WRITING, ASSESSMENT, AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE DISCIPLINES

JONATHAN MONROE

Cornell University, USA

Abstract. The writing program at Cornell University involves professors from across the disciplines teaching writing courses at each level of students' undergraduate careers. This program undertook an assessment of its effectiveness in the years 2002-2004. The process of creating and carrying out an assessment developed by professors involved in the program is reported, and the assessment results are presented. These results lead the writer to argue for the assessment process itself as a key experience in developing the disciplinary awareness of participating professors, who became involved in deep questioning of what 'good' student writing might be in higher education, and in what relationship to the language practices of each discipline. The assessment project's challenges and benefits support the value of assessment of students' work across disciplines as fundamentally owned by each discipline.

Key words: assessment, undergraduate writing, writing in the disciplines, writing quality, disciplinary awareness

Dutch
[Translation Tanja Janssen]
Samenvatting. Bij het schrijfprogramma aan de Cornell Universiteit zijn docenten uit verschillende disciplines betrokken. Er worden schrijfcursussen gegeven op ieder niveau. Het schrijfprogramma werd in de jaren 2002-2004 geëvalueerd op effectiviteit. Het proces van het opzetten en uitvoeren van de evaluatie door de docenten die bij het schrijfprogramma betrokken waren, wordt hier gerapporteerd, en de resultaten van de evaluatie worden gepresenteerd. Deze resultaten zijn voor de schrijver aanleiding om te pleiten voor het evaluatieproces zelf als een essentiële ervaring voor het ontwikkelen van vakbewustzijn bij de betrokken docenten, die zich de vraag gingen stellen wat 'goed' schrijven van studenten in het hoger onderwijs nu eigenlijk is, en hoe het gerelateerd is aan de taalpraktijken binnen iedere discipline. De voordelen en uitdagingen die het evaluatieproject bood, vormen een ondersteuning van de waarde van het evalueren en beoordelen van het werk van studenten over de disciplines heen, voor ieder vakgebied.
Trefwoorden: evaluatie, beoordeling, schrijven van studenten in het hoger onderwijs, schrijven in de vakgebieden, schrijfkwaliteit, vakbewustzijn.

Correspondence concerning this article should be directed to Jonathan Monroe, John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines Cornell University, Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 USA. Electronic mail may be sent to Jbm3@cornell.edu.

French
[Translation Christiane Donahue]

Resumé. Le programme d'initiation à l'écrit universitaire de Cornell implique des professeurs de toutes disciplines dispensant des cours d'écriture à chaque niveau du cursus universitaire. Ce programme a entrepris une évaluation de son efficacité pendant les années 2002-2004. Le processus de création et de réalisation de cette évaluation, développée par les professeurs enseignant dans le programme, est décrit ici, et les résultats de l'évaluation sont présentés. Ces résultats mènent l'auteur a soutenir l'argument que le processus d'évaluation est lui-même une expérience-clef dans le développement de la conscience disciplinaire des professeurs qui y participent, parce qu'ils se sont engagés dans un questionnement profond de ce que l'écrit « réussi » pourrait être à l'université, et quelle relation il entretiendrait avec les pratiques langagières de chaque discipline. Le projet d'évaluation accrédite l'idée que l'évaluation des écrits d'étudiants à travers les disciplines est fondamentalement la propriété de chaque discipline.

Italian
[Translated by Francesco Caviglia]

Abstract. Il programma di scrittura alla Cornell University prevede che professori provenienti da varie discipline tengano corsi di scrittura ad ogni livello del percorso di laurea di I livello. Questo programma è stato sottoposto a una valutazione dell'efficacia negli anni 2002-2004. L'articolo riferisce del processo di creazione e realizzazione della valutazione da parte dei professori coinvolti nel programma, e ne presenta i risultati. I risultati sono stati tali da indurre chi scrive a sostenere che il processo stesso di valutazione è stata un'esperienza chiave per sviluppare la consapevolezza disciplinare da parte dei professori partecipanti, che sono stati coinvolti in interrogativi profondi su che cosa possa essere una 'buona' scrittura da studente universitario, e in quale relazione tale scrittura si trovi ad essere rispetto alle pratiche linguistiche di ciascuna disciplina. Le difficoltà e i benefici emersi dal progetto di valutazione suggeriscono che la valutazione del lavoro degli studenti in situazioni interdisciplinari debba essere di regola appannaggio di ogni singola disciplina.

