2003

The knowledge and skills of freshman writers

Aram Paul Sarkisian

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THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF FRESHMAN WRITERS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English:
English Composition

by
Aram Paul Sarkisian
June 2003
THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF FRESHMAN WRITERS

A Thesis
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San Bernardino

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June 2003

Approved by:
Rong Chen, Chair, English
Bruce Golden
Edward M. White

5.21-03 Date
ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a three-part profile of freshman writers at the University of California, Riverside and the California State University, San Bernardino. Chapter 1 includes demographic cross-sections to characterize the charged social climate in which student writers develop. Universally available placement tests are then examined to suggest how college applicants are expected to read, write, and revise in order to become eligible for First-Year Composition. Chapter 2 analyzes a small syllabus collection from each campus, and it is argued that the apparent shift in focus from mechanical correctness to the social aspects of composition can confuse undergraduate writers if left unexamined. Chapter 3 compares the criteria for composition course credit with a list of student outcomes prepared by the Council of Writing Program Administrators to explore the link between theory and practice. While composition instructors emphasize critical thinking skills and collaborative revision in their course outlines, final grades can still rely heavily on high-stakes tests and edited essays. Chapter 4 concludes that the uniform entrance requirements and consistent student outcomes are a more important consideration for students.
and teachers in California than the inconsistent instructional emphasis and misleading terminology that they may encounter. Ultimately, this research identifies what proficient writers know and do by the end of their freshman year in college and raises the kind of questions that improve the articulation of English instruction.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to recognize the exemplary English professors at CSUSB. It was an honor to spend time in their classrooms: discussing literature; deciding when logic or ambiguity is more resonant; surveying research with different methodologies; becoming a better writer, or at least braver.

Particularly, I view the members of my thesis committee as role models. They are brilliant and effective teachers who helped me complete my best work. I also thank my brother, Gregor, for his confidence and support. And although it is impossible to estimate my debt to my parents, Marie and Vaughn, I will try.

For their patient assistance and generosity with their time, I am grateful to: Elizabeth Rogers--Student Information System Director for Enrollment Management, UC Riverside; Christine Strand--Academic Planning and Budget, UC Riverside; Carla Ferri--Director of Undergraduate Admissions, University of California Office of the President; John Briggs--Director of Basic Writing, UC Riverside; Muriel Lopez-Wagner--Assistant Director of Institutional Research, CSU San Bernardino. They made my data collection enjoyable and nearly effortless.
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CHAPTER ONE
WRITING PLACEMENT EXAMS

News headlines declare that an educational crisis exists in our golden state: California trails the nation in skills needed for success; CSU ousts 8.2% over weak skills. And yet, after all the politicians, educators, and business professionals try to help out, the headlines remain: Education Reform Bill stuck on definition of academic failure; Class size increases again; Computer reading program costs LA Unified $44 million. The political community suggests standards and accountability, the educational community suggests cultural studies or reading through phonemic awareness, and the business community suggests lucrative fund-raising partnerships. Despite the best efforts of these influential communities, we merely confuse the students with ever-changing instruction, we empty the school budgets on pre-packaged programs, and we sell merchandise to captive consumers for a share in the profits. Our best minds cannot agree on causes or solutions, so we continuously shift blame and flail around blindly at this specter called illiteracy.
It is understandable when students and teachers complain that they cannot find a reliable strategy for college preparation or a clear path to college entrance. However, the public perception that community colleges, California State University campuses, and University of California campuses have incomparable entrance requirements is likely to change in the near future. These three segments of our state's postsecondary school system released a draft of legislation in May 2002, describing in detail how they are working together to meet statewide educational goals. The goals are not a new agenda, but rather an update of missions, responsibilities, and coordinated activities, established as early as 1960. The Master Plan for Education in California is a framework meant to facilitate movement among the college segments. Standard requirements and tests have a central role. College-level English proficiency cannot be reasonably discussed without an understanding of this document.

The Master Plan covers Regular Admission to college, straight from high school, when a student's grade point average in specified subjects "a-g" are compared with standardized test scores on an Eligibility Index. Special Action Admission and Transfer Admission among the schools
are covered as well, when alternative criteria are used to
determine eligibility. But largely, the 2002 Master Plan
simply reaffirms the language of the 1960 Master Plan, that
UC schools select from the top eighth of the graduating
high school class, and that CSU schools select from the top
third. California community colleges are expected to
accommodate all other California high school graduates who
are found to be under-prepared for UC or CSU admission, but
are nonetheless promising and capable of benefiting from a
postsecondary education.

The Master Plan for Education in California is meant
to align and coordinate the curricula, assessment,
admission, and placement policy for kindergarten through
college "...with the goal of reducing remediation and
eliminating the need to award additional weight to honors
and AP courses in the admissions process (2)." The joint
legislative committee that released the plan recommends:

Make the UC/CSU "a-g" course pattern the "default"
curricula for all California high school students,
even those planning to attend the community colleges
or not attend college at all. Senator Alarcon has
already included this recommendation in his bill, SB
1731, which requires that high schools enroll each and
every student in the "a-g" course pattern unless the
student, his or her parents, and a school official
consent in writing to the student "opting out." (5)
These influential legislators know that the process of moving students through the grade levels and on to college must become more unified and coherent. Mastery of the knowledge and skills taught in public classrooms should better prepare students for an advanced education. Beginning with the class of 2003, the UC and CSU "a-g" college preparatory courses will be identical: (a) 2 years History/Social Science, (b) 4 years English, (c) 3 years Mathematics, (d) 2 years Lab Science, (e) 2 years Foreign Language, (f) 1 year Visual/Performing Art, (g) 1 year Elective coursework.

Along with a standard definition of "college preparatory coursework," committee members also want a database, shared among the various school levels, to track and report student progress toward achieving the college-prep requirements articulated in the report. The premise behind such recommendations is that California educators must agree on a college preparatory curriculum and must have the ability to utilize standardized test results more effectively, before remediation and grade inflation can be eliminated. Table 1 profiles entering freshmen at UCR and CSUSB for a three-year period and compares them with our state population.
Table 1. Ethnicity and Gender of Freshmen at UCR and CSUSB (1999-2001) by 2000 California Census Data 18 Years and Older: Percentage of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Freshmen</th>
<th>CA Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCR N=9,119</td>
<td>CSUSB N=3,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaskan</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Chicano</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign/Non-Resident</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Freshmen</th>
<th>CA Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

na = non-applicable category in their calculations
Table 1 provides the necessary data in order to discuss issues of gender and race in university admissions. A major part of the controversy surrounding college entrance involves the perception that requiring standardized tests places women and minorities at a distinct disadvantage. However, if something about standardized assessment is unfair to these segments of our population, they should be underrepresented in the class of entering freshmen when compared with their numbers in California.

This ethical consideration is covered in Recommendation #24 of the Master Plan. Committee members agree that each segment of higher education should approximate the general ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender of the state residents. Consideration of race and gender in admissions decisions is in the public spotlight. Although the proportions are not ideal, most California residents would find three figures quite informative. Namely, the population of Asian students at UCR is robust, which would answer any concerns about their representation on campus.

Two figures showing the limitation of this demographic perspective are the students with "unknown ethnicity" at
CSUSB, and the "foreign/non-resident" population in the California census, which is not measured. More precise data on these unknown and foreign populations would probably alter the table. The current study will not interpret the meaning of these demographic trends beyond the fact that minorities are certainly represented in the population of entering freshmen at CSUSB and UCR.

In addition to the demographic breakdown of entering freshmen, I include a cross-section of Bachelor's degree recipients, since that population is actually more important. After all, it is fine to admit a large number of people to a program, but if none of them actually graduates, it is all for naught. As Table 2 indicates, during the 1999 to 2001 school years, African Americans account for 7.5% of the bachelor's degree recipients at CSUSB, Native Americans/Alaskans 1.3%, and women 64.7%. These groups surpass their segments of the California population, according to the Census 2000 figures.

At UCR, Asians/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans/Alaskans, and female degree recipients meet or surpass the portion of state residents that they represent. On both local campuses, a close representation of the Latino and
Table 2. Ethnicity and Gender of Baccalaureates at UCR and CSUSB (1999-2001) by 2000 California Census Data 18 Years and Older: Percentage of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Baccalaureates</th>
<th>CA Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCR N=5,539</td>
<td>CSUSB N=6,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaskan</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Chicano</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign/Non-Resident</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
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<td>55.8</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

na = non-applicable category in their calculations
Chicano communities enter as freshmen, but they are underrepresented in the population of undergraduate degree recipients. Although it is tempting, Tables 1 and 2 cannot be used to evaluate adherence to the Master Plan, because all recommendations are statewide goals. System-wide tabulations would be necessary to evaluate the matriculation and retention of California students fairly.

The purpose of these two tables is to suggest that standardized tests of English proficiency do not cause women and minorities to be underrepresented at UCR and CSUSB, before discussing the contents of the tests. Standardized examinations will be an important part of admission, placement, equivalency, and exit requirements in California for the foreseeable future. My research suggests that students and teachers are better served by learning what the tests target, rather than trying to discredit them. Evidence that standardized assessments will be around for a long time resides in the fact that they measure and rank college applicants in a cost-effective and expedient manner, a need that will only increase.

From an administrative perspective, Regular Admissions are increasingly desirable and Special Action Admissions
are becoming less desirable. The sheer number of yearly applicants leads undergraduate admissions offices to adopt quick, standard methods to determine eligibility and placement issues. Remediation is costly because it takes up classroom space, depletes the pool of instructors, and its hourly units do not count as credit toward graduation. Educational Policy such as Executive Order 665 requires California State Universities "...to reduce the need for remediation in English and mathematics...and the proportions of regularly-admitted freshmen needing a second year of remedial education" (Master Plan 1). Therefore, the pressure for students to demonstrate English proficiency prior to college enrollment will probably intensify.

Applicants who wish to enter college directly out of high school are expected to furnish SAT scores, but only CSU schools honor a score of 550 on the Verbal Reasoning section of the SAT as indicating readiness for Freshman Composition. CSU schools also recognize that a score of 25 on the ACT English Test shows eligibility for the course. But neither the SAT nor the ACT are used by UC schools to determine eligibility for their first-year writing course. At least CSU and UC agree on two placement tests: the Advanced Placement Test and the SAT 2 Writing Test. If
applicants score 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Test, or at least 680 on the SAT 2, they are identified as English proficient upon entry. If college applicants have not earned a passing score on any of these commercially developed standardized tests by the end of their senior year in high school, each school system has its own exam to administer.

Prospective CSU students take the English Placement Test (EPT), and prospective UC students take the Subject A Exam; both are taken prior to enrollment and determine course placement. Table 3 shows exactly how students satisfy the Subject A requirement at UCR. And Table 4 shows how students at CSUSB satisfy the EPT requirement. These cross-sections indicate that the EPT, the Subject A, and the SAT 2 Writing Test (SAT2) provide an adequate representation of the knowledge and skills required for college entrance in California.

