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INDEPENDENCE FOSTERING COMMUNITY
The Benefits of an Independent Writing Program at a Small Liberal Arts College

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In his preface to *Developing Successful College Writing Programs,* Edward White laments that "college and university writing programs usually develop organically as needs appear; they are not so much planned or organized as inherited and casually coordinated" (1989, xvii). Insufficient planning and inadequate organization may bedevil a writing program that emerges in response to local problems or needs, but such difficulties are not inevitable. On the contrary, effective writing programs can and do grow out of a clear perception of specific educational needs within a particular college or university. Such a contingent origin is perhaps the best guarantor that a writing program will develop from the bottom up rather than from the top down, a model of curricular change praised by David Russell in "American Origins of the Writing Across the Curriculum Movement," and that there be an appropriate "fit" between a writing program and the educational community in which it emerges (Hartzog; White 1989). At least that has been the case at Hampden-Sydney College, where, in response to specific local concerns about student writing, faculty and administrators devised and implemented the Rhetoric Program, a multi-faceted writing program that is administratively independent of all academic departments, even as it draws on the expertise, interest, and energy of faculty from across the curriculum. A strong commitment to flexibility, communication, and cross-curricular faculty involvement—combined with a willingness to evolve in response to periodic internal and external program reviews—has enabled the rhetoric program to face and surmount many difficulties in the past twenty years, achieving in the process significant intellectual status on campus. It has been called by faculty and administrators alike the heart of Hampden-Sydney's academic program.

HISTORY AND DESIGN OF THE RHETORIC PROGRAM

Hampden-Sydney College is a small, private, liberal arts college for men in rural southside Virginia. Its interest in good writing is as old as the college itself: its first president, Samuel Stanhope Smith, announced in 1775 that at Hampden-Sydney "a more particular attention shall be paid to the Cultivation of the *English* Language than is usually done in Places of Public Education" (Tucker 22). Two hundred years later, a perceived decline in the quality of Hampden-Sydney student writing led the faculty to demonstrate this "particular attention" by constructing an independent writing program. It is important to stress that impetus for the program came from the faculty who worked every day with student writing; it did not originate in a top-down, administrative decision with lukewarm faculty support. Earlier in the 1970s, the experience of freshmen at Hampden-Sydney was similar to that of freshmen at most American colleges and universities: those with high verbal scores on college entrance exams were exempted from instruction in writing, while the majority of entering freshmen were enrolled in English 105, a one-semester traditional writing course grounded in the study of literary texts. By the mid-1970s, concerned faculty in the college—and particularly members of the English department, who were specifically charged with the teaching of writing—became convinced both that completion of English 105 could not ensure proficiency in writing and that writing instruction should not be the responsibility solely of the English department. Motivated primarily by this local experience but also by growing national attention to writing and writing pedagogy, faculty both in and outside the English department set to work inventing a program that would strengthen student writing.[1]

The resolution passed by the faculty in the spring of 1978 stated simply but boldly that "all graduates of Hampden-Sydney shall have demonstrated the ability to write and speak clearly, cogently, and grammatically" (Minutes of a Meeting of the Faculty, Hampden-Sydney College, Spring 1978). But the faculty approved at the same time a detailed proposal of what the rhetoric program would look like and how it would be administered. Since its founding, the rhetoric program has comprised four principal elements: (1) a required course sequence; (2) a program of testing; (3) a writing center for tutorial support; and (4) cross-curricular faculty participation.[2] Over the years the program has evolved in many ways, but these features still define it. First, the instructional core of the program is Rhetoric 101 and 102, a two-semester

course sequence required of all students. Enrollment in sections of these courses is limited to fourteen, ensuring significant attention to each student's writing. A set of course guidelines, constructed and regularly revised by the rhetoric staff, governs but does not prescribe the content and structure of all sections. Instead, instructors have considerable freedom in designing syllabi to achieve common goals. Final grades are determined primarily by the portfolio of writing the students produce, but in addition all students write common essay and editing exams at the end of each course.

These final exams are features of the rhetoric courses, but they also contribute to the second major element of the rhetoric program: a serious program of testing and evaluation. Every August, entering freshmen and transfer students write an in-house diagnostic editing exercise and an essay so that they can be placed in an appropriate rhetoric course. The final course exams ensure a common experience across rhetoric sections and establish a programwide standard of achievement. Finally, all students must pass a challenging rhetoric proficiency exam before they can be graduated from the college. This three-hour timed essay exam on a topic "not foreign to the students' experience" is, perhaps surprisingly, an aspect of the program fiercely defended by faculty and students alike, who see in it tangible evidence of the college's commitment to excellence in writing.