Parole chiave: valutazione, scrittura nel percorso di laurea di I livello scrittura nelle discipline, qualità della scrittura, consapevolezza disciplinare

Polish
[Translated by Elżbieta Awramiuk]

Streszczenie. Program pisania na Uniwersytecie Cornella zaangażował profesorów z różnych dyscyplin uczących pisania na różnych poziomach studiów przedmagisterskich. Program ten miał na celu ocenę efektywności nauki pisania w latach 2002-2004. Relacjonujemy rozwijany przez profesorów zaangażowanych w program proces tworzenia i oceniania oraz prezentujemy rezultaty oceny. Rezultaty pozwalają stwierdzić, że proces oceniania jest kluczowy w rozwijaniu świadomości dyscypliny uczestniczących w nim profesorów, którzy byli głęboko zaangażowani w dociekania, jakie może być pisanie 'dobrego' studenta w szkole wyższej i jaka jest relacja do praktyki językowej w każdej dyscyplinie. Wyzwania i korzyści projektu oceniania wspierają twierdzenie, że wartość oceniania pracy studentów w różnych dyscyplinach jest specyficzna dla każdej z nich.

Słowa-klucze: ocenianie, pisanie na poziomie przedmagisterskim, pisanie przedmiotowe, jakość pisania, świadomość przedmiotu

Portuguese
[Translation Paulo Feytor Pinto].

Resumo. O programa de escrita da Universidade Cornell implica professores de todas as disciplinas em cursos de ensino da escrita em todos os níveis do percurso académico dos estudantes. Este programa encetou uma avaliação da sua eficácia nos anos 2002-04. O processo de criação e implementação da avaliação desenvolvida pelos professores no programa e os resultados dessa avaliação são apresentados neste texto. Estes resultados levaram o autor a considerar o próprio processo de avaliação uma experiência-chave no desenvolvimento da consciência disciplinar dos professores intervenientes que se empenharam no questionamento daquilo que se considera ser a 'boa' escrita de estudantes do ensino superior e da sua relação com as práticas linguísticas de cada disciplina. Os desafios e benefícios do projecto de avaliação destacam a importância da avaliação do trabalho dos estudantes em todas as disciplinas e a sua ancoragem em cada disciplina.

Palavras-chave: avaliação, escrita académica, escrita nas disciplinas, qualidade da escrita, consciência disciplinar

Spanish
[Translation Ingrid Marquez]
Resumen. El programa de redacción de Cornell University cuenta con profesores de diferentes discipli-nas que enseñan la materia en cada nivel de los estudios de licenciatura del estudiante. Durante los años 2002-2004, se evaluó la eficacia del programa. Se reporta sobre el proceso de crear los parámetros de la evaluación y ponerla en práctica y cómo fue desarrollado por profesores involucrados en el programa; también se presentan los resultados de la evaluación. Llevan al escritor a la proposición de que el proceso de evaluación en sí es una experiencia clave que desarrolla la conciencia disciplinaria de los profesores participantes; éstos se metieron profundamente a la cuestión de determinar qué era una 'buena' redacción estudiantil en la educación superior, y cómo se relacionan las prácticas lingüísticas de cada disciplina en este contexto. Los retos y beneficios del projecto de evaluación señalan el valor que tiene el analizar el empeño de un estudiante desde el punto de vista de las características propias de cada disciplina.

Palabras clave: evaluación, redacción a nivel licenciatura, redacción en las disciplinas, calidad de escri-tura, conciencia disciplinaria.