The political slogans about “leaving no child behind” and “literacy for all” are misleading when such concepts are applied toward university admissions policy. Only around half of all high school graduates go to college. According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission Student Profiles, the total college-going rate was 50.5% in 1999 and 49.1% in 2000. That means admission
Table 3. Means of Freshmen Satisfying the Subject A Requirement at University of California, Riverside (1999-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scored 8 or above May Subject A Test</td>
<td>2,208</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 4, or 5 on Advanced Placement Test in English Language or Literature and Composition</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>680+ on SAT 2 Writing Test (CEEB ACH)</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Means (5, 6, or 7 on International Baccalaureate Higher Level Examination in English/C or above in a Transferable Course)</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Satisfied Subject A Requirement</td>
<td>3,959</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Held for Subject A Requirement</td>
<td>5,142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreported/Unknown Results</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cross-section of Freshmen</td>
<td>9,190</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scored 151 or above on English Placement Test</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24+ on ACT Enhanced English Test</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550+ on SAT Verbal Reasoning Section</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 4, or 5 on Advanced Placement Test in English Language or Literature and Composition</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C or above in Transferable Course</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Satisfied EPT Requirement</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Held for EPT Requirement</td>
<td>2,251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreported/Unknown Results</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cross-section of Freshmen</td>
<td>3,606</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
policy for higher education is primarily used to identify and place the upper half of all high school graduates based on clear, merit-based criteria. But beyond establishing merit or eligibility, California's Master Plan acknowledges that there is an overarching issue of available seats:

This problem—of inadequate space on preferred campuses, in specific majors—is not likely to get better in the foreseeable future. When Berkeley can only admit 990 first year students to its undergraduate engineering program, and over 1400 engineering applicants have grade-point averages of 4.0, many talented students are going to be disappointed when they are redirected away from Berkeley. (9-10)

All 1400 applicants are eligible for admission to the esteemed engineering program based on academic merit, but there are only 990 available positions each year. People discussing literacy crises and accessibility issues in California usually do not understand this heated competition for limited space. Everyone wants in, and they all merit the chance. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, and English proficiency, if there are not adequate resources (rooms, instructors, funding) to accommodate the qualified applicants, every year plenty of well-prepared students who meet all eligibility requirements will be redirected to other programs within the system. Students were lucky at CSUSB in 2000. There were enough available seats to admit
"under-prepared" applicants, as well. Only 1042 students met the CSU eligibility criteria, but 1195 were allowed to enroll in the fall.

The test preparation guides for the SAT2 and the website created to acquaint the public with the EPT and Subject A exams begin with the same first step: **self-diagnosis**. Prospective college students are advised to think about how they think and know what they know. To prepare for college entrance exams, students must ask themselves whether or not they read literature, a newspaper, an instruction manual, or a cartoon differently. Generally, students will find that they do. People read differently when they read for different purposes. They might read aloud in one circumstance, take marginal notes in another, quickly skim an entire document in another, all depending on why they began to read the document in the first place.

Students preparing to take the SAT2, the EPT, or the Subject A must learn to ask important questions about how they approach reading and writing in different circumstances. During this early stage of the test-prep regimen, if a student realizes that he or she views all reading as reading and all writing as writing and all they
know about the English language is to start at the top left of any given text, additional English instruction may be a practical choice. Locating a reliable source of information about college-level reading and writing is the next step.

The Impromptu Essay

High school students and their teachers will find the UC/CSU website, the Diagnostic Writing Service (DWS), very helpful. The site provides sample EPT and Subject A Tests from past years, annotated essays from real college applicants, and scoring rubrics used to evaluate the writing samples. Table 5 displays the rubrics for the SAT2, EPT, and Subject A to enable easy comparison. Although some of the grading categories are split or combined among the rubrics, they are remarkably consistent in what they evaluate. These rubrics are used only for the holistic assessment of actual writing. The SAT2 and EPT also assess writing proficiency indirectly, with multiple-choice questions; whereas, the Subject A is essay only. The direct assessment of a timed response to a prompt is a common element among all three entrance tests, so my analysis begins there.
Table 5. Holistic Rubrics for Evaluating Impromptu Essays:
Subject A, English Placement Test, SAT 2 Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria to Evaluate Writing</th>
<th>Subject A Exam</th>
<th>English Placement Test</th>
<th>SAT 2 Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete Response as Directed</td>
<td>Response to the Topic</td>
<td>Response to the Writing Task</td>
<td>Purpose of the Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Documentation for an Expository Essay</td>
<td>Understanding and Use of Text</td>
<td>Not Applicable to Personal Narrative</td>
<td>Not Applicable to Personal Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers Easily Follow the Train of Thought</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Organization and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas are Developed Using College Level Vocabulary</td>
<td>Development of Ideas</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Choice of Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Uses Mature and Varied Syntax</td>
<td>Facility with Word Choice &amp; Sentence Structure</td>
<td>Sentence Control</td>
<td>Use of Sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edited Grammar and Mechanics, Neat Penmanship</td>
<td>Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics</td>
<td>Grammar, Usage, and Diction</td>
<td>Grammar and Usage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
University administrators and college applicants see impromptu essays differently. From the perspective of a school administrator, an impromptu essay is evidence that a certain person has indeed put pen to paper on a certain date. Administrators are correct in their impression, because once an essay is holistically scored by two trained readers, it becomes a measurable artifact of that person’s mental and verbal ability. Evaluation of a timed impromptu essay guarantees authorship, because several forms of personal identification are required at the entrance to the testing centers.

From the perspective of a college applicant, a standardized writing test is mainly a checkpoint on the route to admission. The direct assessment of writing can feel like a cold-call audition to students. And their impression is also correct. Other than the fact that the writing topics are always geared to the general population of all incoming freshmen, neither the students nor the test proctors have any previous knowledge of the topic or the questions on the exam. Impromptu essay tests basically urge students to “hurry up and write something smart.”

The 120 minute Subject A Exam is by far the largest amount of writing required for college entrance in
California. It is also the only standardized writing test that consistently includes a multiple page text (700 to 1000 words) which must be read and understood by the test takers before they begin to write. The information booklet for the Subject A Exam explains:

This passage concerns an issue accessible to all freshmen, although it may include some perspectives or information that will be new to them. The passage is of the level of difficulty encountered in beginning University courses, and may be drawn from any of a number of disciplines. Frequently, it presents a point of view with which there can clearly be disagreement—a viewpoint, that is, about a truly arguable issue. (1)

If students think they must settle this issue before the two hours are up, they are on the wrong track. To pass the Subject A, college applicants must understand that if the writing task deals almost solely with the given passage, then quotations from that text will be expected. Fail to work quotes from the passage into their essay and they fail the test. If the writing prompt asks test-takers to draw upon their knowledge and personal experience, then the readers are expecting some anecdotes or personal insights that clearly relate to the topic discussed in the passage.

Entering freshmen must demonstrate that they keep their readers in mind as they design and construct their
timed impromptu essays. In developing the placement test, the Educational Testing Service and the UC Entrance Examination Committee want to find out if applicants have rhetorical knowledge. Do students begin compositions by determining the purpose of writing in that situation and what the audience will expect and need? Audience expectations are clearly defined in the scoring guide for the Subject A Exam, published in booklet form by the UC Office of the President and online at the DWS website. Essays are given an Overall Evaluation on a scale of 1 to 6 by two readers during a day-long grading session, based on: Response to the Topic, Understanding and Use of the Text, Organization, Development of Ideas, Facility with Word Choice and Sentence Structure, and Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics.

With so much riding on one essay, it is no wonder this form of writing assessment has been dubbed "high-stakes testing." Conscientious high school students will be encouraged to find out that they can get a preview of what lies ahead on the May testing day during their senior year. Actual Subject A Exams from 1987, 1989, 1992, and 1994 are posted in their entirety on the DWS website. Student essays representing all levels of competence are also
displayed, along with diagnostic statements explaining and justifying their scores. This is certainly a good-faith effort on the part of the ETS and the University of California to clearly define the Subject A requirement for admission and placement.

Students can visit the DWS website well in advance of the entrance tests. They will have been exposed to varying qualities of English instruction over the years, but by junior year of high school they should be able to examine the reading and writing requirements for college eligibility, determine their strengths and weaknesses, and prepare themselves accordingly without outside help. The upcoming years of university study will require that kind of initiative and self-reliance, anyway.

What the readers expect to see when they pick up Subject A essays is really what all university professors expect to see when they grade papers in their own classes; the majority of Subject A readers are, themselves, university instructors. The criteria used to assess entry-level academic writing reveals the underlying concepts of higher learning in general. "Response to the Topic" basically means, did the student follow directions, and were all parts of the assignment addressed adequately.
Students will find that this will be a grading criterion for written coursework in any university class.

"Understanding and Use of the Text" evaluates a student's capacity to read college-level books and journals, and comprehend their content. The Subject A Exam requires students to represent an author's ideas cogently and respond to them. Students are expected to convey the ideas of the passage in their own language, but if words, phrases, or sentences are taken directly from the passage, they should be placed in quotation marks. One of the diagnostic statements on the UC portion of the DWS website claims: "It's best to reserve quotations for those parts of the original that are particularly striking or particularly important to the authors' argument or to your response to that argument." In this rudimentary way, students demonstrate that they understand conventional methods of citing sources. Students who can work quotes from the Subject A passage into their own essays will become accustomed to field-specific documentation once they are enrolled.

"Organization" considers whether students order their paragraphs according to the main points of their discussion or not. They cannot simply echo the structure of the
passage; the topics or issues raised in the passage should provide background and support for the students' response. The student response is the thematic focus that lends coherence to the essay. The students' ideas order the essay and lead the reader to their perception of the ideas contained in the passage. The views expressed in the passage are a part of the students' presentation, not the other way around. Readers will consider a student's voice authoritative if he or she uses transitional words and phrases to logically link sentences and paragraphs. If readers can easily follow an author's train of thought, they are more likely to respond favorably, even if they do not agree on all points.

"Development of Ideas" is the significance of the essay--the content. Once the students decide how they feel about the passage, they need to express their views compellingly to readers. Students must remain focused on the key points of their discussion as they elaborate their position. As students explore the implications of their take on the passage, they often discover a completely reasonable objection to their way of thinking. Proficient writers will field likely objections to their claims as a way of strengthening their perspective. Subject A readers
will find a student's ideas thoughtful and convincing if they provide specific examples and clear comparisons for their views.

"Facility with Word Choice and Sentence Structure" evaluates diction and syntax. The underlying concepts for diction and syntax are very different; so it appears that these two criteria are arbitrarily combined on the Subject A scoring guide. Word choice or diction refers to a student's command of vocabulary. The readers of placement exams want to know that students have a college-level vocabulary and that they are sensitive to the connotations of words. Knowing numerous synonyms for the word "house" is not enough, however. The diagnostic statements on the DWS website explain: "We would never call a 'house' a 'domicile' unless we wanted to emphasize its status as someone's legal residence." A student's writing should employ a broad range of words, typically intended for experienced, informed readers, such as college students and professors.

Sentence structure or syntax is supposed to vary "...in ways that help convey and reinforce [the students'] meaning...clearly and precisely." The length and complexity of sentences should be appropriate for the content. Simple
immediately before submitting their papers, provided their knowledge in these areas is sound. On the Subject A Exam, when papers cannot be typed or checked for spelling errors on a word processor, students must be sensitive to the smallest of issues, like penmanship, or readers will become distracted and their overall impression of the author will suffer. Error-free mechanics reflects back on the author, just as tone of voice does.

When students use an inappropriate register, including informal street slang, vague idiomatic language, or overused clichés, their writing gives off the impression that they do not grasp the importance of the task at hand. Hasty or incomplete editing can allow small mistakes to add up and irritate the reader. It would be terrible if a student became ineligible for college admission due to sloppy penmanship or faulty punctuation, but mechanical issues are carefully evaluated on the Subject A Exam. Since two of the six scoring criteria assess spelling, punctuation, grammar, and word choice, mechanical issues heavily influence a reader’s overall impression—and ultimate scoring—of an essay.

Whatever the topic of the writing prompt may be, test-takers must remember that their main purpose as they sit
down to write is to demonstrate their readiness for college level composition. Although the Educational Testing Service participates in the design and administration of the Subject A, the EPT, and the SAT2, there are differences among them. The 45 minute essay portion of the EPT and the 20 minute essay portion of the SAT2 are much shorter writing tasks and they do not require the students to read a passage before writing, as the Subject A Exam does. Also, the SAT 2 Writing Test can be taken more than once whereas the Subject A and EPT are not generally repeated prior to enrollment.

