

CREATING ESSAY EXAMINATION TOPICS

- Speaker: Alice Brekke, *The California State University and College System*
- Introducer/Recorder: Bonnie Braendlin, *The Florida State University*

Alice Brekke presented a short history of the testing situation in the California system. Focusing on the English Placement Test, Brekke discussed the statewide committee's initial dissatisfaction with essay topics that were unfocused or too specific or too restrictive. She then described the process by which the committee, using guidelines from E.T.S., currently researchers, composes, and field-tests essays to determine the best possible topics. Brekke discussed some of the topics, delineating criteria by which they are judged to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Subsequent discussion with the audience explored the students' range of responses to various kinds of essay topics, the confidentiality of topics, ways to get students to respond in pretesting, and recruitment as holistic scorers of faculty from disciplines other than English.