The third major component of the rhetoric program is the Writing Center, where students have come for tutorial services since the late 1970s. The availability of trained faculty and peer tutors has allowed the rhetoric program to establish and maintain high standards for student writing—in rhetoric courses, in courses across the curriculum, and on the proficiency exam—secure in the knowledge that students can receive the help they need to meet those standards.

In the next two sections of this essay, we describe in some detail the fourth principal element of the rhetoric program: the legislated involvement of faculty from across the curriculum in the enterprise of strengthening student writing. Through the years, close attention to writing quality within and beyond the rhetoric program proper has encouraged faculty to assign a good bit of writing in a wide range of courses. As a result, even without a formal program of writing-intensive courses, both faculty and students are aware that writing plays a key role in learning and that students improve their writing if they are asked to examine and discuss their work at different stages in the writing process.

COMMUNICATION WITH AND INVOLVEMENT OF COLLEAGUES

In *Developing Successful College Writing Programs,* Edward White notes the importance of improving the "campus climate for writing," concluding that a key to establishing a good climate is for "all members of the campus community, particularly the administration and the faculty outside the English department, [to] begin accepting their share of responsibility" for writing instruction (1, 15). At Hampden-Sydney, writing is part of the academic culture in precisely the ways that White advocates, primarily because faculty and administrators have accepted the pedagogical arguments that underlie writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) programs. Because we are a small liberal arts college, we interact frequently with colleagues in all departments and have come to understand not only the importance of managing a cultural shift among the faculty in attitudes about writing, but also how best to accomplish that shift through an informal approach to WAC.[3] We have done so by creating constant and diverse (major and minor) ways of interacting with our colleagues and communicating with them about writing. One might say, then, that we have a strategy instead of a program, a strategy centered on persuasion—friendly but persistent, varied, often low-keyed.[4]

That persuasion takes concrete form in several ways. First, our colleagues across the curriculum participate in the rhetoric program itself: some teach theme-based 102 courses that allow them to adapt their own intellectual interests to the rhythm and demands of a writing course. Close to two-thirds of those who have taught a rhetoric course indicated in a survey administered by the writing center that teaching writing has influenced their teaching within their own discipline, evidence that the emphasis on pedagogy that characterizes a writing course heightens teachers' awareness of their teaching practices in the disciplines. Second, the great majority of faculty help score the rhetoric proficiency exam. All proficiency exam readers are well trained in the art of scoring exams holistically: we conduct workshops for new faculty each spring and only then invite newly trained readers to score exams; refresher workshops are offered each fall semester for veteran graders. The training workshops ensure reliable scoring of the proficiency exam and, according to the survey administered by the writing center staff, also influence the ways in which faculty grade papers written in their classes.

In addition to involving colleagues directly in the rhetoric program, its directors and staff often serve as consultants about students' written work; the writing center, through "outreach" strategies, is a focal point in this

regard. Results from a broad-based student survey, the College Satisfaction Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ), administered collegewide in 1998, show clearly that students believe that they are receiving significant, valuable instruction in writing at Hampden-Sydney.[5] More than 50 percent of the faculty have consulted with writing center staff about constructing and grading assignments, and faculty tutors have been invited to visit classes as varied as math, economics, and physics to discuss writing assignments. Finally, the rhetoric staff adopts and maintains toward colleagues outside the rhetoric program an attitude that communicates the assumption that they not only are interested in developing students' writing but also have valuable expertise in the writing conventions in their own fields.

MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PROGRAM

The original plan for the rhetoric program mandated periodic review of the program by internal and external reviewers. With the understanding that regular assessment keeps academic programs alive, growing, and changing, program directors and staff members have paid careful attention to suggestions and criticisms made by all reviewers and have made adjustments to the program when such changes are appropriate and possible.

Furthermore, because the rhetoric program's independent status means that "ownership" of the program and thus responsibility for it rests with the community at large, faculty across the curriculum regularly offer criticisms and advice on nearly every aspect of the program. Such interaction provides valuable information about how features of the program are working and equally importantly about how the program is perceived; so we take seriously all critiques, knowing that, at the very least, we who are most closely involved in maintaining the program demonstrate thereby a determination to keep lines of communication open to the entire community. And for the most part, such advice— along with reviewers' assessments and rhetoric staff attention to developments in composition theory—has spurred valuable staff discussion or has led to beneficial changes. We sketch below several case studies illustrating such changes.

