Welcome back!

At the Office of Instructional Development, our job is to support you in all your teaching-related efforts. How do we do that? Any way we can—just ask! You’ll also find information on the formal programs we offer in this issue of *On Teaching*. This fall we are welcoming Christopher Basgier and Jessica Zerr who will be splitting duties as our Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) consultants. In addition to offering writing-focused On Teaching Seminars and Faculty Study Seminars (details inside) both Christopher and Jessica will be available for individual and departmental writing consultations. Dr. Basgier is beginning his second year as an Assistant Professor in the English Department, and he is also the Academic Director of Composition. Jessica Zerr is a Senior Lecturer in the English Department, and she recently helped develop the department’s newly redesigned second-semester composition requirement, ENG 130 Writing for Public Audiences. We are also very pleased to continue working with Kimberly Stewart, Acting Coordinator of the University Writing Center. Stop by the Writing Center (Merrifield 12) or contact Chris, Jessica, or Kim if we can help you think about student writing in your classes.

On Thinking about Writing Programatically

Christopher Basgier, English

You’ve heard it all before: writing improves critical thinking; writing fosters student engagement; writing is a mode of learning. You try to work writing assignments into your course. Maybe you’ve even participated in a Teaching with Writing summer workshop (twelve people did this past summer, from Art and Design, Basic Sciences, Biology, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, English, Languages, Educational Leadership, and Social Work). But at your first department meeting during the fall semester, you hear the same complaints: our students can’t write. What else can you do? Perhaps, you might tell your colleagues, it’s time we start thinking about writing programmatically.

Continue on page 2
This year, the Writing Across the Curriculum program will focus its efforts on precisely that. How, we will ask, can departments integrate writing throughout their majors or programs—and why might they do so?

According to Lee Ann Carroll (2002), writing is “a complex set of abilities developed unevenly through many periods of transition requiring a variety of different roles” (24). From department to department, and even from course to course, Carroll argues, students encounter a diverse range of writing tasks—and faculty rarely connect those tasks directly for students. No wonder, then, that students’ writing development can appear so uneven—or even nonexistent.

Anne Beaufort (2007) states the premise even more directly: “department chairs, writing program administrators, and deans would greatly increase the ‘return on investment’ in writing instruction if they foster opportunities for faculty to create sequential, developmentally-sound writing sequences that extend across courses in the major” (153). Doing so, she maintains, “would allow for both repetition of skills in order to refine them and gradual, linked assignments requiring new writing skills” (154). In other words, students are best served when they can make deliberate connections among the skills and genres they learn throughout their undergraduate careers.

References


NOTE: During the spring semester, Dr. Basgier will lead a faculty study seminar on Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki’s (2006) Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life. In this book, Thaiss and Zawacki compare faculty and student perceptions of academic writing in the disciplines in order to develop recommendations for individuals as well as programs looking to integrate writing more fully into students’ learning experiences.

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STUDENT FEEDBACK

Fall 2014
GET MIDTERM FEEDBACK FROM YOUR STUDENTS

Arrangements for SGIDs (small group instructional diagnosis, a process for soliciting student feedback at midterm) can be made now. Anyone teaching a class at UND may request an SGID. This includes faculty, part-time instructors, and GTAs.

SGIDs are conducted by trained faculty who work as facilitators for the process in their colleagues’ classrooms. A facilitator will collect information from your students, summarize it in a report for you, and provide you with high-quality student input regarding their learning.

You’ll have this information at midterm, rather than waiting until semester’s end when course evaluations are completed. Furthermore, the interactive nature of the process can motivate students to think more carefully and deeply, so SGID feedback is often more thorough than course evaluations, providing you with a clear understanding of student perceptions.

SGIDs are intended to be formative (i.e., for your own benefit as a teacher) rather than summative (they are not to be used as an evaluation of teaching, for example in promotion and tenure files).

To schedule an SGID, please contact Jana Diemert at 701.777.4998 or jana.diemert@UND.edu
Sending Your Students to the Writing Center

Kim Stewart, Acting Coordinator of the Writing Center

If you assign writing projects, big or small, chances are, even if you aren’t aware of it, at least one of your students has come to the writing center to work on their writing for your class. Just last year we saw an average of 600 individual students per semester and held 3,144 30-minute writing sessions. We even had one PhD candidate from Educational Foundations and Research who visited the writing center weekly for help to improve her writing skills and by May, she had turned three of her previous homework assignments into articles that were accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals in her field.

