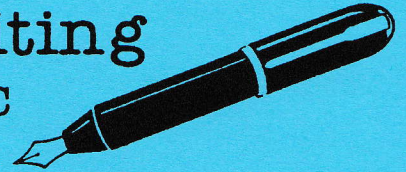


# Newsletter

## Conference on Basic Writing

A special interest group of CCCC



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### 1999 CCCC Convention

#### **"Teaching Basic Writing at the Point of Need"**

The Conference on Basic Writing is offering a workshop all day on Wednesday, titled, "Teaching Basic Writing at the Point of Need." The workshop will explore a host of innovations for the basic writing classroom, including using technology in the basic writing classroom, integrating the teaching of reading and writing, introducing service learning as a vehicle for teaching basic writing, and implementing outcomes-based assessment for basic writing programs. The co-chairs are Gerri McNenny, California State University, Fullerton and Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald, Chabot College.

The first speaker will be Linda Adler-Kassner from the University of Michigan at Dearborn addressing "Service Learning in the Basic Writing Classroom." She explains that service-learning can be a particularly effective "point of need" strategy in basic writing in that it helps students take real audiences and purposes into account, thus

*(Continued on page 2)*

#### **"Basic Writing Programs and Access Allies:**

#### **Finding and Maintaining Your Support Network"**

Terry Collins, University of Minnesota

It's certainly not news that Basic Writing has been under attack lately. The most puzzling assaults may have come from several colleagues in the academic left who assert that basic writing programs in general operate as self-serving and regressive barriers to full inclusion of students who are marginalized in higher education. But the most dangerous threats directed at basic writing and at the students served by our various BW programs come from the reascendant right, as part of the national effort to dismantle meaningful access to higher education among non-elite students. In some systems, governing boards attack "remediation" (and with it basic writing programs) as part of their retreat from open-admissions. Elsewhere, legislative mandates against college-level developmental studies programs in writing and mathematics are proffered as crowd-pleasing, tax-cutting economic measures,

*(Continued on page 3)*



(1999 Conference continued)

making writing more vital and dialogic. After being introduced to the fundamentals of service-learning and its potential for writing instruction, workshop participants will work in small groups, identifying the possible applications for service-learning on their campuses and working out curriculum directed toward both community and student needs.

The next speaker will be Kathleen Blake Yancey from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, presenting, "Outcomes Assessment and Basic Writing: What, Why, and How?" She will ask the questions: What can basic writers do? What do basic writers know? Especially after completing a basic writing sequence? And what effect does such knowing and know how have upon these writers? Do they stay in school longer? Do they take these "knowings" into their other classes, and if so, to what effect? Do they graduate at greater rates? If we were to ask them, what would these students tell us about the effects of such a course? This session will consider how outcomes assessment can serve the needs of students, teachers and programs.

After lunch, George Otte, CUNY Graduate Center, and Terence Collins, General College, University of Minnesota, will be presenting, "Basic Writing and the New Technologies." This workshop session will provide an overview of how new technologies are changing basic writing instruction through various kinds of on-line discussion and information access; new forms for the delivery of texts, instruction, and tutorials; even some new approaches to assessment. Changes in instructional format will be given special consideration, not least of all changes that propose reducing student-teacher contact or presume to reduce cost, and due consideration will also be given to

the (thus far very limited) evidence of benefits of new communication and instruction. They will treat strategies for funding, access, faculty development, and technical support. Particular attention will be given to faculty development, which will be enacted as well as discussed—including, no doubt, confronting (often understandable) resistance to the use of new technologies.

Finally, Marcia Dickson from Ohio State University at Marion will explore "Learning to Read/Learning to Write." Her presentation will be focused on the idea that teaching basic writing means teaching basic reading. She will explain that many of the problems exhibited in basic writers' essays are the result of a fundamental lack of familiarity with common print conventions and the structure of academic discourse. The same writers/readers who have trouble following a complex textual argument, who cannot identify main points or separate the authors' ideas from the sources quoted in their texts, write vague essays which are full of unsubstantiated leaps in logic and are characterized by conclusions that seem to have no relationship to the text being read or the theses they develop in response to it. Unfortunately, most basic writing teachers do not have training in reading pedagogy. In this workshop, participants will examine the specific reading problems that face basic readers, determine how these reading problems compound writing problems, and work through a number of suggestions for familiarizing basic readers with the texts that they will encounter as college students. Participants will be encouraged to contribute to the conversation.

The discussion leaders will be Karen Uehling, Boise State University; William Jones, Rutgers University; Mary Kay

(Continued on page 5)



*(Basic Writing Programs and Access Allies, continued)*

under the claim that public funding of such instruction is inappropriate because the state would be "paying twice for instruction that ought to take place in high school." In a time of anti-immigrant and anti-entitlement sentiments, basic writing programs are targeted as part of the trend to withdraw services of all sorts from populations not traditionally represented in higher education. It's natural that those of us who work in basic writing programs feel isolated in such an environment. After all, many in basic writing who have reported being unwelcome or undervalued members of English departments over the years now find their enterprise attacked from both ends of the political spectrum. But it's also clear that we need not, in fact, remain isolated in our struggle to maintain supportive writing courses for under-prepared students. On most campuses, basic writing programs are but one feature of an array of access-support programs. It's important for each of us to survey our local landscape to see who else works in the interest of the students we serve. In identifying others who seek to provide a "safe house" point of access, we identify our potential allies in protecting and strengthening our programs. Forming alliances with these colleagues is simply good sense even in good times. In bad times, these alliances can prove to be the difference in maintaining access for our students and the life of the programs which serve them.