Case #1: Additional Courses

As noted above, the faculty resolution that created the rhetoric program established Rhetoric 101 and 102 as the course sequence required of students; however, over the years, other courses have been created.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is Rhetoric 100, the addition of which serves as an example of the need for flexibility and creativity in adapting features of a program in order to solve problems while maintaining the goals most essential to that program.

The original plan for the 101–102 course sequence included both a provision to exempt students from 101 if they performed particularly well on a diagnostic examination and a provision that "students whose performance on the diagnostic examination show[ed] serious deficiencies" should be "placed in special sections of Rhetoric 101, where more intensive and extensive work will be expected." The difference between "special" or intensive 101 sections and "normal" 101 sections was ill-defined, except that enrollment in "special" 101 sections was limited to fewer than ten students.

The various provisions regarding Rhetoric 101 provoked the program's first major lesson in the need to heed constructive criticism and to change the program when it becomes clear that change is needed. During the first five-year review of the program in 1983, the instructor who taught most of the intensive 101 sections reported serious problems in those sections: first, "an average of nearly 1/4 [of students in the "special" sections] fail Rhetoric 101"; second, "of those intensive students who do go on to Rhetoric 102, an average of 42% make a D or an F in Rhetoric 102"; and third, "at the end of their freshman year, over half of all intensive students are gone—52% do not return for their sophomore year." This instructor concluded, "I feel this survey indicates a failure to deal successfully with students in the intensive sections of Rhetoric."

While an internal review committee did not recommend any specific remedy, increasing problems with student achievement in the mid-1980s, along with recommendations from external reviewers, forced the issue. Institutional concern with retention bolstered the cause of instructors in the intensive courses, who were frustrated by the requirement to bring less-prepared students to the same end point in one semester that better-prepared students in the "regular" 101 classes had to reach. Finally, students, faculty, and administrators came to the same conclusion at roughly the same time: there was a need for a basic writing course that was congruent with the goals of Rhetoric 101 and 102 but that allowed students to focus on a narrower range of concepts and practices than was required for those courses. Approved by the rhetoric staff and then by the faculty as a whole, with little debate, in 1986,[6] Rhetoric 100 has proved a remarkable academic success; students starting out at that level

have shown themselves to be able students who simply need extra time and guidance as they improve their writing. In this case, fortunately, the need for action in response to the combined advice of students and faculty was clear, if somewhat slow in coming, and the changes were justified by the improvements to the rhetoric program and to the college's overall educational program.

Case # 2: Changing the Procedures for Proficiency Exam Scoring

Nothing came so close to jeopardizing the rhetoric program's survival in its first decade as did emerging controversies about the validity, reliability, and fairness of the rhetoric proficiency exam. Most of the problems grew out of the scoring procedure. As established by the founding resolution, the proficiency essays were "to be evaluated by three-person faculty panels drawn from all the faculty," with each panel to include at least one member of the rhetoric staff. But the resolution did not specify how the exams were to be graded or what would constitute a passing score, and at the time the college had little experience with large-scale testing and none with holistic scoring. Problems appeared almost immediately. Faculty outside the rhetoric staff wanted detailed scoring rubrics with instructions for ranking or weighting rhetorical elements; rhetoric staff members worried about reductive, mechanical grading scales. As a compromise, the director of the program constructed a fairly general set of evaluative criteria. It was further decided that the three readers would assign scores of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory to each essay, with three S's needed for an essay to pass.

Not surprisingly, given this cumbersome scoring system from which little useful information could be gained about either the students' or the readers' performance, rumblings about unfairness and inconsistent standards began to erode confidence in the proficiency exam and to threaten the program as a whole. Still, the program review committee of 1983, relying in part on the recommendations of an external reviewer from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), urged that measures be taken to improve the scoring of the exams rather than to jettison the test. In response to this tangle of problems, serious attention was paid to research in the field of testing. Conversations with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) complemented readings in Edward White's *Teaching and Assessing Writing*. A new method of scoring the proficiency exam, a version of holistic scoring models by now familiar to most writing programs, was adapted for use at Hampden-Sydney and is

still in place. The rhetoric staff, oscillating between rhetorical principles and actual student writing, constructed a six-point scoring guide based on a model devised by Edward White. The guide then was subjected to further revision by the faculty as a whole. As noted earlier, frequent grading workshops have generated a community standard for the proficiency exam and a population of skilled readers who regularly "recalibrate" their scoring; and the use of a numerical scale provides necessary information about the reliability of scorers. As a result of these changes, serious discontent about the exam has virtually disappeared.