The results of the student mentioned above are extraordinary. She made a concentrated effort to improve and develop her writing that is uncommon among students, but she is not alone. Each year a handful of students make committed efforts through repeated use of the writing center and their writing skills and abilities change dramatically. Students don’t have to come to the writing center weekly, however, to enjoy the benefits of one-to-one peer writing consulting, even attending one session with a consultant can help writers to assess their writing problems. Writing consultants are committed to helping each student become a stronger, more confident writer through the work on their immediate writing project; we work to help the writer through immediate application of the information we cover in a writing session to his or her paper, and we are seeing a lot of success. Based on our survey results from last year, 97% of the students who responded to our after-visit surveys reported having a positive experience and leaving their sessions feeling a clear sense of what they needed to do continue to improve their papers and develop as writers.

On the other hand, it is important to have realistic expectations of how much can be accomplished in a writing session. The writing center does not offer copyediting or proofreading services, though we can refer you to a few freelance copyeditors who work on campus. A visit to the writing center often does not result in a “fixed” paper, and when students ask for us to fix their work we narrow their focus to the three biggest concerns in their paper—a small enough number to allow concentrated application of the skills, techniques, and grammar rules that we teach students in writing sessions. Students may leave disappointed that their papers aren’t fixed to the stage of perfection that they were hoping for, but if we taught them a few skills that they will use in future writing projects, then we have succeeded in fulfilling our goal of improving the writer over the long term.

I have presented to you a condensed version of the evidence that supports the work that takes place in the writing center, but how do we get our students to visit the writing center? Some instructors are inclined to incentivize writing center visits through scavenger hunts, mandatory visits, or extra credit. Though there are various philosophical standpoints that professors take on the issue of extra credit, there are a few clear results from any of these incentivized types of writing center visits which are that students find the writing center and meet with a consultant to discuss their writing project. If you decide to incentivize visits to the writing center please remember that there are peak times in the semester when all of our available appointment times fill up; the two weeks preceding midterms and the weeks between Thanksgiving break and finals week are consistently full each year. Luckily, students who plan ahead can reserve appointments right now for any available appointment times throughout the semester. Ultimately, this means that students who are given significant forewarning that they are encouraged to use the writing center can, through proactive planning, successfully schedule writing center sessions; however, the reality is that many students will wait until the last minute and find that they are unable to make an appointment. If you are feeling especially benevolent, you may find it useful to have a backup option in place for these students. It is important to note, however, that students get to decide whether or not their instructors receive emailed reports of their writing center visits. If a student chooses not to have a report sent to his or her instructor, writing center consultants respect that decision, though a student can change his or her mind and request the report be sent later.

Another way to encourage your students to visit the writing center is to bring the writing center to your classroom. This year, as in previous years, you may request an introduction to the writing center class visit and a representative from the writing center will come to your class for a 10-15 minute presentation of a general overview of writing center services and how to make an appointment. You may also request a 20-30 minute mini-workshop on a common writing concern like plagiarism and citation, the writing process, the group writing process, and successful strategies for peer review. These requests can be made through the “resources for instructors” link on our website, by calling my office at 777-6381, or by email at kimberly.stewart@und.edu.

As we begin a new academic year, please consider encouraging your students to visit the writing center through any of the options listed above. You can even request flyers to distribute in class yourself. If you are working on your own writing and would like a thoughtful reader to discuss your project with you, consider signing up for an appointment yourself! You will have a chance to see what your students have experienced and maybe even find ways to improve your own writing.
JOIN A FACULTY STUDY SEMINAR

Faculty Study Seminars allow faculty with common interests to learn more about a teaching-related topic. This fall the Office of Instructional Development will offer three. Each group meets four times a semester, at times mutually agreed to by participants, to read and discuss a teaching-related book (books provided by OID). Your only obligation is to read and to show up for discussion. To sign up for a group, e-mail the facilitator noted below with your contact information (e-mail and phone). You will be contacted once the group is full to set an initial meeting date.

Assignments Across the Curriculum: A National Study of College Writing (2014) by Dan Melzer.

All around campus, students are beginning to mark due dates for writing assignments onto their calendars, and faculty are likely imagining what those papers will look like. When we think about improving student writing, we often start with a critical look at the final drafts as we note what students haven’t done. What happens if we start by taking a close look at our own writing assignments? What do our writing assignments tacitly tell our students about the reasons for writing? What do we really ask students to write in college? How good are we at creating good writing assignments? Does it matter what students are asked to write in other courses?

In Assignments Across the Curriculum: A National Study of College Writing, Dan Melzer offers a way for us to answer these types of questions as he presents an analysis of over 2,000 undergraduate writing assignments from the natural sciences, social sciences, business, and humanities in 100 postsecondary institutions in the United States. Analyzing the writing assignments as classroom artifacts, Melzer gives us a nearly unprecedented opportunity to understand undergraduate college writing more broadly and to consider our own writing assignments in that context.

