

# Writing Matters



## Finishing Well

We've come around to the end of another semester, another short, chaotic burst through "crunch time." We all know that faculty look forward to breaks just as much as students do. However, don't let this end-of-semester time pass you by without taking the opportunity to reflect on the sixteen weeks that have just passed. While the past weeks are fresh in your memory, take a few moments to answer the following questions: What worked well this semester? What didn't work so well? Which lectures/presentations/assignments seemed to fall flat? Which assignments seemed to spark student interest and engagement? What annoyed you about your classes this semester? What made you happy? Did student work match your expectations, especially on writing assignments? The answers to these types of questions can give you valuable feedback as you look towards next year, guiding you through syllabus adjustments, assignment design, and assessment.

## Writing Assignments and Your Course Goals

The end of the semester is an ideal time to reflect on our course content and goals. Writing is often assigned without a clear connection to how it helps a student become successful within our courses or our disciplines. To fully integrate writing assignments, they should correlate to our course goals. Writing assignments should be a bridge our students can use to achieve our stated goals.

First, determine your goals for your specific courses. Think of how you would complete the following sentence: "At the end of the semester, a successful student should be able

to..." Perhaps it may help to define how a student should be able to write and what types of writing a student should be able to produce. This is different for each discipline. Some students may need to write specific reports or memos; other students may need to know how to perform and write accurate and relevant research. Remember to consider how you are preparing your students to think and write for your specific field.

After clarifying your goals, determine writing assignments that help meet those goals. This includes thinking about the certain

types of assignments and specific support students may need to accomplish them. Perhaps students will need to create formal assignments such as research papers and essays. Plan your assignment design so that students are supported through these complex processes. However, students may need more informal assignments to encourage thinking on particular subjects in your discipline: journals, summaries, reaction papers, notes, etc. This style of writing in particular helps students create thinking, particularly in areas that are dense or

complex.

Finally, when assessing student writing, keep course goals in mind. This will help you determine what is most important in grading the writing students produce. The goals for a particular assignment should line up with the overall goals for the course. These become the guides by which you grade student writing.

Without a clear idea of where our courses are headed, it is difficult to fully integrate writing into our teaching. However, if you are sure of your course goals, writing assignments can be designed to meet each one in a unique, and deeply thoughtful way.

**Education is all a matter of building bridges.**

**—Ralph Ellison**

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE 2011 WAC ESSAY AWARDS



### Research Category

**First:** Kayla Pruett  
**Second:** Michael Redman  
**Third:** Michelle Barborich

### Non-Research

### Category

**Perry Matthews**  
**Cola Williamson**  
**Brailey Derreberry**



Thank you for supporting student learning through writing and the WAC program!

Have a fantastic summer...and go out and do something you love!

The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity.

—Ayn Rand