1.   EVALUATING ('ASSESSING') STUDENT WRITING IN THE UNITED STATES CONTEXT

Concerns over the quality of student writing in the United States have prompted increasing interest over the past decade in more objective measures to evaluate how improvement in writing occurs at all levels of instruction, from kindergarten through high school ('K-12'), as well as at the university level. Responding to a perceived decline in writing standards from anxious parents, state legislators, and other quar-ters, a growing industry of writing 'experts' has arisen to clarify what good writing looks like, how it can be evaluated, and what approaches to writing instruction are most likely to yield improvement. While the basic questions the so-called 'writing assessment' movement asks could scarcely be more fundamental – How do we know when students are writing well? How can we help them get better? – convinc-ing answers to these questions have proven elusive. Educators and policy makers have found it difficult to build accountability into K-12 as well as university educa-tion in ways that would demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the massive financial investments put into writing instruction are indeed worthwhile and accom-plishing what they seek to accomplish.

Given these concerns within the United States context, what are the implications for higher education in particular of the current demand for 'objective' evaluation of student writing known as 'assessment'? Four-year colleges and universities continue to fuel its momentum even as many professors and administrators remain skeptical about its potential benefits and consequences. What 'outcomes' and 'products' are being assessed and what is it about the idea, practice, culture, and, we must surely also say, the *institution* and *business* of assessment that elicits extremes of cowed compliance and vehement resistance? Why have legislators and administrators de-voted so much time and attention, and in many cases precious financial resources that might be used for other purposes, to the pursuit of assessment agendas often greeted less than warmly by those who agree, as we say, to be 'subjected' to them.

Why assess? And for whom? What are the contexts, assumptions, features, goals, constraints, limitations, and scope of assessment? From where does it derive its authority? Whose purposes does it serve? What's the relationship between the politics of assessment and assessment as production of knowledge? Who will assess the value of assessment itself *as a discipline*?

The approach to writing instruction in higher education in the United States that has come to be called 'Composition' – sometimes now referred to as the 'Comp Industry' – is the academic field or discipline that has developed over the past several decades to address the neglect of writing practices and improvement in writing, as such, across all academic disciplines. While students in European countries tend to enter university already specialized in an area they wish to pursue over a three-year period – where 'writing' is often understood as a rather mechanical 'skill' they should already have acquired before pursuing the academic discipline they have come to university to study – the four-year time-to-degree typical of American university undergraduate education allows an additional year for students to pursue what are characteristically called 'general education' courses or 'distribution requirements' – a limited number of courses required of all students across a range of subject areas and disciplines – which in fact require a range of writing capabilities. As a way of addressing the writing needs of first-year university students in a more 'general' way, American four-year colleges and universities have characteristically relied on what tends to be called the 'Comp 101' model, that is, a single course required of all first-year students, generally one taught by advanced-degree students in a university English Department with a fairly large number of students per class (often 30 or more). The unrealizable goal of such courses (the staffing of which is typically driven by particular financial pressures) is to improve student writing, as it were, 'once and for all.' This one-size-fits-all approach to writing instruction – which has remained the national norm and in the current context has created the desire for an equally one-size-fits-all procedure of evaluation ('assessment') – is exactly the approach Cornell University's College of Arts and Sciences and the university as whole rejected as early as 1966 in favor of a more discipline-specific way of conceiving writing instruction.

2.   EVALUATING WRITING IN DISCIPLINARY CONTEXTS: CORNELL UNIVERSITY AND THE JOHN S. KNIGHT INSTITUTE FOR WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

While Cornell undergraduates typically pursue a four-year Bachelor's degree – in contrast to the three-year time-to-degree in European countries – entering students are generally no more or less likely than their counterparts at the more than 2500 other four-year colleges and universities throughout the United States to have decided their 'major' (principal area of specialization) by the beginning of their first or even their second year. In contrast to their undergraduate peers elsewhere within the United States, however, Cornell students by deliberate design do not have the option of taking a general 'Comp 101' writing course of the kind still required at the vast majority of American colleges and universities. Instead, they are required to take

what Cornell calls 'First-year Writing Seminars,' courses with a limited enrollment of 17 students each that teach writing through course materials that are as discipline-specific as those of any other course they will take during the remainder of their undergraduate careers. To evaluate ('assess') 'improvement' in this context clearly demands a much more nuanced procedure than one that might seem adequate for a 'Comp 101' approach to writing instruction, a procedure that would have at its core instead a profound respect for the specificity, diversity, alterity, and historicity of writing practices within and across many disciplines. Such a procedure would regard with the utmost skepticism any attempt by a cadre of outside evaluators ('assessors') with a 'general' expertise in 'writing assessment' – we might say a 'Comp 101' kind of expertise – to evaluate writing improvement in discipline-specific writing practices in discipline-specific contexts.