Perhaps we could have implemented a good testing system from the start if we had "downloaded" a model developed elsewhere. But the struggle to understand testing issues and the attempt to solve problems that developed in the early years of the rhetoric program helped the faculty as a whole to devise appropriate, in-house ways of addressing the issue and in the process to develop a strong sense of community ownership of the rhetoric program.

Case #3: Reconsidering the Teaching and Testing of Grammar

To outside reviewers, the most controversial aspect of Hampden-Sydney's Rhetoric Program is the emphasis on teaching grammar and editing and the use of frequent editing tests. Since its inception, the program has included editing tests, which, together with a three-hour essay test, serve as exit exams for all rhetoric courses. It should be stressed that no rhetoric course at Hampden-Sydney focuses primarily on grammar or editing: Rhetoric 100, 101, and 102 all teach expository and argumentative writing, and rhetoric staff members emphasize a process-based approach to writing that guides students through drafts. More than in many other writing programs, though, instruction in grammar and editing is seen as part of that process. Until very recently, students in each rhetoric course had to pass a test asking them to edit fifty sentences, each containing a single error in grammar or usage. Such a test can easily be construed as—and for some instructors indeed does become—product-rather than process-oriented. Thus in recent years, as more instructors with graduate training in composition have joined the staff, there has been some internal pressure to reassess not the fact that we teach and test grammar and editing, but the ways in which we do so.

As with other debates about features of the program, this one has proceeded slowly and was resolved in a cooperative, experimental manner rather than by dictate. Our discussion began in the spring of 1997

when Martha Kolln, author of *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects,* conducted a workshop for the rhetoric staff on ways to use her book in the classroom. Some of her observations about our methods of teaching editing—namely, that we stress rules and what not to do rather than positive ways in which students can manipulate the language rhetorically to better communicate their meanings—led the staff to reexamine some of our practices to see if we might institute a more positive approach to grammar and editing.

Intrigued by Kolln's approach, a special committee on teaching and testing editing conducted a staff workshop on the issue, during which a consensus was reached that Rhetoric 102, which focuses on research and style, would be an ideal course in which to experiment with different pedagogical approaches to grammar and editing. Many at the workshop expressed dissatisfaction with our standard editing test as a tool to measure students' grasp of stylistic concepts and choices; as a result, we established several experimental 102 sections, taught by interested staff members, who used Kolln's book rather than the standard handbook for grammar instruction and who did not administer the traditional fifty-sentence editing exam. Instead we devised an alternate exam to assess students' learning of the materials in the Kolln book and other rhetorical matters introduced by their instructors.[7] While these experimental sections were under way, instructors of these sections met regularly with other members of the teaching and testing editing committee to discuss the progress and problems of the classes. At a workshop following the first semester of experimentation, instructors of the new sections discussed not only the final editing exams, but also their experiences using *Rhetorical Grammar* in the classroom. They generally agreed that the experiment had been a successful one and expressed their belief in the usefulness of Kolln's approach.

Because attitudes about the importance of teaching grammar and editing are deeply embedded in the rhetoric program, many staff members are firmly attached to our traditional editing exams, which constitute for them a significant pedagogical tool. In addition, members of the Hampden-Sydney community at large, including other faculty, students, and alumni, consider the rhetoric program's emphasis on grammar and editing to be an essential part of writing instruction. For students who have gone through the program, the editing exams become a common experience, a rite of passage. Because the program is independent of all academic departments, there exists a strong sense

of communal ownership and the feeling that one simply cannot change the program at will. Throughout the process of addressing the issue of teaching and testing editing, then, we have proceeded slowly and democratically. Before any binding, programwide decision was made regarding what would be perceived here at Hampden-Sydney as a fairly radical change in program policy, there was careful consideration, in a series of workshops, of instructors' accounts of their teaching experiences with new approaches, as well as of student work itself, both experimental editing exercises and tests and the student essays produced in the experimental sections. As this evidence was considered over time, interest in the changes grew among the staff. Finally, at a staff meeting in the spring of 2001, the staff approved by an overwhelming margin the proposal to retain the traditional editing tests in Rhetoric 100 and 101 but to adopt for the program as a whole the approaches to editing and grammar developed in the experimental sections of 102.