The essay portion of the EPT and SAT2 asks students to take and defend a position on some issue of general interest, drawing on evidence from history, literature, or personal observation and experience. Essay topics are presented in one of three formats: (1) a quotation, (2) a fill in the blank statement, or (3) a situation. Samples of these kinds of writing prompts include:

(1) "A year of community service, with low pay, should be required of all eighteen year olds in the United States." Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this viewpoint. (DWS)

(2) The year is marked with many holidays, each with its traditional rites and customs. The fourth of July, for example is often celebrated with fireworks, while Mothers' Day means sending flowers or taking Mom out to dinner. If I could create a
new holiday, it would be ______, and I would celebrate it by ______. Complete the above statement by inventing a new holiday. In an essay, please explain your choice. (Barron’s 61)

(3) Most people have read a book or seen a play, movie, or television program that affected their feelings or behavior in some important way. Discuss such an experience of your own. Describe the book, play, movie, or television program and explain why you regard its effect on you as important. (EPT Booklet 7)

The structure of the questions may differ, but the topics consistently deal with human behavior and values. Whether a student agrees or disagrees with a quote is immaterial to their evaluation as long as the evidence given to support their thesis is reasonable.

On all three entrance tests, the essays are written on lined answer sheets inside a test booklet. Students must make any lists, notes, or outlines on the test booklets themselves, which are then turned in to the test proctor. The Subject A instructs students to plan, proofread, and revise before turning in their essays, and two hours might allow enough time to do these things. UC admissions officers feel that writing produced under these conditions can adequately inform eligibility and placement decisions. However, the EPT and SAT2 further examine reading and composing skills with multiple-choice sections. The preparation guides for the SAT2 claim that, with practice,
students can train their ears to listen for correct sentence constructions.

Students who have always struggled in Language Arts classes or are learning English as a second language might wonder what they are trying to hear. My research finds that without understanding the basic terminology that enables students to describe the way language functions, they will not pass college entrance exams in California.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Besides test-taking ability, multiple-choice sections of the EPT and SAT2 target classical mistakes in standard written English, the same kind of mistakes professors have seen on student papers since 50% of the Harvard applicants failed their first entrance exam in 1874. College applicants must realize that only interpretations which find support in the text will be considered valid, especially when the author’s intentions are implied and not openly stated. Questions 1-3 in the EPT Information Bulletin demonstrate how college level reading skills are assessed. Three questions based on content follow a brief passage. Reading comprehension is evaluated by questioning what is stated or implied in each passage:
The search for a workable panacea is not new. Spanish explorers sought the Fountain of Youth. Millions of Americans used to seek health and contentment in a patent medicine called Hadacol. During the past two decades, however, more and more people have been turning to various branches of psychology for magic solutions, hoping that psychology can take care of any hang-up, cure the common cold, or solve the riddle of existence. (8)

The author of this sample passage attempts to persuade her readers that the ancient quest for a "panacea" has now spread to the field of psychology. Although she does not explicitly say such a quest is a fool's errand, readers can surmise from textual cues that this is her belief. The author uses comparison and exaggeration to argue her point. The people who turn to various branches of psychology for "magic solutions" are compared with the Spanish explorers who sought the "fountain of youth" and millions of Americans who used some concoction called "Hadacol." Since the fountain of youth has never been discovered, and Hadacol has disappeared from the market, the reader is led to believe that searching for a psychological "cure-all" will elicit the same disappointing results.

Success, in this instance, means that the audience finds the comparison fair and thinks that the author's skeptical "tone of voice" is appropriate for this
discussion. Proficient writers know that this author's purpose is to question our unreasonable expectations for psychology because she uses exaggeration for effect. A "magic" solution means one that probably does not exist to the greater audience, except for those who practice witchcraft or voodoo. The author is also betting that most people will agree that solving the "riddle of existence" is beyond our grasp, at least until we die. By associating our desire to quick-fix any hang-up with other fruitless panaceas, and by using words and phrases that connote an air of skepticism, the author suggests to the reader that current expectations for the field of psychology are unrealistic without directly saying so.

Students must be able to determine how sentences are related in order to complete the multiple-choice sections of the EPT or the SAT2. Sample sentences can provide an example, make a comparison, give a reason, state a consequence, and draw a conclusion, to name a few of their possible functions. Students must differentiate between phrases and clauses in order to improve sentences and paragraphs. They are also expected to revise run-on sentences, fragments, and comma splices by choosing the best version of a sentence from a list.
Multiple-choice questions on the EPT and SAT2 require students to connect verbal phrases with their subject, to fix dangling participles, and to clarify ambiguous reference when a sentence has several clauses. A sample sentence from the EPT Information Bulletin is: Ancient Greeks ate with their fingers, wiped them on pieces of bread, and tossed them to the dogs lying under the table. Students either choose a revised version of the underlined portion of the sentence, or select (A), which is the same as the original. Knowing that the first choice means the sentence is best "as is" will save the students precious time. Leaving the underlined selection the way it is, in this case, gives the impression that the dinner guests threw their fingers to the dogs: a gruesome thought, even for ancient civilizations. Fortunately, (C) tossed the bread clarifies the reference, and the Greeks can still play their flutes and harps after dinner.

Consider another practice Composing Skills sentence from the EPT: "Photographers, hoping to get good shots of the colorful birds, accidentally damaged the birds’ nesting grounds." Students must rewrite this sentence, beginning with: The birds’ nesting grounds were accidentally damaged... They must know that the next words will be (C) by
photographers who. Multiple-choice questions frequently invert sentence construction in order to test a student's familiarity with modification and reference. Proficient writers cannot necessarily explain why modifiers dangle or become misplaced, but they know that the following sentences must be revised for clarity:

A. After stacking the chairs, it was time to lock up and go home.
B. Upon reviewing the tape, his foot was clearly out of bounds.
C. You can see the bay sitting on my balcony.
D. I was watching you play catch through the window.
E. Luckily, she found her ring walking to school.

Some of these sentences would sound fine in a casual conversation. It is doubtful that anyone would be confused about what they mean, either. College entrance exams are designed to identify students who pay attention to minute detail when they edit their writing. Why are colleges so picky? Without proper syntax, student papers will describe feet watching playbacks, bays sitting on balconies, and rings walking to school. Such outlandish activity would be appropriate in a work of children's literature, but not in the typical college paper.

Proficient writers know that the placement of a modifying word or phrase can make a huge difference too:
All of our friends are not invited to the party.

Not all of our friends are invited to the party.

Words such as almost, only, just, even, hardly, nearly, not, merely, etc...must immediately precede their subject or they will cause confusion.

An asteroid nearly destroyed the entire planet.

An asteroid destroyed nearly the entire planet.

If we had to choose one of the previous sentences to come true, the significance of where we put the modifier, "nearly," becomes apparent. Earthlings better elect a proficient writer to make the choice.

Rather than being matters of right and wrong, as many grammatical rules seem, most of these syntactic decisions depend upon the author’s intention. Reference and modification will either clarify an author’s views or confuse the readers and slow them down. Especially in college, tedious, jumbled reading makes an audience unsympathetic toward the author’s ideas. Careful editing may be overly emphasized on college entrance exams. But as it is, this final step in the composing process is thoroughly scrutinized.

Multiple-choice questions cover coordination as well. Knowledge of how an author connects words, phrases,
clauses, sentences, and paragraphs is of utmost importance on standardized tests. That means proficient writers are familiar with conjunctions. Conjunctions indicate relationships. They can join: Mom and Dad; down the stairs and out the door. They can set up opposition: Tea or coffee; stand there shivering or sit by the fire. They show dependence: For a few extra dollars, you get another complete set. They indicate causality: If one plays with the bull, then one gets the horns. They show exception: Everything was proceeding as planned until Batman showed up.

Adverbs and transitional phrases can act as conjunctions, connecting independent clauses, and establishing the relationship between them. Since independent clauses have all the makings of a complete sentence, the clauses joined by conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases must be separated with a period or a semi-colon. Otherwise, a comma splice or a run-on sentence occurs: The Russian Master won again, consequently they had to reprogram their machine.

Students who pass the EPT or SAT2 have demonstrated their knowledge that conjunctions can subordinate parts of a sentence. They did not have to memorize the complete
list of subordinating conjunctions, but they did have to understand that conjunctions inform the reader which parts of a sentence are essential to the main idea, and which parts serve as supporting evidence or elaborate the author's point further.

Multiple-choice questions will even isolate the ability to identify supporting statements. One of the main complaints of college professors is that students make a series of unsubstantiated claims and turn them in as an expository essay. College students are expected to know that readers will not be convinced by a thematic essay unless general claims are supported with evidence, unless central concepts are defined, and unless important questions are answered. Multiple-choice questions on the EPT and SAT 2 Writing test isolate these composing skills by asking students to "select the sentence that provides the best support for the topic presented."

Proficient writers look for the best fit as they link sentences together. If a writer's aim is referential, as most college research papers are, an essay will introduce a topic, provide some background, and make some point about what was found. Multiple-choice questions assesses a writer's familiarity with this basic format for informative
essays, and conjunctions play a big part. Conjunctions indicate that all parts of a sentence are not equally important, that certain bits of information can be emphasized and others can be made dependent or relegated to the background. Terminology may not be of primary importance, but students will not be considered English proficient and ready for college level instruction unless they understand how language functions.

Sample Composing Skills Question #6 in the EPT Information Bulletin begins with the conjunction, "although." This is an important sign to the reader that the first clause is dependent. The first clause sets up the main clause, like a lead for a punch line. Proficient writers will recognize that the first clause, "Although the high school that I attended was wonderful," cannot stand alone. It is a sentence fragment looking for resolution. This dependent clause leads readers to think, "school's wonderful, but what?" Then the main clause follows: "it had one big drawback."

The second sentence narrows the focus: "It had—and enforced—a strict dress code for students." This thesis statement is explicit, rather than implied, and takes up two sentences. The next sentence is missing. And the
Our daily apparel consisted of a gray sweater (imagine damp putty), Peter Pan collared white blouse, plaid skirt, and clumpy brown Oxford-style shoes.

Students select the sentence that best connects a general thesis with a detailed description. Choices that fail to bridge this gap are:

- (B) Nevertheless, having to dress alike was the least of our worries.
- (C) I tended to resist anything that would keep me from expressing my individuality.
- (D) Teenagers like to follow fashion trends without being restricted by old-fashioned ideas—or old fashions, for that matter.

(B) would lead the reader toward a different problem at school. (C) diverts the focus from the particulars of the dress code to the author herself. (D) steps back from the dress code problem and comments on the teenaged mindset in general. Only choice (A) makes a smooth transition between sentences: "Without fail, day in and day out, we donned a dreary combination of clothes."

My analysis of the placement exams used by UCR and CSUSB is meant to suggest that they test similar knowledge and skills in their applicants. How high school students prepare themselves for these placement tests will vary, but it does seem possible to prepare for UC and CSU placement tests at the same time. Proficient writers will pass
college entrance exams without committing to memory the
various coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs,
correlative conjunctions, and subordinating conjunctions.
But anyone who is deemed English proficient and prepared
for college level study will have a working knowledge of
how writers fiddle with the various units of language as
they compose and revise. In order to pass the multiple-
choice sections of the EPT or the SAT2, students must be
prepared to flip sentences around, locate verbs, find
subjects for modifiers, and choose the best way to organize
a passage. Conventional rules and terminology may not be
directly tested, but the rhetorical and linguistic
functions they describe certainly are.
CHAPTER TWO
FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

Once students fulfill the eligibility requirements at UC Riverside or CSU San Bernardino, they are placed in First-Year Composition (FYC) and begin earning credit toward their general education requirements. After explaining that I hoped to study the design and pace of their first-year writing course, I received a small collection of UCR syllabi by mail. At San Bernardino, I obtained the file folder from the English department and assembled the sample. I chose different-looking syllabi: different fonts, different boldfaced headings, and different thicknesses of the stapled packets. I made sure that male and female instructors were represented in the stack of syllabi and course material and photocopied them. In order to maintain the anonymity of the instructors—twelve women and ten men—the course packets were coded R1 through R10 for Riverside and S1 through S12 for San Bernardino.