Join us for this faculty study seminar focused on a broad view of college writing assignments and the implications for anyone interested in helping students become better writers. This seminar will be facilitated by Jessica Zerr. To join the group, contact jessica.zerr@UND.edu


Have you been asking your students to underline, reread, memorize, or review the material you cover in class? Did you learn and study this way yourself? In the new book, Make it Stick; The Science of Successful Learning, Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel report that so many of the study techniques that we teach our students to use in order to succeed in our classes only create temporary, ephemeral knowledge that disappears very rapidly over time. The authors have synthesized recent findings in cognitive psychology and other fields to provide practical learning techniques that we can use to improve our teaching and increase our students’ learning. Surprisingly, Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel argue that innovative, student-tailored teaching strategies are not the answer to more successful, long term learning. What is the answer? Join this faculty study seminar to find out.

The authors of Make it Stick employ a broad array of examples to illustrate their findings, ranging from the choices seasoned pilots make to avert disaster, to the training practices of Minnesota police officers, to the ingenious knowledge retention strategies a medical school student devised in order to pull himself from the bottom of his class to the top. The chapters build toward practical study techniques that we can use to teach students, train athletes, or learn new information ourselves.

In this Faculty Study Seminar participants will read and discuss Make it Stick, while also sharing their own experiences and interpretations of the text and its suggestions. The book uses informative and lively writing (Brown is a professional writer of fiction and nonfiction) as it examines a revisionary approach to teaching and poses arguments that readers may or may not accept. As a result, group members will have an opportunity to discuss the applicability of these findings in the context or their own classroom and their teaching and learning experiences.

This seminar will be facilitated by Kim Stewart. To join the group, contact kimberly.stewart@UND.edu
How College Works (2014) by Daniel Chambliss and Christopher Takacs

“In an era of fixed or even shrinking resources, can the quality of collegiate education be improved at no additional cost?” This is the provocative question that Daniel Chambliss and Christopher Takacs set out to answer via a 10-year longitudinal study of undergraduates at his own institution. Chambliss and Takacs did not begin with the assumption that students themselves “know” what they needed in order to learn and grow. Quite the contrary, in fact. Many student assumptions turn out to be highly questionable: some assume that more small classes are always better, for example, but making classes smaller can increase difficulty in enrolling in the classes of their choice, perhaps making it impossible to stay on track for graduation. Similarly, their preferred living arrangements (private rooms, bathrooms shared with a minimal number of suitemates) are not conducive to making friends with peers – and yet developing close (and intellectually engaging) relationships with peers will enhance the undergraduate experience.

Still, Chambliss and Takacs believed that by following students and tracking the experiences that actually changed their trajectory – whether students had desired and sought those experiences or not – it should be possible to determine the kinds of experiences that we can be more purposeful about providing more broadly.

Chambliss and Takacs characterize one particular finding as “most striking to us.” They go on to explain: “Time after time, in descriptions of a wide variety of situations, students told us of how encounters with the right person could make a decisive difference.” In fact, they say, “This pervasive influence of relationships suggests that a college – at least insofar as it offers real benefits – is less a collection of programs than a gathering of people.”

So what do we do with that finding at UND? With our own student population and our own distinctive challenges – given a student population of almost 15,000 and research expectations that continue to ratchet up – where are our opportunities to intervene in the student experience? Would a study of our students even lead to the same findings? If not, what might we predict would be the take-home? Are there ways to learn more about what makes a difference for our students – and if so, how might we do that? These are the questions we’ll discuss as we read the 2014 book, How College Works, winner of the Harvard University Press’s prize for an outstanding publication about education and society.

This seminar will be facilitated by Joan Hawthorne. To join the group, contact joan.hawthorne@UND.edu
The Faculty Instructional Development Committee

The Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC), elected by the University Senate, provides support for course and curriculum development that goes beyond the means of the individual faculty and academic units.

The committee is responsible for all decisions having to do with FIDC Travel Grants, Materials/Software/Minor Equipment Grants, Developmental Leave Supplements, traditional and online Summer Instructional Development Projects, and Summer Mini-Project Grants. The committee also advises the OID Director on other matters.

FIDC grants may be used to purchase instructional materials, travel for pedagogical development, travel to make a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) presentation or other projects relating to teaching. To submit a proposal, you will find the necessary information on the OID website. The next deadline is October 1 at noon.

