

Writing Matters

Writing Across the Curriculum
Southwestern Community College

Volume V
Number 4

Do you want to help your students become better writers and thinkers?

Consider how you can become more involved with the WAC program!

- Attend WAC professional development offerings
- Participate in the Fall Workshop days
- Individual consult on syllabus and assignment design



Looking Back

Most of us are relieved—ready for a break, just wanting to wrap things up and head home for some R&R. But, the end of the school year is a valuable chance to think about where we are and how we got here. Best practices in teaching include reflection, a chance to look back on the semester and determine what in our teaching worked and what didn't. This same principle is a highly effective tool for students to use in the course of their time in our classes.

Reflection offers a unique opportunity for students and teachers alike to come to a deeper understanding of what we've done and learned. After all, thinking back is a valuable part of looking forward.

Reflective Writing and Teaching

As the academic year comes to an end, one valuable way to incorporate writing into the final weeks of class is to encourage students to reflect on the semester. Thinking back on what was done and why gives students an opportunity to engage in a meaningful way with what they've learned. It shows students that they have a choice in how they learn and remember what the semester was about.

It is important to recognize that good reflection isn't simply

thinking back and summarizing or describing—it's asking questions: what worked, what didn't, what should change, etc. This pathway of questioning is a critical piece to higher education and to life-long learning because it moves students in their thinking from mere memorization towards analysis and synthesis.

One real benefit of reflective writing for students is that it allows them to revisit assignments rather than forget about them. By

asking students to look back on assignments they have completed, they often can see progress they've made.

One way to use reflective writing is a portfolio. Here, students collect writing and other assignments from the semester and analyze them. You can ask them to answer questions like what worked, what didn't, how would they change what they did for that assignment, or how would they approach that same assignment differently now. Get students to answer "So what?" Why did that

assignment matter? What did I learn?

As a bit of an aside, we should use the same principles for our own roles. It is important for us to think back over the semester to see how various assignments, lectures, or projects worked or didn't.

Finally, there are some important principles to keep in mind when using reflective writing. Remember that students want specifics. When we give an assignment, we

cont'd page 2

**Habit rules the unreflecting herd.
—William Wordsworth**

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Reflective Writing cont'd

have a “picture” in our minds of what that piece of writing should look like. It’s only fair to give students the details of that “picture” so they can succeed. Also, students want feedback; they want to know how they’re doing. Reflective writing should enhance content learning, so design your questions around the ideas you want your students to remember. Last, if the reflective piece

is a significant portion of the total course grade, allow students a chance to revise based on your feedback. This helps them learn the importance of revision and editing, and it solidifies the content in their memories.

Reflection is an important aspect of teaching and learning. This is the perfect time of year to allow your students and yourself a chance to reflect.

5th Annual WAC Essay Awards Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the 2013 WAC Essay Awards!

Non-Research Category

- 1st Place—Michael Redman
- 2nd Place—Joshua Wilkey
- 3rd Place—Megan Smoker







Research Category

- 1st Place—Courtney Shuler
- 2nd Place—Beverly Hardy
- 3rd Place—Evyann Gainey



April is National Poetry Month, and we’re celebrating here at SCC!

APRIL Celebrate 2013 National Poetry Month with Southwestern Community College

-  **Join a poetry reading.** Visit the Burrell Building Room 102A on Tuesday, April 23rd, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. to participate in a poetry reading.
-  **Read the Poem of the Day.** Available each Monday through Thursday in April.
-  **Add to a Commonplace Book of poetry.** Visitors are invited to share their favorite quotations, poems, and lines of poetry as well as to write their own in the Commonplace Books at the Jackson Campus and/or Macon Campus Learning Assistance Centers.
-  **Look for poetry in unexpected places.** Poetry can enrich our lives in meaningful ways, especially when we happen upon it in unexpected places. Throughout the month of April, look for pieces of poetry around campus—elevators, lounge areas, bulletin boards, and more!
-  **Integrate poetry with technology** by adding a poem to your email signature.
-  **Join us for the Milestone luncheon event.** On Wednesday, May 1, 12:00-2:00 pm, Bradford Conference Room. We will unveil the 2012-13 edition of *Milestone*, a biennial publication of Southwestern Community College and showcases the creative expressions of writers and visual artists in the area. The luncheon is free. Prizes for submissions will be awarded, and free copies of the periodical will be available. As a final celebration of National Poetry Month, writers will be encouraged to read from their works.

- Poetry reading, April 23, 2:00, Burrell 102A—everyone is invited to participate!
- Commonplace Book of poetry in LAC—leave your poetic mark!
- Poetry in unexpected places—you never know when you’ll encounter poetry!
- The *Milestone* unveiling luncheon event on May 1, 12:00, Bradford Conference Room—come celebrate the written and visual art from our region!