Admittedly, there are innumerable factors in obtaining a representative sample of course handouts. My samples ignore many variables which impact the students and
teachers of writing, such as economic status, age, teacher training, and a treatment of gender which goes beyond biological sex. Limiting my check for authenticity to the sex of the instructor answers only the most basic challenge to my findings. Researchers evaluating my methodological authority will also criticize my syllabus collection for being too small a sample to make meaningful generalizations (North 138). Because this study does not attempt to evaluate hiring practices or review program quality, the small syllabus collection should provide an account of what the women and men at two local universities teach in FYC with very little bias.

Primarily, my collection of instructional materials and student enrollment data had to meet the guidelines set forth in the Buckley Amendment. Also known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, the text appears as Appendix H in The Allyn & Bacon Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators. The only calculations made on the raw data are additions of like values and conversions to percentages, numbers presented as reasonable ball-park figures of student activity. Although individual years will vary slightly, my research claims the statistical precision and face validity of a cross-section,
an unsophisticated methodology adequate for its purpose: to raise important questions for students and teachers of writing.

During the three school years from 1999 through 2001, about 36% of the entering freshmen at CSUSB were immediately qualified to enroll in First-Year Composition (Lopez-Wagner). In the same period of time, 43% of the entering freshmen at UCR were, likewise, eligible for FYC upon entry (Briggs, Ferri, Rogers). Every year, the remaining students who have yet to fulfill the pre-requisites for enrollment take developmental writing courses until they pass the EPT or Subject A exam. The CSUSB bulletin of courses notifies freshmen:

Students placed in remedial programs in either English or mathematics must complete all remediation by the end of the first year of enrollment. Failure to complete remediation by the end of the first year may result in denial of enrollment for future terms. (71)

As the newspapers said, the 8.2% of freshmen in the California State University system who were ousted during the 2001-02 school year failed to demonstrate the basic skills deemed necessary for university study within the allotted time. Their expulsion is a terrible occurrence, but it is not evidence of a national literacy crisis--not even a statewide literacy crisis. Undergraduate students
on both UC and CSU campuses are encouraged to satisfy
general education requirements as early in their studies as
possible for good reason. The UCR catalog explains that a
general education provides students with a conceptual
framework which will enable them to examine and appreciate
"the significant aspects of civilization:"

This framework is derived from the study of world
history; political and economic systems; the ethnic,
cultural, and religious diversity of the peoples of
earth; the arts and letters of all cultures; the
social and natural sciences; and technology. Such a
broad education is the foundation for concentrated
studies that enable students to prepare for careers
and to strive for an understanding of the world in
which they live and about which they must make
decisions...It must teach students to become verbally
and quantitatively literate, to analyze and
synthesize, and to regard the acquisition of knowledge
as a lifetime activity. (65)

The broader university program prepares students for
all that follows, buttressing their studies. The
responsibility for covering the written communication part
of the general education requirement falls on the First-
Year Composition course, a three class sequence at UCR.
The first in the sequence, English 1A, Beginning
Composition "...will introduce students to the strategies of
personal writing in a multicultural context." Next,
English 1B, Intermediate Composition "...will emphasize the
transition from personal to public writing in a
multicultural context." Finally, English 1C, Applied Intermediate Composition "...will address the function of writing in a range of contemporary situations, including that of the academy, from a critical and theoretical perspective" (239).

The charge put to the instructors of Freshman Composition is to build upon the basic knowledge and skills that the students have demonstrated on the placement exams. The catalog charts the general progression that instruction will follow from the personal, to the public, and then to a range of specific situations. The course sequence seems clear enough; one would expect instructors who teach the same segment of the course to cover similar ground. But the variety is astounding. After reading the catalog description of First-Year Composition, students may wonder why sections of the same writing course would vary so greatly, a potential source of confusion for students which will be discussed within the context of the WPA outcomes.

At CSUSB, First-Year Composition is a one-quarter course called English 101. Although it is a much shorter requirement and is designed to serve a different body of students than the English 1 sequence, it also fulfills general education units and is the only lower-division
writing instruction provided to all students, except those who are exempt from the class because of high placement scores. Since the instructors of First-Year Composition at UCR and CSUSB are expected to reach the same outcomes in drastically different periods of time, it was interesting to compare their programs. Six course components found to operate throughout the syllabus collection will organize my discussion.

Documentation and Format

Before qualifying for English 101 or English 1A, whether students were quoting a line from a reading passage, explaining some personal opinion with an anecdotal narrative, or giving some statistic to support a claim, they were expected to document their sources. I wanted to see whether or not the freshman writing courses continued with that premise. As I charted the first component for Cal. State San Bernardino classes, I found that any syllabus mentioning documentation at all required the stylistic standards of the Modern Language Association (conventional MLA documentation).

Attention to format varied. S1 requires that papers are typed "using a clear font (either Times New Roman or
Courier New), no bigger than 12pt., and one inch margins on all sides." S3 specifies plain white 20# paper stock. S5 requires that all papers have a title and heading, which includes "[the student’s] name, course & meeting time, instructor’s name, and date." Report covers were forbidden. S6 adds "assignment number" to the heading (placed in the right-hand corner) and explains that "Every single essay must come with a) an outline b) a rough draft c) a peer critique sheet d) a slip from the writing center, and e) the essay itself—stapled in that order." The S7 instructor must also see invention materials, an initial draft, group evaluations, and the final product to consider a paper complete; however, papers are submitted in a folder, rather than stapled. S12 adds a cover letter and error sheets to all the parts of a "complete" paper listed in S6 and S7. Only S3 and S10 mention an alternative documentation system to the MLA "Works Cited," such as the American Psychological Association (APA) "References" style. As Table 6 indicates, attention to documentation and format is brief and cursory on Riverside’s English 1A syllabi (R1 through R4).
Table 6. Coverage of Documentation and Format by Syllabus

|   | R1 | R2 | R3 | R4 | R5 | R6 | R7 | R8 | R9 | R10 | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 | S6 | S7 | S8 | S9 | S10 | S11 | S12 |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| N | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y    | N  | N  | N  | N  | N  | N  | N  | N  | N   | Y    | Y   |

Note: Y = Yes, N = No

R1 establishes that "All papers & revisions need to be typed on 8.5 x 11 paper, using 1 inch margins, double-spaced in a serif font." The format for R2 papers is identical to R1, except: "Font Size must be standard; use this syllabus as a guide." A course guideline for R3 is: "Please use MLA format for all papers. All work must be stapled." R4 says: "The format must be according to the one described in class on 4/20 [during week 3]" and cites pages 51-54 in The St. Martin's Guide to Writing.

"Remembering events" is assigned for that day. The textbook directs writers to ask: Do readers appreciate the images and feelings described from my memory? Is the reason for its lasting significance clear? Students recreate a personal event for readers and are meant to share any insights they have gained. If students have
trouble, the text helps them solve problems with organization, dialogue, description, the story, or its meaning to the author. From this activity, students gain experience with format, but not documentation. R5 through R7 are English 1B syllabi. As writing instruction moves from narrative aims to referential aims, toward research papers, issues of format and documentation appear to become more salient. Coverage increases. All three English 1B syllabi mention double-spacing and 12 point type. However, R7 accepts papers "...with approximately 1 - 1.5 inch margins on all sides..." More lessons in English 1B and 1C center around selecting sources of information and citing them properly in the MLA style.

Over half of the English teachers on each campus addressed conventional MLA citation in their course outlines (6 of 10 at UCR, 7 of 12 at CSUSB). However, using and acknowledging sources is only scheduled for the first two weeks of class in R5. My research indicates that a partial explanation for the delayed or missing coverage of documentation has to do with the genre of personal narrative and the layout of the required textbooks. The most popular texts by far, used in 13 of the 22 courses, are The St. Martin's Guide to Writing and Reading
Critically, Writing Well, written by Rise Axelrod and Charles Cooper, two University of California English Professors.

In their introductions, the authors make it perfectly clear that instructors may cover the chapters in any order they find most useful. But unless instructors do so, documentation occupies Chapter 22 in the "St. Martin's Guide" and an Appendix beginning on page 491 in "Reading Critically." Early chapters include specific hints about incorporating an interview into an essay, for example, but they do not go into specific matters of citation as a basis for instruction. This could suggest that when an author's memory is the only source of information, as in personal narrative essays, documentation appears less important.

Assigned Reading

According to the syllabus collection, 100% of the Freshman Composition courses at UCR and CSUSB require a textbook. The selected textbooks were comprised of guided writing assignments and short readings. Chapters were organized thematically or by the intent of the author. Chapters in Read, Reason, Write include: The Writer as Reader, Understanding Literature, Preparing Good Arguments,
Getting Started and Locating Sources. *Signs of Life in the USA* and *California Dreams and Realities* investigate popular American culture. Their readings and assignments examine the prevalent images and issues in our society, offering various perspectives on gangs, AIDS, racism, sexuality, and celebrities in film, music, and sports.

In addition to these "writing guide/rhetorical readers," most syllabi suggested that students would also need a dictionary, thesaurus, stapler, and reams of notebook paper. Composition textbooks often include an abridged grammatical reference at the end, but at least three instructors on each campus decided that an additional, more in-depth writer's handbook would be helpful to their students.

My research indicates that the selected textbooks can help freshmen follow the sequence outlined in the UCR catalog, from personal writing to persuasive writing. These instructional materials can also help CSUSB freshmen meet the English 101 objective: "Using the processes of writing and critical reading not only to communicate but also to generate thinking and to examine assumptions" (177). To reach instructional goals, the Axelrod and Cooper texts do not dwell on the mechanical aspects of
writing as the placement exams do. Instead, they provide systematic strategies for reading, thinking, and writing during all stages of the writing process. As Table 7 shows, the assigned reading component of FYC also suggests that writing teachers at UCR and CSUSB can differ significantly in the number of books they require beyond the course text.

Table 7. Number of Books Assigned Beyond the Course Textbook by Syllabus

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<tr>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
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In San Bernardino, freshmen read collections of works, such as **CyberReader** in S1 and **Free Falling and Other Student Essays** in S9. S6 and S11 also require a packet of handouts compiled by the instructor and duplicated at the campus copy center. Course packets include additional readings and activities which are not otherwise available for purchase in a convenient form. Across the syllabus collection, assigned readings included packets of handouts,
lists of articles on reserve in the library, and additional store-bought readers. Each collection of assigned readings was treated as equivalent to one literary work. Although the level of reading difficulty varied considerably, the number of assigned pages in the reading packets, articles on reserve, and literature books averaged 200.

The only literary work required in a CSUSB class was The Woman in White, by Wilkie Collins in S2. At UCR, two additional books were often required beyond the course text. R9 required an additional three books. Coordination among the classes was also evident at UCR; syllabi from the same section required some of the same literature and later classes in the sequence did not repeat any titles. The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien was required in three of the four English 1A classes (R1, R2, R3). R4 required My Left Foot by Cristy Brown and The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. In addition to O’Brien’s wartime narrative, R1 required Jon Krakauer’s biographical Into The Wild.

All the books in Riverside’s 1A classes can be loosely described as personal narratives because they are all based on real people’s lives. In fact, O’Brien, Brown, and Cisneros are telling their own stories. Krakauer, on the
other hand, only speaks of himself to explore the psychological workings of Chris McCandless, a fellow outdoorsman. Krakauer constructs a biography of McCandless using letters and a recovered diary. He speculates about why such an intelligent and promising young man would sell his belongings, donate his savings to charity, and hitchhike into the Alaskan wilderness to be found dead four months later by a party of moose hunters.