At our small, close-knit institution, changes mandated by a program director without the lengthy process of consideration that has taken place in this case would likely be met mostly with resistance and resentment. But our process of ongoing assessment and communication about proposed changes and our policy of establishing experimental sections to test hypotheses about the value of programmatic changes smoothed the way for this dramatic change. Our experiments with ways of teaching and testing grammar and editing constitute a recent, significant example of how the rhetoric program remains flexible but cautiously so, responding to criticism from sources both outside and inside the college in order to benefit our students.

CONCLUSION

Our experience has shown that, in order for an independent writing program to survive—more importantly, in order for such a program to accomplish its educational goals successfully over a period of time—program directors and staff members must be receptive to the constructive suggestions and criticisms of colleagues, of students, of administrators, and of outside reviewers. Establishing lines of communication and keeping those lines open are crucial to maintaining others' trust and support. If there is a sense of campuswide ownership of and responsibility for a writing program, especially at a liberal arts college, then independence does not turn into isolation or marginalization but instead becomes a source of strength, allowing true integration of writing

instruction into the whole of the institution's academic program. Furthermore, program directors and staff members need to be open to the idea that various features of a writing program—even features they are particularly attached to—may need to be adjusted, either because there is significant and reasonable demand for change or because, over time, shifts in focus are needed to ensure that the program corresponds to the needs of the student body, the teaching staff, the institution's overall academic program, or the world beyond the university gates, where the students must compete for jobs or for places in graduate and professional programs. Program directors need to be flexible and creative in finding ways to adjust features of the program so that the program's central goals are not sacrificed but enhanced. Inevitably, too, the director will have to find appropriate ways to smooth the ruffled feathers of those on the teaching staff and beyond who opposed the changes.

How is all of this possible, and what are the drawbacks of having an independent program that operates this way? It must be said that probably the most significant difficulty with Hampden-Sydney's Rhetoric Program and its particular version of "independence" is that being deeply rooted in the requirements and standards of our own institution's liberal arts curriculum and being deeply committed to interacting with members of the local community can mean that the program tends to be out of sync with developments in the broader world of composition studies. More often than not, assessments of our program by outside reviewers have been highly critical on these grounds, and many reviewers have left campus saying something to the effect that "according to composition theory, and given results of research in the field, this program should not work at all; it simply cannot be as effective as everyone on campus believes that it is." Although being slower to adjust to external than to internal demands leaves us open to the charge of provincialism,[8] we have decided that local demands and standards, along with the experience and evidence accumulated during the program's twenty-year lifespan, outweigh the mandates of current theoretical developments in composition studies.

To date, program directors have worked on this problem by ensuring that issues from internal and external sources are seriously discussed in staff meetings and workshops and with the campus community at large. And, though slow to change, the rhetoric program has not been averse to change: if staff meetings are at times cantankerous events, they are also lively ones, as instructors seek ways to adapt the program they have inherited to new generations of students and to the constantly changing

world of work and study. What can certainly be said in our favor is that the time and effort we devote to discussion and debate means that on our campus there is an unusually acute awareness not only of the importance of students' writing but also of various issues associated with the teaching of writing. That the Rhetoric Program at Hampden-Sydney is quite healthy at age twenty-two can be credited to the wisdom of those who devised it, to the college administrators who have supported and even lauded it, and to the hard-working staff members and program directors who have guided and formed it, but also to the faculty members and students campuswide who—along with the professionals in the field who have reviewed it—have contributed their ideas about how a good program could be made even better. This is our way of fulfilling Samuel Stanhope Smith's 1775 goal for Hampden-Sydney College, ensuring that, in fact and not just in theory, all graduates of the college will be able to write clearly and cogently; it is our way of creating the "open communication and rational engagement" (Russell 1992, 41) that is a most natural and appropriate foundation for liberal arts education and a hallmark of effective, enduring academic programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1.   Mary Saunders, now a senior professor of English who was hired in 1977 specifically to help develop a comprehensive writing program, recalls that members of the English department agreed that "a two-semester course, probably with exit proficiency exams, would be crucial to giving students the help they needed to improve their critical thinking as well as their writing skills. It was also understood that the job was too big for the English department alone: careful attention from more than a few teachers in one department would be needed to produce improvement." As a result, though plans for the rhetoric program were initiated within the English department, faculty and

administrators quickly decided that "the program would be the business of the whole college."

2. Wayne Tucker, professor of classics and the first director of the Rhetoric Program, published in the college's alumni journal a useful article on the new writing program, from which some of the information in this section is taken. See "Rhetoric Reborn: A Theme with Commentary". Additional information was provided to us by George Bagby, professor of English, and Larry Martin, professor of English and dean of the faculty, both of whom helped construct the rhetoric program.