The following questions will help you identify where you can start on your campus and in your community to build a support network for basic writers and the courses which serve them. Knowing the answers to these questions certainly helped my colleagues in General College

of the University of Minnesota deflect an administrative attempt in 1996 to close our program as part of a plan to restrict access on our campus. These questions reflect pretty transparently some of my assumptions formed by that experience. You might make other assumptions, given that you will very likely be working from the site-specific dynamics of your institution. But I hope that my questions might help you and your colleagues get a start toward identifying your allies in your situation.

1. Who are the administrators on your campus who have working responsibility for the following?

- \* diversity
- \* admissions
- \* outcomes assessment
- \* outreach
- \* community relations
- \* alumni relations

What are the current relationships between each of these people and your program?

2. Institutional research

- \* To what forms of institutional research does your program have access?
- \* What reports are free to you (e.g.

*(Continued on page 4)*

*Please note:*

*Next to your name on the mailing label is the year your CBW membership expires. If expired, please send \$5.00 to renew for one year to:*

*Sallyanne Fitzgerald  
Dean, Language Arts and Humanities  
Chabot College  
25555 Hesperian Blvd.  
Hayward, CA 94545*



*(Basic Writing Programs and Access Allies, continued)*

graduation information on program participants at year six after enrollment; success in the "next writing course")?

\* What sorts of studies does your institution do on a recurring basis that might include your students (e.g. post-graduation interviews in which attributions of success factors are reported)?

\* What sorts of institutional research can you commission?

\* What sorts of institutional research can your program do without outside assistance?

\* Who has responsibility for institutional research closest to your program?

3. What are the chief access programs on your campus? Many basic writing programs predate the access initiatives of the 1970s; many grew directly from "open admissions" efforts; all have a stake in access programming.

Which of the following programs exist on your campus? What ties does your program have to each? How can you build appropriate ties?

- \* Upward Bound
- \* TRIO Student Support Services
- \* McNair Scholars
- \* Disability Services
- \* Learning centers
- \* Intercollegiate athletics
- \* Student services
- \* Others?

4. In your locale, who benefits from your basic writing student's success?

- \* Employers?
- \* Social Service agencies?
- \* Identifiable communities or population pockets?

How do you access power centers which serve such people? Chamber of Commerce? Unions? City Council members? Campus district legislators?

5. If your program hires graduate students to teach, whose graduate students are they? What graduate departments benefit materially from your payroll? If your program trains and mentors graduate students who teach in your program, what is the relationship between their eventual placement and the training you provide?

6. Press relations:

\* In your institution, who decides what will go out in press releases?

\* Do you have access to the press office? To the press office mailing lists and fax generating capacity?

\* How are story ideas proposed and developed?

\* Have your students been featured in your institution's good press?

\* Do you have former students whose successes can be profiled?

7. Governing Board:

\* Who are your regents (or "governors" or "trustees")?

\* How do you get bio sketches (or get a sense of who's up to what) of the regents/governors/trustees?

\* What are the protocols for getting in contact with these people in your site?

8. Community ties

What is already in place (are members of your staff, your students, or your alumni on advisory panels, commissions, service organizations, political bodies)?

*(Continued on page 5)*



*(Basic Writing Programs and Access Allies, continued)*

What logical ties would your outreach build?

- \* service learning
- \* grant writing
- \* study groups
- \* K-12 connections
- \* expert advisory functions

9. Political allies--who are the key political figures whose decisions or influence have an impact on your program or on access to your site?

- \* How do you get to them?
- \* Whose interests identified above overlap with the interests of these key political figures?

10. Campus governance--finding and navigating the halls of power.

Key committees of the faculty--what are they and how does the BW staff get on them?

- \* Curriculum

- \* Faculty affairs
- \* Finance
- \* Long-range planning

Committees for students

- \* Campus life
- \* Campus climate
- \* Technology

11. Money

- \* Who controls the budget that controls your basic writing program?
- \* What total tuition and legislative dollars do your students produce in all of their courses and in all departments in which they enroll?
- \* Where do budgeters get their information on your program?
- \* How can you control the information they get about your program?

My colleagues and I in General College learned under duress that keeping your

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(1999 Conference continued)*

Crouch, California State University, Fullerton; Geoffrey Sirc, General College, University of Minnesota; Gregory Glau, Arizona State University, Dept. of English.

The day will be scheduled as follows:

Schedule - 1999

**"Teaching Basic Writing at the Point of Need."**

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 9:00 - 9:15   | Welcome  |
| 9:15 - 10:45  | Linda Adler-Kassner, "Service Learning in the Basic Writing Classroom"             |
| 10:45 - 11:00 | Coffee Break   |
| 11:00 - 12:30 | Kathleen Blake Yancey, "Outcomes Assessment and Basic Writing: What, Why and How?" |
| 12:30 - 1:30  | Lunch  |
| 1:30 - 3:00   | George Otte and Terence Collins, "Basic Writing and the New Technologies"          |
| 3:00 - 3:15   | Coffee Break   |
| 3:15 - 4:45   | Marcia Dickson, "Learning to Read/Learning to Write"                               |
| 4:45 - 5:00   | Closing remarks  |



*(Basic Writing Programs and Access Allies, continued)*

program alive is a constant effort. Even in good times maybe especially in good times it is vital that we identify and form strong access-ally networks on and off campus for the good of our students and in support of their continued access to higher ed. Good luck where you work.

(Derived from a pre-conference workshop session of the same title offered as part of CBW's "Rethinking Basic Writing: Ideas Whose Time Has Come," Conference on College Composition and Communication, 1998)