Syllabi for English 1B require: The Tortilla Curtain by T. Coraghessan Boyle (R5, R6), Sophocles' Antigone, and The Parable of the Sower (R7). Syllabi for English 1C require: The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy (R8, R9), White Noise by Don DeLillo, Bram Stoker's Dracula (R9), Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys, and Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte (R10). These selected dramas, fables, and novels span the globe and the ages, certainly providing a great deal of pleasure as well as insight to the human condition, but what these literary works are intended to teach students about writing must be made clear in a general education course.
Media of Communication

The third component of FYC instruction indicates that "ink on paper" (conventional print media) is not the only way student writing is published. Computer use and required time on the world wide web is becoming more common. Oral presentation of student essays can also be required. Instructors who used electronic media in their courses required essay drafts to be saved on floppy disks and brought to class on days when students would critique each other's work. The disks, along with printed copies of the essay, would then be submitted on each due date.

It is safe to say that California college students publish digitally now, in addition to print. The S12 class often met in a computer lab, reading and revising their work using word processing software, searching for sources of information online, and contributing to an e-mail listserv. R2, R7, S1, S5, S9 follow suit and include computer and internet technology in their modern day definition of college-level literacy. Print, electronic, and spoken communication are now joined by visual and musical media. On nearly every FYC syllabus, movies, television shows, and songs are treated as textual media, just like any print document. Students begin to see film
directors, musicians, and (most importantly) themselves as authors with messages for specific audiences.

An inclusive definition of English composition is developing in university classrooms. When college freshmen broaden their definition of writing to include any medium of communication, such a shift in perspective can be uncomfortable, disorienting. It is an abrupt departure from dissected language use and mechanical correctness. The syllabus collection from UCR and CSUSB does not separate reading from writing as a "reading program" may do in primary and secondary schools. The surface features of writing are not emphasized as they are on multiple-choice tests. Suddenly, all language use is conceived as cognitive composition—the mental construction of meaning. English discourse can take place electronically, verbally, visually, musically. Listening and reading are not conceived as informational input; speaking and writing are not output.

In FYC, tidy, iron-clad categories give way to abstraction and shifting identities. Students may wonder how proficient language use can mean all of these things. As freshmen present their essays orally and interpret video and music as discourse, they understand that communication
skills are inextricably linked. Literate processes occur simultaneously; steps and stages merge and disappear. By publishing their compositions to actual audiences, freshmen experience the social aspects of English literacy and their need for feedback becomes obvious. In FYC, isolated skills are brought together and effective communication in specific contexts becomes the new definition of English proficiency.

Writing Assignments

The fourth component of composition class involves the way teachers design their essay assignments. Instructors who explained how their assignments were organized on their course outline invariably pointed to the author’s purpose for writing as the determining factor. 70% of the syllabi from Riverside approached writing tasks with the author’s purpose in mind, 75% did so in San Bernardino. The remaining syllabi did not explicitly state how their essays were organized.

There are endless ways to design writing tasks, but the most common strategy at UCR and CSUSB is to envision the basic aim of the author as he or she sits down to write. The R1 syllabus highlights the role of empathy in
two narratives as freshmen follow soldiers in Vietnam and try to figure out why an accomplished sportsman could not make it back out of the wild alive. The authors of these books explore the thoughts and emotions of their characters. Their intention is to recreate events for their readers, events which will elicit basic human responses.

O’Brien describes in fine detail what each soldier carries into battle: the photos, letters, clothing, weapons, toiletries, everything. Many times he describes these belongings as they are packed up and sent home with the soldier’s body. Krakauer portrays his tragic character as a highly intelligent, friendly young man. Readers like the young adventurer and truly regret his senseless loss. Common emotions are expressed: anger, disgust, sorrow, longing. By exploring the themes in these stories and writing personal narratives of their own, students are meant to examine how authors make an impression on their readers.

An informative essay assignment is designed a bit differently. “In general, it does not feature its writers’ experiences or feelings, as autobiography does” (St. Martin’s 157). The focus is on some concept or object,
rather than on the author’s reaction to it. In R5, S6, and S8, essay assignments draw the students’ attention to the basic purpose of encyclopedias, dictionaries, newspapers, and other referential texts. An objective, reasonable tone is more appropriate for an essay that reports research findings. Readers will not appreciate exaggeration or unbalanced coverage. As students define, classify, and explain the subject of their research, their basic aim is for their readers to become more knowledgeable.

Persuasive argument may be the most difficult type of essay assigned in FYC; they are usually assigned toward the end of the course. Students in R8 analyzed advertisements in magazines, television, and film as persuasive compositions. Differing from the purpose of informative discourse, argument does not present a balanced view. Persuasive essays will generally discount alternate perspectives, rather than explain them in good faith. Again, the crucial point is the author's disposition. When students in S7 are encouraged to take a position and argue their case, their views on the subject are established before they begin to write.

Students are decidedly for or against an issue from the start. They are not disinterested journalists. As
students craft persuasive essays, they must justify an evaluation or speculate about the causes of some problem. They are expected to defend a viewpoint and win readers. Persuasive essays give freshmen the chance to debate a complex issue and convince their readers that a certain perspective is superior to others. When FYC instructors design their essay assignments with the author’s purpose in mind, students can envision specific compositions in relation to all the reasons that they may have to write in college.

Self-Assessment

The fifth component of FYC instruction took several forms. The first chapter of St. Martin’s Guide encourages new college students to think critically about their own behaviors and preferences as they read and write. Reading Critically, Writing Well features self-reflective activities as important transitions in each chapter: “Research has shown that when students reflect on their learning, they clarify their understanding and remember what they have learned longer” (x). The Axelrod and Cooper textbooks invite students to review what makes each kind of essay effective and how individual authors achieve their
purpose. In order to objectify themselves and become self-critical, freshmen will keep a reflective journal, assemble their writing into a portfolio, or both.

Journals meant that class discussions were prompted with a brief free write to get students thinking in R9. Journals helped readers engage a difficult text in S11. Students could ask questions and record their impressions as they read. It is evident that FYC instructors assigned journals to develop a writer's awareness of deeply rooted assumptions. Freshmen confront their attitudes about English discourse and their own specialized study habits. Regular journal entries, which can demonstrate the personal—even therapeutic—benefits of writing, were more common at CSUSB than at UCR.

Few course syllabi organized their assignments into a portfolio: two in Riverside; five in San Bernardino. This is surprising. When students organize their writing in a portfolio, it promotes self-assessment, just like journals. Areas of strength and weakness become evident. Recent papers usually show marked improvement from earlier ones. A real artifact documenting their efforts is created. A syllabus with a portfolio component indicates that the teacher values the ability to view a student's writing over
time for assessment purposes. It also recognizes the instructional value for students to do the same, even if it involves more work.

For all their good instructional qualities, the use of portfolios for assessment purposes has been met with resistance (Schuster). Opponents of portfolios have been those who want quicker, less-involved ways to teach and assess writing. Nevertheless, current research in English Composition finds no instructional tool available that can provide a more valid and comprehensive view of a student's developing writing proficiency than a portfolio--for business administrators, creative writers, and laboratory scientists, alike.

Increasing Paper Value

At some point, teachers are required to document student progress and justify their evaluations. They pass or fail students depending on the grades they earn. My research indicates that FYC instructors will often make edited papers worth more as the page requirements increase and instruction continues. Table 8 may point out an inventive pedagogical attempt to encourage creativity and reward progress with higher grades. Essays in S7 are worth
10, 10, 15, 20 as percentages of the final grade. Similarly, students who completed the R5 assignments (10, 10, 10, 15, 15) could take risks early on with their writing style because of the grading system. The R8 syllabus took longer to classify. Although the first

Table 8. Increasing Paper Value by Syllabus

|   | R1 | R2 | R3 | R4 | R5 | R6 | R7 | R8 | R9 | R10 | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 | S6 | S7 | S8 | S9 | S10 | S11 | S12 |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Y | N  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | N  | Y   | Y    | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | N   | N    | N    |

Note. Y = Yes, N = No

assigned essay is worth 10% and the next three are worth 20%, I decided that R8 did not fit the pattern of increasing paper value. The minimum pages required for the assignments increased, but the value of the last three essays did not. In fact, the final collaborative paper was only worth 10%.

If their essay assignments increase in value, students can afford to write one or two mediocre papers toward the beginning of the class without ruining their chance for course credit. However, as they acquaint themselves with
the teacher and the class, and university study in general, nearly 60% of the Freshman Composition instructors at UCR and CSUSB expect their students to show signs of increased ability as the end of the quarter approaches.
CHAPTER THREE
OUTCOMES FOR FRESHMAN WRITERS

Outcomes statements are an "After photo" for freshman writers. According to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, composition scholars from across the nation:

This statement describes the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes sought by first-year composition programs in American postsecondary education. To some extent, we seek to regularize what can be expected to be taught in first-year composition; to this end the document is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, the following statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory. This document intentionally defines only "outcomes," or types of results, and not "standards," or precise levels of achievement...These statements describe only what we expect to find at the end to first-year composition, at most schools a required general education course or sequence of courses. As writers move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, students' abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. For this reason, each statement of outcomes for first-year composition is followed by suggestions for further work that builds on these outcomes. (59)

In March 1996, talk of creating these outcomes began on the WPA listserv. Edward White, a professor of English at California State University, San Bernardino asked: "Can we come to some sort of agreement about what we are trying
to do in FYC?" That online discussion thread indicates that consistency is a high priority for first-year composition teachers. The research of Writing Program Administrators and other English scholars will be used to make an important distinction about writing instruction: where consistency matters and where inconsistency is permissible. Course grades and FYC Outcomes were a natural comparison, based on the premise that the activities which earn credit for the course would match student outcomes, if theory informs practice. The breakdown for final course grades was included on most syllabi, providing an indication of how freshmen pass writing class.

To the community of Writing Program Administrators, the idea of creating an outcomes statement for Freshman Composition was problematic from the start. Composition scholars expressed their concern that course outcomes would too easily become mixed-in with other issues, "such as TA abuse, reductionist university committees, hyper-theory, and original sin." The tone of the early posts to the Outcomes thread on the WPA listserv (WPA-L) is playful and fun to read. Susanmarie Harrington asks if Ed White’s spelling errors are an example of "California innovation." Certain submissions are judged "more creative" than others.
The early stages of this important document show how influential community members tease and push one another through the drafting process.

They are aware that their words can become law. Yet, their creative process is very human. Leading minds frequently go off on tangents and need others to refocus their ramblings and get them back on track. Scattered throughout the profound discussions of "defining the local" and balancing their loyalties to "the personal, the academic, and the civic," they talk about food, complain about empty travel budgets, and accuse gremlins of zapping archived files they wanted to save. Writing Directors warned: "The very concept of outcomes is product-based and contradictory to a process-oriented writing program. It would be very difficult to include an understanding of the writing process or development of thinking processes as outcomes" (WPA-L). They argued whether or not one freshman course could really mean everything to everyone, anyway. They drew up the pluses and minuses of their intellectual work and wondered if "...even the best conceived outcomes statement will be damaging." The informal vote at one brainstorming session was split 4/4.
The WPA Outcomes Statement is admittedly political and conflicted. Bill Condon contributed work from the 1997 Conference on College Composition and Communication, but did not consider the goal "national standards." Writing experts wanted to keep this important dialogue open-ended, but they worried that without some professional agreement on the goals of their business, they would "look mighty odd to outsiders." With the urging of some of the more vocal participants—individuals posted to the listserv as many as 245 times in one year—and the reassurance from Ed White that "they in no way force curriculum or mandate texts or stimulate axe murders," the outcomes were adopted in April 2000 and published in their organization’s journal.

The fact that I quote from the final version is evidence that it is possible to foster an ongoing dialogue without underplaying the enormous diversity of personal backgrounds and interests of university colleagues. Knowledge gained from their research and teaching experience eventually coalesced into four categories and became unanimous. They also made an important distinction between FYC outcomes (which should be consistent) and the ways to reach those goals (which should not).
In a recent *College English* article, Brian Huot, Director of Composition at the University of Louisville, says: “Since grades and assessment signify what we value in instruction, connecting how and what we value to what we are attempting to teach seems crucial” (166). By exploring this tension between theory and practice (what composition scholars value, and what actually occurs in writing courses at UCR and CSUSB) I hoped that any discrepancies would become evident. Each outcomes category appears here, followed by the related FYC requirements.