3. In the last chapter of *Programs That Work*, Toby Fulwiler and Art Young identify "entrenched [faculty] attitudes as the chief enemy of writing across the curriculum" (292–94). We maintain that at least at our institution and likely at others, the most effective weapon against that enemy is what David Russell claims is one of the strengths of WAC initiatives—their ability to help the American education system "realize the vision of Dewey: that curricula should be arrived at by means of open communication and rational engagement, not by fiat" (1992, 41). Hampden-Sydney has had the opportunity to implement a more formal writing-across-the-curriculum requirement, but it has consciously decided not to, opting instead for the kind of approach we have described. Other schools have benefited from such "grassroots" methods—administrators at George Mason University, for example, write that "[we] decided to create a grass-roots program through workshops that would involve interested faculty. We felt that a 'seed' program would eventually provide a strong base for more ambitious plans. Rather than beginning the program from the top, as has occurred recently at many institutions where 'writing intensive' courses have been mandated before faculty training has begun, we felt that massive curriculum change would occur naturally though pressure from experienced faculty" (Thaiss et al. 225–26).

4. This strategy of persuasion is especially effective at small liberal arts colleges, according to a recent article by Thomas Amorose. Citing David Bell, Amorose unpacks the complex concept of "power" at academic institutions; what we call "persuasion" is termed "authority" and "influence" in this article. On the whole, Amorose's discussion of authority and influence in the operation of successful writing programs at small colleges is an apt analysis of how the rhetoric program works at Hampden-Sydney.

5. In particular, seventy-one percent of students reported that in the course of the year they had written and revised a rough draft, and a

significant number reported that they had spent five hours or more writing a paper and/or had revised a paper two or more times. Almost half of the students surveyed (forty-five percent) reported that they had written more than ten papers during the year (which was not yet complete when the survey was administered), and, most importantly, 85 percent reported that, as a result of their work at college, they had gained "quite a bit" or "very much" in their ability to write clearly and effectively. In comparison, 65.9 percent of students responding to this questionnaire at all selective liberal arts colleges included in the survey between 1990 and 1996 felt that they had gained "quite a bit" or "very much." The Hampden-Sydney numbers in the "very much" category especially stand out: 49.5 percent, compared to 24.2 percent among other respondents. Though this is self-reported, anecdotal evidence, the fact that more than twice as many students at Hampden-Sydney than at other liberal arts colleges reported gaining very much from their study of writing in college speaks to the influence not only of the rhetoric program but also of the culture of writing that has become an established part of Hampden-Sydney.

6.   At Hampden-Sydney, all new courses must be presented to the faculty as a whole for consideration and vote. The independent status of the rhetoric program (and its status as a program and not a department) was a considerable disadvantage in this instance, since there were no tenured department members to argue for the course. This fact makes the faculty's acceptance of Rhetoric 100 all the more significant. We were lucky in this case because the Math department already had in place a Math 100 course, one that students took for credit but which did not satisfy the college's core requirement in math. We modeled Rhetoric 100 on this course and used the parallel when presenting the case for Rhetoric 100 to the faculty.

7.   In the first semester of experimentation, students were asked to revise two substantial paragraphs that contained a variety of problems in organization and focus as well as problems with rhetorical effectiveness at the sentence level. They were then presented with two passages about a similar subject matter and asked to decide which was the most rhetorically effective and to explain why. Because there was some dissatisfaction with this test among instructors, the following fall a new task was designed, this one asking students to revise a paragraph from their final essay exam according to the principles of rhetorical grammar and then to explain in a brief essay why they had made the changes they did to improve their paragraphs. A recent staff review of

this revised test, as well as writing portfolios produced by students who wrote the revised test, suggested that this testing model was effective for Rhetoric 102. The instructors who administered and graded the tests were pleased with the type of test and also with their students' performance.

8. Hampden-Sydney's rhetoric program is certainly a "traditional" writing program and is also "homegrown," as we have explained; however, it is not insular or closed to outside influence. Directors and staff members regularly attend and present papers at regional and national conferences devoted to writing instruction, and several national figures in the field of rhetoric and composition have visited campus to conduct workshops here. Such interaction, we believe and hope, keeps our pedagogical peculiarities from developing into ineffective oddities. On the problem of writing program insularity, see Bruce Horner's discussion of the English 1–2 program at Amherst College in his recent *Terms of Work for Composition* (179–87).