog, 2001-2002*. (2001). Walker College, Tn: Walker College.
- Walker College catalog, 2003-2004*. (2003). Walker College, Tn: Walker College.
- Walker College catalog 2005-06*. (2005). Walker College, Tn.: Walker College.
- Walker College student handbook 2003-2004*. Lafayette, Indiana: School Datebooks.
- Walvoord, B. (1990). *Thinking and writing in college: A naturalistic study of students in four disciplines*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Walvoord, B. (1996). The future of WAC. *College English*. 58, 58-79.

- Walvoord, B. et.al. (1997). *In the long run: A study of faculty in three writing-across-the-curriculum programs*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.
- "Why Johnny Can't Write." (Dec. 8, 1975). *Newsweek*, 58-62, 65.
- Williams, J. (1990). *Style: Toward clarity and grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake and Irwin Weiser, eds. (1997). *Situating portfolios: four perspectives*. Logan: Utah State UP.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. (1998). *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. Logan: Utah State UP.
- Young, A. (1999). *Teaching writing across the curriculum*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Young, A. (2003). Writing across and against the curriculum. *CCC*, 53, 472-485.
- Young, A. & Fulwiler, T. (Eds.). (1986). *Writing across the disciplines: Research into practice*. Upper Montclair: NJ: Boynton/Cook.
- Zellermayer, M, Salomon, G., Globerson, T., & Givon, H. (Summer 1991). Enhancing writing-related metacognitions through a computerized writing partner. *American Educational Research Journal*. 28. 2, 373-391.
- Zinsser, W. (1988). *Writing to learn*. New York: Harper and Row.