**Rhetorical Knowledge**

By the end of first year composition, students should:

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
• Write in several genres

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

• The main features of writing in their fields
• The main uses of writing in their fields
• The expectations of readers in their fields

The WPA reaffirms the general education objectives of the first-year writing course. They want freshmen in any academic field to benefit equally from the curriculum, as students are encouraged to examine what writing means in their disciplinary community in relation to the others. Students rhetorically position themselves as they write to clarify their purpose and identify their intended readers.

Writing Directors have likened this process of objectifying one's self to mapping and charting a new geography. For Lynn Z. Bloom, Professor of English at the University of Connecticut, it involves asking questions in changing times and changing contexts. She says, to ask "locating" questions "...may be as important as to answer them, since in any dynamic field answers will always be provisional" (276). How students interpret their shifting identities will guide their choices in matters of
organization, tone of voice, and level of formality in their writing. Composition scholars have found that in order for college students to acquire rhetorical knowledge, writing assignments should vary in purpose and structure. Drafting essays with different features and uses will give students a sense of how genres and reader expectations change in major fields of study. Table 9 indicates that freshmen wrote an average of 4 papers per 10-week quarter on both campuses; the low was 3 papers at CSUSB and the high was 6 papers at UCR.

Table 9. Number of Essays Assigned Per Quarter by Syllabus

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Writing assignments varied in design and aim: personal narratives were assigned toward the beginning of the courses; research papers and persuasive essays appeared toward the end. Viewed in its entirety, the syllabus collection left me with the impression that four papers per quarter would give freshmen at UCR and CSUSB the
opportunity they need to examine how textual features change according to the purpose of the author and the intended audience. Therefore, FYC courses on both campuses appear to develop rhetorical knowledge in their students.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

By the end of first year composition, students should:

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Understand the relationship among language, knowledge, and power

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

- The uses of writing as a critical thinking method
- The interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
• The relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields

Critical thinking is an activity that Writing Directors admit is difficult to represent in specific outcomes. What constitutes being critically minded is neither clearly defined nor easily assessed. English teachers will recognize the danger for reductionism when they consider what would be a sufficient indicator of one's capacity for critical thinking. How do you teach it and how do you grade it? WPAs appear wary of people with quick answers. For example, one would hope that the day will never come when a machine will score critical thinking by counting one's use of the word "literally."

But as Hunter Breland from the Educational Testing Service points out, the day when essays are graded by computers is upon us. Computers count passive verbs or punctuation errors or total words in an essay and then come to a judgment on quality. In this way, critical thinking is as important for teachers as it is for freshman writers. If teachers and students consider the relationships among language, knowledge, and power (as the WPA recommends) they will develop critical thinking skills.
Judging by their outcomes, the WPA views language use as the central phenomenon—the content—of First Year Composition. They have found that the ability to locate and evaluate primary and secondary sources of information is instrumental in developing critical thought. In their writing assignments, students learn to participate intellectually and socially with the various academic communities on campus. Scholars approach critical thinking, reading, and writing skills as discursive, fluid activities, not as discrete or linear tasks—so should teachers and students. Their research and teaching experience has taught WPAs that learning, thinking, and communicating are inextricably bound and reliant upon one another—writing assignments should also exhibit these qualities.

Instructors must be critically minded when they set page requirements on drafts, or when they require a certain number of drafts before a paper is considered complete. Students may mistake these arbitrary rules as a genre. Many English teachers would find such confusion on a student's part ridiculous. In fact, a student's inability to distinguish between teacher preference and the conventions of genre may even be construed as a deficiency
best handled in remedial classes. However, composition research shows that manipulating the form and content of writing can be extremely mysterious to students, even doctoral candidates. According to Carol Berkenkotter, Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at Michigan Technological University and Thomas Huckin, Writing Director at the University of Utah, students who are articulate writers in genres such as personal narrative may come to view format and conventions as superficial (122). Instructors of FYC may be unaware of this dangerous misconception.

S10 assigns something called “exploratory essays” and “elaborated essays.” The syllabus explains: “An exploratory essay (1) has a main idea; (2) is developed with concrete examples; and (3) should be at least 500 words long. An elaborated essay uses the immediate preceding exploratory essay as a starting point—to develop ideas further, to refine your argument, and to polish your style.” However, an elaborated essay represents “…a thorough rethinking and reworking of the topic.” These are strict and specific guidelines to be sure, but they seem to emanate directly from the instructor. How these essay
formats position freshman writers in the college community may be unclear.

If students in the S10 classroom learn to approach all writing in this manner, they may associate the structure of their assignments with a conventional format. Students could get the impression that writing in other classes will also progress in this manner. In the minds of students, the various drafting stages could become their own genres if the rationale for these steps is unclear. Teachers cannot assume that clear directions mean a clear rationale. Students will follow directions without understanding the reasoning behind them. In this way, pedagogy can be defined as the power to impose a mode of instruction or required materials on a group of students.

Composition scholars and teachers have a great deal of influence--and therefore responsibility--since they guide classroom practice. A writing instructor may explain that certain regimens can be helpful and urge students to try them out, but one person's writing habits may not work for another. Since writing assignments described as "expository," "explanatory," "informative," "referential," and "argument" can mean the same thing, it is doubtful that
adding "exploratory" and "elaborated" to the mix will help students think critically. These are all ways to describe the same genre.

Processes

By the end of first year composition, students should:

- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work
- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to critique their own and others' work
- Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:
• To build final results in stages
• To review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing
• To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process
• To apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields

My research indicates that writing instructors in Riverside and San Bernardino attempt to link process and product in a variety of ways. A few courses begin with self-diagnostic writing assignments to measure the range of talent in their students. Other instructors collect student work several times during the drafting process and grade each stage. One key term accepted as a foundational part of writing processes stands out as potentially confusing for freshmen: collaboration. Freshman writers collaborate in so many ways that one term cannot relate all the associated meanings and roles.

At UCR and CSUSB, freshmen collaborate on group research projects, debate teams, writing workshops, and with tutors. FYC instructors sanction writing centers on both campuses as a crucial resource for students seeking
feedback. Carol Peterson Haviland, Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center at CSUSB and Denise Stephenson, Director of the Writing Center at Grand Valley State University, direct our attention to the complex—even contradictory—circumstances in which freshmen learn to write.

They explain that collaborative learning centers and writing labs in particular can have the erroneous image of a campus “fix-it shop” or “grammar garage,” even though most of the work done in these designated areas does not involve proof-reading texts for mechanical errors. Rather than a discursive collaboration between two writers, students and faculty may perceive tutoring sessions as “paper repair.” In order to clarify the work that actually takes place in writing centers, Haviland and Stephenson refer to tutors as “consultants:”

Consultants may be faculty or staff members, graduate or undergraduate students, and writers may be lower- or upper-division students writing in chemistry, marketing, art, sociology, or English courses; graduate students writing theses and dissertations; faculty members designing student writing projects or writing for publication; or staff writing grant proposals. (381)

Although Haviland and Stephenson admit that the roles of writer and consultant can hold unequal amounts of power
(especially in knowledge and experience with writing) the collaboration they see does support learning and does not mainly serve remedial purposes. Students can meet with consultants and benefit from their input during every stage of the writing process. No rules exist about circulating among the consultants or sticking with a favorite, either. Students may want to show several drafts to one person, or they may prefer a variety of perspectives as they write. Nearly all the syllabi from UCR and CSUSB mention that students will "learn to critique their own and others' work," directly addressing WPA outcomes.

The message is that students must be able to talk about writing without judging quality and putting others on the defensive. "Describing" a text without "judging" it could seem like a game of semantics to inexperienced writers. It is an important distinction for scholars. Collaborative composition is meant to be more descriptive than evaluative. That is why writing consultants should not be perceived as spell-checkers or grammar guides; there are indexed handbooks for that. By the end of Freshman Composition, Writing Directors want students to understand that collaborative revision and peer consultation does not mean correcting mechanical errors with a red pen.
Another outcome in the processes category draws attention to the rationale for revision: A text usually takes multiple drafts. Although it was not evident from the syllabus collection, FYC instructors could have discussed when repeated revision would not be useful. For instance, students may not consider writing for playful purposes or therapeutic expression if they felt that revision would be required. In fact, multiple revisions are not always a natural part of the writing process for non-English majors. Some students can be reluctant to share their essays at all before they are finished.

Rather than trying to discount or ignore inconsistent approaches to writing (whether they are valid or not) it seems apparent that Writing Directors want teachers to explore foundational terms like "collaboration" and "revision" with their students. Teachers cannot assume that their FYC students will understand the multifaceted meanings of these deceptively simple terms. Students aiming for competitive fields such as business or law may not want to collaborate with the competition. Students who fashion themselves as accomplished writers may not acknowledge the need for multiple revisions because they write well the first time.
Instructors need not interpret these discrepant approaches to writing as deficiencies. They can investigate the complex nature of commonly used terms and recognize how students may become puzzled or lost as they experiment with strategies which are new to them. When students resist required collaboration or multiple revisions, teachers should seize the opportunity to understand and answer their concerns. Teachers will come to expect some confusion about their assignments as a natural part of the learning process and freshmen will see that dissensus can play a constructive role in First-Year Composition (Weaving 232).

Knowledge of Conventions

By the end of first year composition, students should:

- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:
• The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
• Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved

Scholars who investigate the textual qualities of situated discourse have found that the relationship between form and function is reciprocal. How writing functions in a community will influence the form it takes and the conventional structure of a type of writing will shape the vocabulary and tone of the language that a community will come to expect (Berkenkotter & Huckin, van Dijk). As they attempt to lay out the implicit knowledge of writers in specific genres, composition scholars document an extremely awkward process. Students attempt to walk and talk and reason like the notable figures in their discipline and they fail repeatedly. The results can seem like parody, border on plagiarism, or sound like gibberish. But trying on the vocabulary, structure, and documentation of writing in one’s major field of study is an important step for university students. If students do not learn what the discourse in their chosen field looks like and sounds like,
they may not be able to contribute to the important conversations taking place.

According to the syllabus collection, the composition instructors at UCR and CSUSB greatly value the risks of using language in new ways. Students write for different audiences: on the internet, to grant coordinators, to members of congress, to their classmates, to themselves. They work alone, in groups, and one-on-one with writing center consultants. By using technology to reach different audiences and experiment with the conventions of new media, students can become more self-aware. It becomes easier for students to position themselves in relation to their audience when they write. However, the amount of time and effort that collaborative and self-reflective activities require is not commensurate with the grades they earn.

My research indicates that FYC courses at UCR and CSUSB urge freshmen to try new procedural systems, develop rhetorical knowledge, and become more critically minded—all WPA outcomes. But the activities that develop self-assessment skills and provide experience with collaborative revision (reflective journals, portfolios, oral presentations, tutoring sessions) account for 13% of the Freshman Composition grade on both campuses. Table 10
indicates that Midterm and Final Exams account for 12.0% of the FYC grade at UCR, 14.2% at CSUSB. This means that impromptu performance tests (the timed, in-class essays typically required for high stakes exams) hold equal weight when course grades are calculated.

Are timed essay tests as important as collaborative and self-reflective activities? By comparing course outcomes and grades, writing instructors can ask themselves such important questions. The writing process and critical thinking skills are difficult to measure and difficult to grade. They account for half of the WPA outcomes. But typically, they do not account for half of the FYC course grade. This may be an inconsistency worth considering as instructors decide what indicates student performance and credit for their courses. If such inconsistencies are left unexamined, the awkward process of learning how to control and manipulate the conventions of written English may be required without being rewarded.

