

# Writing Matters

Writing Across the Curriculum  
Southwestern Community College

Volume VI  
Number 2

## Faculty Roundtable

### Feedback That Works

Join fellow faculty members in a discussion about improving the feedback we give on student writing!

Where: Burrell 307

When: Wednesday,  
March 26, 2014  
2:00-3:00 PM

## “I’ll never use this again!”

We’ve all heard it before, the complaint of the student who just wants to get through the class, do just enough to get by, get the grade, and move on. The protest may be about the course in general, or it may center around a particular assignment. Whatever the case, the complaint itself signifies that the student doesn’t clearly see the connections between the course/assignment and his/her personal and career goals.

One of our goals should be to help students make those connections. Remember, they come to us as novices in our fields. While we can see the usefulness, and the connections seem obvious to us, they may be lost on our students. Having conversations in class that explicitly outline the far-reaching implications of our courses and assignments can often be just what our students need.

## Increasing Motivation: The Role of Perceived Usefulness

We all know that motivated students are more active in their educations. They learn deeply and are often the backbone of class discussions, always turn in assignments on time, and seem engaged with everything you do. Those students appear few and far between some semesters. However, those students who “seem to be” unmotivated may simply need some help connecting the dots.

Motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) on the part of students is closely connected

to the idea of “perceived usefulness.” In other words, students tend to be more motivated and more active in their learning in courses and on assignments that clearly have a direct connection to their personal and/or career goals. Levels of motivation often become abundantly clear on writing assignments.

For example, if Joey is wanting to become an EMT, he may not be very motivated to do an APA formatted research paper. After all, it is doubtful that any supervisor in the future is going to ask

him to perform a similar task. Joey’s instructor, on the other hand, may see very clearly the benefits of this assignment.

How can the instructor communicate these to Joey and increase motivation and engagement?

### Connecting the Dots

One useful tip is to first find out why students are here (at SCC and/or in your class in particular). You’ll receive answers about better job prospects or transfer to a four-year university. Knowing where students want to end up (degree,

profession, etc.) can help you begin the process of making connections explicit.

Also, always strive to connect particular assignments to larger concepts, your course goals, your students’ individual goals. What is the “utility” of that assignment? How will it help students’ skills or abilities as they move through their educations?

Another useful “connector” is to give feedback early and often.

*continued on pg. 2*

I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught.  
—Winston Churchill

# Writing Matters

Writing Across the Curriculum  
Southwestern Community College

Volume VI  
Number 2

## Motivation: Perceived Usefulness (cont'd)

This is particularly useful on major writing assignments, but the principle also applies to the course in general. Keeping students appraised of how they are progressing through the course can increase their engagement and motivation. In addition, use your feedback to represent the larger connections your class (or that assignment) can make. For example, in a research paper, valuable feedback may be a comment indicating a passage of the paper that represents solid critical thinking that will benefit a student in his/her

chosen field.

Finally, model the motivation and values of your field. The ways we talk about our course content can influence our students to see the benefit in the course or assignment. Our motivation and enthusiasm can “rub off” on them.

Motivated students are engaged students. We can play an important role in increasing that motivation and engagement by making clear connections between our courses/ assignments and students’ goals.

**Remind your students about the WAC Essay Awards! Deadline is April 2, so there is plenty of time for students to enter! Check WAC website for rules and submission forms.**



**6th Annual WAC Awards Essay Writing Contest**

Let the Words Flow ...  
and Win Some Dough!

**Categories** Research Essays & Non-Research Essays  
Any length • Any essay written in an SCC class in Summer '13, Fall '13, or Spring '14 is eligible.

**Who Can Enter** Current SCC students can nominate themselves or Instructors can nominate student writings

**Cash Prizes** Top three essays in each category:  
1st - \$200 • 2nd - \$100 • 3rd - \$50

**Deadline** Wednesday, April 2, 2014, by 4 p.m.

For more info, contact the WAC Coordinator, Jennifer Hippensteel  
jb\_hippensteel@southwesterncc.edu • Office Location: Oaks 101B  
Full rules and submission forms available at <http://www.southwesterncc.edu/wac>

Being ignorant is not so much a shame as being unwilling to learn.  
—Benjamin Franklin