



CENTER FOR TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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Jan 28, 1985

TO: College Writing Committee Chairmen

FROM: Marilla Svinicki

RE: Possible Evaluation Data

At our last meeting you asked me to check into possible forms for gathering evaluative information about the writing programs. To do this, I looked over the forms which were sent by various people, talked to people from Academic Affairs and Research and spent some time thinking about what an evaluation committee might want to know two or three years down the road. The original list I came up with was far too long and represented a real evaluation of the program, the kind no one has time to do. So with the help and advice of several people, I cut the list back to things which were already available or which would be fairly easy to produce. I am now sending it on to you for your perusal. Later in the semester I'd like to get together with you to discuss this idea about coordinating record-keeping. For now I'd just like your reactions to the feasibility of collecting information like that described in the attached sheets.

It seems to me that future University committees would be interested in the following questions:

1. What did the writing courses look like?
2. How were the courses perceived?
3. What resources were required to run such a class?
4. Did the courses have any effect on student writing ability?
5. How were courses selected and certified?
6. What other activities at the College, department or University level were needed to support these courses?

These are just suggestions about the kinds of information which might be useful later on in evaluating the writing requirement. Some of the information already exists, while other parts could be gathered easily. The attached sheets describe data sources which could address one or more of these questions. Obviously there are many more questions one could ask and many more sophisticated ways of collecting data, but realistically, it would be unlikely that such data could be collected. If, however, some of your faculty are interested in more sophisticated evaluations (for example, people in education are already collecting writing samples), I know there would be interest in the information, if not here, then at other universities. I would be happy to help anyone design a more detailed evaluation.

### A Possible Instructor-oriented Format

In order to gather information which might eventually be fed into a College Writing Committee report to the Dean or to an ad hoc University committee report, we might ask instructors to respond at the end of their class to items like the following (numbers in parantheses refer to the evaluation questions suggested above):

1. A Copy of the Course Syllabus or a brief description of the course and how the writing component was integrated into the course. (Deals with question 1)
2. Examples of handouts given to students to describe writing assignments or a brief description of the types of assignments used. (Deals with question 1)
3. A brief assessment of the impact the writing component had on student writing in this course. (Deals with question 4)
4. What are your overall reactions to the writing component of the course (eg. is it worth pursuing, what could be done to make it better or easier, what resources does such a class require, etc.)? (Deals with question 2 and 3)

### A Possible TA format

Another rich source of information would be the TAs. They could be asked to respond to item 4 of the instructor list.

### A Possible Student Format

Students could be asked the following questions on the Course Instructor Survey or other end of the semester evaluation:

1. To what extent have your writing skills improved as a function of the writing component of this class? (Deals with question 4)
2. What has been your reaction to the writing component of this class? (Deals with question 2)

Other Resources Format (for the CTE, the Library, the LSC, etc.)

Agencies contributing to the overall writing program could be asked to provide a brief description of the type and extent of their involvement with substantial writing courses and faculty. (Deals with question 3)

### A Possible Format for College Writing Committees

College Writing Committees could annually update the Dean's records with the following:

1. A list of all College Writing Committee members with the chairman highlighted (not directed at any specific question, just to recognize those folks and identify additional sources of information, if necessary)
2. A list of all courses certified that year (so we can go back and get enrollment data, etc. for question 1)
3. A brief description of the Committee's procedure for certifying courses (Deals with question 5)
4. A list of Committee activities, including meetings, workshops, major decisions, memos, etc. (Deals with question 6)