Credit-bearing assignments should model the type of collaboration and self-assessment that composition scholars deem necessary in order for students to integrate their ideas with others'. Lecture, discussion, reading quizzes, informal writing tasks, and most of the social interaction
Table 10. Grading Criteria for Freshman Composition (in Percentages) by University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Edited Papers</th>
<th>In-Class Writing and Quizzes</th>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
<th>Midterm and Final Exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UCR Average (n = 10)</strong></td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSUSB Average (n = 12)</strong></td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average for Both Universities (n = 22)</strong></td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low for Both Universities (n = 22)</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High for Both Universities (n = 22)</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

scheduled in the syllabus collection only account for an average of 14.6% of the course grade on both campuses.

Getting a little credit for a lot of work sends a mixed message to students: The activity is good for you, but it
does not actually count for much. Of course regular class attendance and participation is mandatory on every syllabus. The R4 syllabus says:

You will be expected to come to class fully prepared, which means that you must have read the assigned material, understood it, and have completed any other required assignments. In class, participate in discussion. Remember, your success in this class depends on the effort you expend.

In reality, the final course grade for R4 is 80% edited papers, 20% in-class final exam. A student could rightly ask: "If I don't do homework and refuse to participate in class, which grade do you lower—the papers or the final?" Disregarding the obstinacy of the question for one moment, writing instructors may realize that the entire learning process can be absorbed into the end products.

Teachers know without reservation that the readings and class discussions will help the student perform better on the papers and the final. On the other hand, if this teacher is a good sport about it, he or she will recognize a valuable opportunity to reflect on what actually determines credit for composition class—the process or the product. The S3 syllabus makes in-class activities and reading quizzes sound central to the course objectives:
In this class we will often come to and from the readings with different perspectives, and from this I expect some interesting discussions. It is in these discussions that this class will take shape. This class will only be successful if each of you voice your thoughts, thoughts which will not be graded.

Reading the syllabus for the first time, I took the last sentence figuratively, meaning: you should feel safe to express any opinion you have; being for or against an issue will not affect your grade for classroom participation. I still think the teacher meant it that way. However, considering that the final course grade in S3 is calculated from edited papers and a midterm exam, students may interpret the statement literally: voicing my thoughts in class will not be graded.

Students may feel betrayed if the end of the quarter rolls around and they were counting on their readings and discussions to boost their grades. Reading quizzes and classroom participation only account for 27.3% of the FYC course grade in the entire syllabus collection--not much help at grade time. Despite the theoretical and verbal emphasis on the processes of learning and writing, credit for the first year composition course can still depend heavily on high-stakes tests and final edited products.
CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS

AND TEACHERS

The newspapers are full of stories about underrepresented populations and discriminatory college admissions practices. But my research found no evidence for these claims at UC Riverside or CSU San Bernardino. A possible cause for such confusion is that gathering complete enrollment data can be tricky. Conflicting figures are common on publicly accessible websites because reports prepared by various administrative departments adhere to different definitions.

A "freshman" can be any student with fewer than 45 quarter units or only people straight from high school. Groups of the student population who are unrelated to a specific study will often be omitted, which affects results. For example, one online chart concerned with the college-going rates of California high schools whittled down the number of enrolled freshmen because it only counted first-time, full-time, first-year, regularly-admitted, degree-seeking, English-proficient students.
In such a case, inconsistent terminology can prevent students and teachers from asking even the most basic questions. Believing that conflicting figures frustrate interpretation, I applied for access to the complete data sets on both campuses. The resulting tables provide a clear perspective, not available anywhere else, because the raw data is protected as private information.

I hope my research has shown that in a very real way, the teaching and testing of English proficiency plays a central role in meeting the educational and economical goals for California. Students cannot escape the competition for a limited number of seats and English teachers cannot eliminate the need for ranking and sorting students. They can, however, pay very close attention when abstract qualities like writing aptitude or English proficiency are reduced to numerical quantities--on placement tests, on essay scoring rubrics, on course grades. UCR and CSUSB are exemplary in this regard. Their populations of entering freshmen and undergraduate degree recipients are very well-mixed, suggesting that the tests and courses that revolve around English composition are sensitive to the political and ethical aspects of literacy.
Public data taught me one thing: colleges prefer to admit students who will be continuously enrolled until they graduate with a degree, regardless of race or gender. Admissions officers want to do what is ethically sound and admit a broad representation of the community they serve. But legally, colleges can only select the most qualified students using valid and reliable measures—criteria with numerical values. For their initial college of major, students are a scheduling concern, a financial concern, and ultimately a concern for their reputation in the college community. Admission departments want students who will follow through with their studies and make them look good.

Writers develop within a charged cultural climate in California. Simply by looking out among the faces in university classrooms, state residents know that our prosperity depends on attracting and keeping a richly diverse population. Since every conceivable mix of people takes general university courses, Freshman Composition naturally attracts intense scrutiny. Educating an ethnically diverse community is a crowning achievement and a unique challenge. After seeing the cross-sections of entering freshmen and baccalaureates, it was evident that the teachers and administrators at UCR and CSUSB recognize
their duty to provide all our demographic communities with full opportunity to participate as equal citizens through access to higher education. This is partially the reason why teaching and assessing writing attracts such heated debate: meeting the needs of a multi-cultural population is hard to do.

As I organize the results of my research into some final thoughts, a single question dominates: Which patterns and gaps matter and which do not? The pivotal part of the answer is: “matter to whom?” Throughout this study, the lens of interpretation consistently serves the students. Even as the implications for teachers are delineated, they are primarily designed to improve course articulation and better meet the educational needs of California’s postsecondary students. Although the freshman profiles find areas of concern at each juncture, the results of my study are promising. A student’s first glance at college-level reading and writing need not be so disheartening or perplexing. These accounts of student activity should clarify how writing is used to meet college placement and general education requirements.

Measuring literacy is an imperfect process, but one that will most likely be a permanent part of higher
education in California. It is the fear of all educational administrators and college applicants alike, that if selected coursework, high school grades, and entrance test scores are used to deny admission to those who actually would have done well if they had the opportunity, then eligibility requirements are inhibiting talent rather than predicting performance. Until the postsecondary academic senates and test publishers like ETS devise more credible measures of a student's capacity to finish college, standardized measurement of English proficiency will remain.

At the end of my study, the significant patterns are the ones that direct our attention to common terminology that could mislead students. Among these terms are: "collaboration," "remedial students," "literacy crisis," and "process-oriented instruction." Only one-third of California’s high school graduates can attend CSU or UC schools due to limited space—the TOP one-third. My cross-section of entering freshmen at UCR and CSUSB shows that the majority of these students do not immediately enter First-Year Composition. More than half of the entering freshmen at UCR and CSUSB need extra support and a more unified perspective of language use in order to
successfully transition to university study. However, they are far from remedial.

"Remedial" is a derogatory term. It means to correct a bad habit or disability. When students have outperformed two-thirds of their peers, they have earned a more respectful and accurate label. When the top high school graduates in the state secure a position for themselves on a university campus, it is evidence that they possess good academic habits and exceptional ability. More useful predictors of collegial success might be the ability to function with little sleep, the possession of a large bank account, and access to a network of "study buddies" from class. As freshmen adjust to accelerated study, abstract variables such as intelligence and literacy actually have something in common with "real" entities like cash and friends. The key to the equation is how students utilize these resources, which is difficult to test or predict. A successful student knows when it is necessary to stay up late, and when sleep must come before school work, when a recreational road trip will provide a needed change of scenery, and when fun begins to interfere with studies, when to share notes with classmates, and when to hit the books alone.
Although the first-year composition courses differ in nomenclature and construction on the two local campuses, they are a core undergraduate requirement for both the UC and CSU systems. High School English teachers should be aware that whichever university system their students apply to, they must demonstrate their English proficiency prior to enrollment. Sponsors of standardized tests argue that evaluating reading, writing, and revision can indicate important differences in student preparation. Teachers usually prefer a grade point average, representing four years of work and the collective evaluations of many people. Even with the balanced input from teachers with years of personal contact with the student, the reliable scoring from a scantron machine, and criterion-based evaluation of writing samples by two trained judges, the admissions process still boils down to the ranking and sorting of California's youth. It is widely recognized that students drop out of college for reasons other than inadequate language skills, but these traditional measurements of academic talent certainly do not guarantee future performance.

It is encouraging that the college entrance exams judge applicants on the same yardstick. But historical
rates of freshmen retention and six-year graduation indicate that this number crunching exercise is a modest predictor of academic success, at best. Historically, freshman retention rates at UCR are 86% and six-year graduation rates are 66% (Academic Planning and Budget). At CSUSB, those rates were 44% and 38% respectively, according to their 2001-02 Common Data Set published on the world wide web (Office of Institutional Research). Test preparation guides for the SAT2 consistently emphasize the physical and emotional toll that college study can take. Often-ignored aspects of university life can turn a stellar high school student into a sick, tired, overweight mess on academic probation. The publicly accessible statistics show that students will continue to drop out in the face of the best predictive indicators available.

Describing the retention and graduation rates as a crisis is not the solution. The state educational system has been functioning this way for far too long to be considered a crisis. Merit-based matriculation is a terribly stressful process, especially for failing students; nonetheless, it is a stable one. This pattern of matriculation appears every year. It is the norm, not a crisis. A crisis is an unstable state of affairs with an
impending abrupt or decisive change. My research suggests that if universities project this continued need for extra support into their budget, rather than trying to “eliminate remediation,” they may improve student retention and graduation rates.

Legislators and educators agree that articulation matters in English instruction. They recognize that even good students can lose direction during the course of their studies. Needing extra resources during a transitional period is understandable; it is not evidence of a deficiency. If the majority of entering freshmen need help in structuring their first year of university study, it should fall under general education coursework, not remediation.

My analysis of FYC instructional materials indicates that students may get a fragmented highlights reel of what English discourse can mean as they transition from high school to college. Whether Freshman Composition teachers prefer to use historical narratives, scientific research, novels, persuasive essays, song lyrics, or film scripts as instructional materials, they must remember that general university courses are expected to portray English discourse in such a way that all the different reasons to
write find a conceptual home in the minds of their students. How English proficiency is defined during this transitional period is a significant consideration because undergraduate students write in such a variety of ways in their major fields of study.

The attempt at a broad education is not misplaced; it is just conflicted. When instructional interests collide with administrative interests, the realm of higher education can appear more like a battlefield than a place of collaborative learning. Edward White chronicles the conflicting interests on every scale: nationwide (Portfolios as an Assessment Concept); statewide (The Opening of the Modern Era of Writing Assessment: A Narrative); and on individual campuses (Use It or Lose It: Power and the WPA). When influential groups have conflicting objectives, it can be difficult to know whom to rely on for guidance. Who is positioned to hinder? Who is positioned to help?

By analyzing the placement tests and composition courses at UCR and CSUSB, my research provides reliable information. College placement tests may involve reading a passage and writing about it (Subject A). They may include multiple-choice sections in addition to writing an essay.
(EPT and SAT2). However, students and teachers can say with confidence that standardized tests consisting entirely of multiple-choice questions will not prepare students for placement on UC or CSU campuses. Rather than a threat, California residents should understand standardized assessment as an opportunity to streamline the college application process, reduce the need for remedial instruction, and eliminate grade inflation, which is currently necessary for averaging in Honors and Advanced Placement coursework.

If students and teachers can get past the confusing terminology (grammatical and political) and understand the activities they describe, a coherent path to college composition will emerge. The move toward standard criteria for entrance to the California State University and the University of California means that “college preparatory English” will have a fairly consistent definition. The high school coursework, the entrance exams, and the knowledge and skills expected from freshman writers will become more uniform. The public should know that primary and secondary English instruction can prepare students for both university systems at once.
If California’s teachers knew that the standards and criteria used to determine college eligibility were becoming more consistent, perhaps some commonality and confidence would begin to emerge in lesson plans among English classrooms. Assuming that all primary and secondary education strives to prepare students for college entrance, teachers would want to align their classroom instruction with entrance requirements. Teachers should then base their instruction on describing how sections of text function when their students read and write. Teachers can be certain that examining how people coordinate, subordinate, infer, assert, and justify their thoughts while they read and write will prepare students for the entrance tests. Their students’ impromptu essays and multiple-choice answers must manifest their knowledge of these functions if they are to become eligible for First-Year Composition.