2013-2014 FIDC Members

2015 Joel Iiams (A&S)
2015 Claudia Routon (A&S)
2016 Clement Tang (CEM)
2016 Julia Ernst (Law)
2017 Matthew Cavalli (CEM)
2017 Kari Chiasson (Teaching & Learning)
Joan Hawthorne (VPAA, ex-officio)
Anne Kelsch (Instructional Development)
Jeanne Boppre (secretary)

2013-2014 FIDC Deadlines

October 1 Travel & Materials
November 3 Travel & Materials
December 1 Travel & Materials
January 5 Travel & Materials
February 2 Travel & Materials
March 2 Travel & Materials; Summer Professorships
April 1 Travel & Materials
May 1 Travel & Materials

The Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) supports UND faculty travelling to conferences for professional development in support of their teaching. A vibrant network of university teaching experts and scholars share their insights every year at regional, national and international conferences and workshops. Grants fund $1000 per trip or $1,5000 for intercontinental travel.

Information on a number of opportunities is available online, whether it be

- a conference focused on teaching within your discipline (for example, the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference or the American Association of Physics Teachers Conference); or

- a disciplinary conference with teaching-related sessions (which exist in every discipline from the Accounting Information Systems Educator Conference to the Association for Theatre in Higher Education Annual Conference and more); or

- a conference or workshop dedicated to a pedagogical approach or learning outcome (the Council on Undergraduate Research National Conference or the Critical Thinking Community Workshop or the Reacting to the Past Institute at Barnard College); or

- a method of delivery (the Distance Teaching and Learning Conference or the International Conference on Online Learning); or

- a general college teaching conference (like the Teaching Professor Conference, EDUCAUSE or the Lilly Conferences on College Teaching).

If you'd like additional information on grants to support your professional development as a teacher, contact the director or visit the Funding link on the OID website.
SEMINARS

Fall 2014
ON TEACHING SEMINARS

On Teaching Seminars are an opportunity to share a meal and discussion of teaching issues with colleagues from across campus. This year we are focusing on developing student writing. See the asterisk for WAC related sessions.

All sessions take place in the Badlands Room of the Union unless otherwise noted. Please note the seminar times and the deadlines for registration.

How Should We Evaluate Teaching?

Tuesday, September 23, 12:30-1:30 pm
(register by Friday, September 19 at noon)

*Tools from the Writing Center: Revision Activities Students Can Use With (or Without) a Consultant

Tuesday, October 14, 12:30-1:30 pm
(register by Friday, October 10 at noon)

*Building on Student Experience: What First-year Composition Means for Your Writing Assignments

Wednesday, October 29, 12:00-1:00 pm
(register by Monday, October 27 at noon)

Speaking Out: Teaching Presentation Skills

Wednesday, November 12, 12:00-1:00 pm
(register by Monday, November 10 at noon)

Supporting Veterans in our Classrooms: What Faculty Can Do

Tuesday, November 25, 8:30-9:30 am
(register by Friday, November 21 at 8:30 am)

*Designing a Writing-Enriched Major: Why and How?

Wednesday, December 3, 8:30-9:30 am
(register by Monday, December 1 at 8:30 am)

To register and reserve a meal, visit oid.UND.edu. For information, contact Jana Diemert at 701.777.4998

AWARDS

Outstanding Faculty Awards Nominations Due October 10

Each year at the UND Founders Day Banquet, individual faculty and departments are honored for their outstanding teaching, advising, research and service. The Outstanding Advisor Award is coordinated by the Academic Advising Committee and research awards are coordinated by RD&C.

The remaining seven awards come under the auspices of the Outstanding Faculty Awards Committee (OFAC), appointed by the Provost and coordinated by OID. Individual awards are given for undergraduate teaching, graduate or professional teaching, and service. Departmental awards honor teaching and faculty development or service. The prestigious Outstanding Faculty Scholar award honors a faculty member who has demonstrated record of excellence in teaching, research/creative activity, and service to the university, the profession, and/or the community.

Please consider nominating a colleague or department for an award. As faculty we often witness their best work. We benefit from having their students in our classes and from candid talks in the hall. We have knowledge that is often less evident to others: they teach multiple independent studies without compensation and work intensely one-on-one with various students. We observe their work on graduate committees and on assessment reports. We perhaps have the best vantage point from which to fully understand and evaluate the full nature of their contribution.

Go to oid.UND.edu to find nomination forms under the “Awards” link.
UPCOMING DEADLINES

Sept 19  Registration due for Sept 23 On Teaching Seminar
Oct 1    Proposal due for FIDC Travel and Materials funding
Oct 10   Nominations due for Outstanding Faculty Awards
Oct. 12  Registration due for Oct. 14 On Teaching Seminar

*ON TEACHING* is published six times a year as a service to UND faculty.

OID Director: Anne Kelsch
WAC Coordinators: Chris Basgier and Jessica Zerr
OID/WAC Staff: Jeanne Boppre & Jana Diemert