Legislators and English scholars also agree that financial advantage matters when evaluating college readiness. It is important to educators that standardized examinations are fair to students from all economic backgrounds, since equity in admissions relies on reversing the advantages which do not reside in the student’s
intelligence, initiative, or ability (Master Plan).

Beginning with the Class of 2003, the UC and CSU "a-g" coursework requirements are identical. Although UC and CSU have their own placement tests to measure English proficiency, both systems assess similar skills and knowledge in their applicants. In 2006, the SAT will have an essay component, as well.

Students and teachers who want a practical definition of college preparation should visit the Diagnostic Writing Service website. It is jointly produced by the Educational Testing Service, the University of California, and the California State University. Given the powerful move toward coordinating all three branches of higher education in California, students and teachers should pay close attention to the multiple-choice and essay sections of the universally available tests. Most students and teachers are best served by ignoring special actions admissions and tests with limited access, and concentrating on standard routes to admission and placement.

As stated earlier, the courses that culminate with the Advanced Placement tests are not available in all California high schools, so the issue of access is significant. In fact, the American Civil Liberties Union
is currently taking several school districts to court for that very reason: All students do not have the option of taking AP courses. Although 7.1% of the entering freshmen at UCR fulfill their Subject A writing requirement by taking an AP English Test, and 2.5% do so at CSUSB, my research did not examine the formats of these exams because they do not appear to be an equitable path to eligibility. Those who are interested in the history, development, and content of the Advanced Placement Program should read Mahala and Vivion’s "The Role of AP and the Composition Program," and Joseph Jones' doctoral dissertation, "Examining Composition and Literature: Advanced Placement and the Ends of English."

My profile of freshman writers does not extend to "under-prepared" or "advanced" students; nor does it examine the "specialized" coursework offered on both campuses. How expectations change as students advance and specialize is not the focus of this study. This essay is mainly concerned with the kind of broad instruction that would provide the needed bridge from high school to university writing. Further research resembling the current essay is needed on behalf of the students placed in basic writing at UCR or developmental composition courses.
at CSUSB. A similar project could also serve the needs of multilingual students, honors students, and science and engineering students who take specialized writing courses.

Also, students who earn composition course credit for high scores on the AP exams could be profiled to examine whether or not they could have benefited from English 1A, 1B, or English 101, had they not been exempt. A similar profile could examine how students who are exempt from first-year composition perform in upper division composition classes, such as English 306 at CSUSB or English 103 at UCR. Further research is necessary in all of these areas to monitor and improve university writing instruction, in order to meet institutional and statewide objectives. By analyzing the important work of composition courses and continuing to describe the matriculation of college writers in detail, studies like this can help to guide college preparation, outline effective models of instruction, and examine the link between theory and practice.

But first, scholars in literature, composition, rhetoric, and linguistics must be inclined to step out of their comfortable, familiar, community-based lingo and clearly explain what they value about writing (Berlin,
Elbow). Then, new programs can be compared with those in place and original teaching techniques and innovative use of instructional materials can be described in basic terms, and be comprehensible to students and other non-English faculty. My research suggests that the many groups who converge under the banner of English Studies can cooperate and coexist. They need not fly apart, as some suggest is imminent (Connors, Crowley). In fact, the members of very different academic communities who study college-level English proficiency can prevent others from sanctioning outdated instruction and harmful assessment practices by circulating their research and informing their colleagues of their findings. It is my firm belief that when writing directors inform other university administrators how the freshman courses should be run, the entire system benefits. They are positioned to facilitate the kind of dialogue that improves writing instruction.

Once students enter college with their disconnected conceptions of English, writing instructors try to bring unity to this chaos. In as little time as one quarter at CSUSB, writing teachers attempt to convince their students that all discursive aims are valid and important, that ranking the uses of language in an order of importance is
strictly a matter of personal preference. In FYC, students write for a variety of purposes, tie their composing strategies together, and enrich their view of literacy. They write in order to share the assumptions of historians, engineers, psychologists, etc...roles that they may inhabit in their other classes. As long as students and teachers examine how the different aspects of writing are related and valued differently, they will understand what authors expect to accomplish when they write.

Students and teachers may wonder, if inconsistency is desirable among sections of the same course, what holds them together? It may seem odd, especially to students, when they find their friends are doing vastly different activities to fulfill the same general education writing requirement. This is the reason that consistent outcomes matter. It must be clear to students that they may take various paths to the same destination. By drafting documents like the Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, English scholars can help bring coherence to writing programs throughout California.

As teachers reflect on student concerns and goals, they find that common course components and consistent outcomes are patterns worth considering. Instructors must
take stock in what others know about writing or they will continuously reinvent the wheel. No single approach to literacy development is comprehensive. Each disciplinary community has their particular way of seeing and describing English discourse, each offering a piece of the puzzle. Rather than cycling through the staples of literacy development as if they were recent discoveries, the disciplinary communities studying English should be able to share their notes.

In doing so, they will enable freshmen to situate themselves and their reasons for writing on a unified map of English Studies. Then, inconsistent emphasis among the sections of FYC will only be a minor consideration. Inconsistent writing instruction becomes problematic if students are unaware that during the transition from high school to university study the major shift in emphasis is from mechanical correctness and the textual qualities of writing to rhetorical awareness and the knowledge that all compositions are embedded in social interaction.

Teachers and students may want to investigate the assumption that matters of grammar, syntax, and diction are not the domain of higher education. They may want to ask: Do proficient writers really learn to control the surface
features of writing before they consider its social aspects or are the surface features of writing just easier to test? As teachers take time to examine the relationship between what they value and what they grade, they will recognize that self-assessment is a crucial component of writing instruction, for themselves as well as their students.

Teachers can document improved writing ability in their students by implementing a grading system that connects student outcomes with the criteria for course credit. They may want to explain the profound implications of credit-bearing scores to their students. When instructors credit work with a system of checks or points or percentages, they should identify the cut-off for a passing grade. Then students will be able to distinguish when the purpose of describing textual features is instructional (as collaborative revision is meant to be) and when writing assessment becomes evaluative, and its purpose is to determine credit for the course.

FYC instructors may teach and assess writing however they see fit as long as the fundamental components of English instruction are present, and student outcomes are consistently achieved. Claiming to be process-oriented is not enough. Teachers must follow this claim with support
in the form of grades. My research suggests that an emphasis on the writing process can be quite confusing for students if only the end products of their assignments are graded.

It will always be a challenge for teachers to give value to less concrete, less testable aspects of literacy development, such as critical thinking and the writing process. Nevertheless, these are important student outcomes. Critical thinking is how students learn that the textual features of "good writing" change across disciplinary boundaries. Teachers may want to investigate what documentation styles communicate about their users and cover genres that illuminate how form and content are related. However writing instructors design their courses, they should conceive its components as they operate in concert, not in isolation.

Teachers can use holistic rubrics, their grading system, and any writing tests they require to communicate expectations to their students. They can use journals, portfolios, and other self-critical instruments to reflect on the complex nature of assessing writing quality. Portfolios, especially, can depict the important difference between describing the features of a written document
(usually 1-6 on a rubric) and evaluating student performance in a course (A-F at UCR; A,B,C, No credit at CSUSB). Students may freewrite, draft essays, criticize literature, and do all of the popular FYC activities; but left disconnected and unexamined, the building blocks of college-level English proficiency can be confusing. What these activities are meant to accomplish and how they are aligned with student outcomes must be clarified.

Meeting expectations is of primary concern for freshman writers. They may have been praised by their high school English teachers for being imaginative or analytical or ambitious. But if they thought placement exams called for heart-felt expression, poetical musings, or persuasive rhetoric charged with political or religious dogma, they did not meet the readers' expectations on the scoring rubric. Students should become more comfortable with impromptu essays as the criteria on the holistic rubrics become more uniform. Freshmen should know that composition instructors at UC Riverside and CSU San Bernardino design writing tasks by their basic communicative aim, and that they sanction a comprehensive framework, where no type of discourse is left out or given undue emphasis. Literary works are given far more attention at UCR, but this does
not appear to be a failing of teachers on either campus. FYC instructors are often graduate students in literature, and it is a natural human tendency to teach what you know and love best, as well as market your area of expertise.

WPAs have found that through careful course design, there are numerous ways that FYC instructors can assist students of all majors during a crucial time in their development as writers (Smit). By addressing theoretical issues, instructors should be able to account for any potential confusion their students might encounter: What is writing? How is it learned? Is there a single writing process? How should instruction and assessment proceed? When instructors compare the WPA Outcomes with their course requirements, they address relevant practical issues, as well. They can analyze how matters of documentation and format emerge, from a student's perspective. They can arrange for students to publish their compositions to an authentic audience and receive feedback. They can ensure that their students study composition in several media of communication, and that any technology use is an integral part of the discourse in a student's field of study. They can guarantee that course requirements such as accelerated amounts of reading and self-diagnostic activities do not
send confusing messages when they are mandatory, but not graded. After all, freshmen are savvy. They know that in college, important activities receive grades.

Composition scholars do not claim that pedagogical and curricular variety is necessarily harmful. Innovation and experimentation are, in fact, encouraged. Writing Directors do not want their programs to stagnate; it is their job to ensure that risk-taking and discovery continue. English instruction is merely expected to explain how literature, or technology, or any other thematic emphasis will adequately prepare general undergraduates for their future writing assignments. FYC instructors must consider how their curriculum accommodates the philosophies and assumptions of non-English majors.

Table 11 indicates that between Summer 1998 and Spring 2001, only 9% of the undergraduate degrees at UC Riverside were awarded to students of Arts and Letters: certainly not a population large enough to warrant specialized instruction or extra coverage. Students of Business and Public Administration earned 28% of the degrees, Social and Behavioral Sciences 36%, Natural and Agricultural Sciences over 21%.
Table 11. Number and Percent of Baccalaureates by College at University of California, Riverside and California State University, San Bernardino: Summer 1998 to Spring 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UC Riverside</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Letters</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Public Administration</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>1,985.5</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and Agricultural Sciences</td>
<td>1,196</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourns College of Engineering</td>
<td>316.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5,539</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSU San Bernardino</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Letters</td>
<td>2,175</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Public Administration</td>
<td>1,505</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>1,744</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Education</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6,352</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.**  
Double-majors count as 0.5 in each discipline to preserve the total number of degrees.  
Indented colleges do not exist separately at UCR.
As a general university course, Freshman Composition must serve the interests of the entire degree-seeking population. Students of Arts and Letters do comprise a significantly larger portion (34%) of the baccalaureates at Cal. State San Bernardino. At CSUSB, 24% are Business degrees and 28% are in Social Sciences.

The proportions of student majors are like a survey of their interests. Something as simple as a cross-section of baccalaureates can prompt discussion about when and why conventional rules and preferred genres change. And when English teachers position the degree-seeking population at the focal point of their mission, student interests can guide their selection of instructional materials and influence curricular design.

Finally, since the WPA finds instructional value in uniform outcomes and descriptive, ongoing experiences with writing, collaborative activities and critical thought should hold equal weight with edited papers and impromptu exams. The outcome categories are not ranked, suggesting that they are all important. In order for reductionist conceptions of writing to change, formative assignments must find concrete value in grade points. If opportunities to share insights, concerns, and resources are truly
required for the acquisition of college-level English proficiency, then instructors must demonstrate that all the benefits of a Freshman Composition course cannot be measured with bubbles and blue books.
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