The question of assessment is, first and foremost, a question of value. Within higher education, where value tends to be located in and through the disciplines, questions of assessment and value are at their core questions of disciplinarity and disciplinary affiliation. Given the range of disciplinary communities and discourses that make a university such as Cornell what it is, no discipline may be said to have a monopoly on values, no discipline holds a trump card over any other in the pursuit of whatever will be called 'assessment.' As long as a discipline has a place and holds its own within the academy, the discipline's very existence affirms the institution's assessment that the authority for evaluating the production of knowledge within any given discipline resides within that discipline. From a disciplinary perspective then, neither the theory nor the practice of assessment offers a refuge from questions of disciplinary autonomy and authority.

In undertaking the Study of Student Writing at Cornell that provides the focus and occasion of the present article, Cornell's John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines understood that issues of assessment, however neutrally or 'objectively' presented, are bound up inextricably with the production of knowledge within, between, and among the disciplines. Given this understanding, we asked, who is granted the right to take or to assume – to whom is it given to pursue – the power to assess, why and for what purposes? In keeping with Cornell's decision to distribute the privilege and responsibility for writing instruction to professors across the disciplines, the Institute developed its approach to assessment in collaboration with a range of professors with permanent university positions, as well as advanced-degree students from participating fields, serving as 'participant-observers' (the methodological influence of the discipline of anthropology here is evident, though the term resonates as well with disciplines as diverse as physics and literary criticism), who together constitute an important and representative sample of the corps of professors teaching courses administered by the Institute.

In developing for the Study what the assessment industry has come to call an assessment 'instrument,' the Institute sought to avoid or at least minimize the kinds of predictable resistance among university professors – generally manifest through non-cooperation – to which externally-mandated assessment projects tend to give rise. To succeed in this way, we understood, would involve an approach subtle and sensitive enough to do justice to the distinctive emphasis on discipline-specific writing and learning that has been at the core of Cornell's approach for the past several

decades, during which time Cornell has distinguished itself especially through its extraordinary commitment of junior- and senior-level professors from an ever-expanding range of disciplines to the teaching of writing in First-Year Writing Seminars and writing-intensive courses at all levels of the curriculum. It is this commitment above all that has established Cornell as a national leader – as recognized, for example, by *Time* and *The Princeton Review*'s naming of Cornell as their 'private research university of the year' in 2001 based on the work of the Knight Institute – in the development of what has come to be called a 'writing-across-the-curriculum' (WAC) or, as we prefer to call it at Cornell, a 'writing-in-the-disciplines' (WID) approach. In keeping with this tradition and Cornell's commitment to professorial ownership of teaching writing and writing assessment, our assessment of writing at Cornell in Institute-administered courses focused on close collaboration with two dozen Cornell professors, with additional input as well from a dozen graduate student teachers and teaching assistants, representing some two dozen fields in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences:

First-Year Writing Seminars:

- American Indian Studies
- Anthropology
- City and Regional Planning
- Comparative Literature
- English
- Government
- History
- Linguistics
- Medieval Studies
- Philosophy
- Romance Studies
- Science and Technology Studies

Writing in the Majors

- Applied Economics and Management
- Biology/Neurobiology and Behavior
- Government
- Mathematics
- Natural Resources
- Sociology

Sophomore Seminars

- Anthropology/Asian American Studies
- Applied Engineering & Mechanics

- Art
- Dance
- Film Studies
- Government
- Psychology/Cognitive Studies

In assessing the value(s) of a discipline-specific approach to writing and writing instruction in each of these fields through three key collection methods – student evaluations, portfolios/rubric sessions, and self-reflection by participating professors – we followed Cornell's long-standing conviction that expertise concerning what counts as good or effective writing resides where writing in the university takes place, within particular disciplinary contexts and communities of practice.[1] The underlying premise of the Study is thus that the most effective evaluation of student writing is likely to focus less on a policing of student 'outputs' than on intra- and interdisciplinary collaboration among participating professors, the commitment to writing as a shared intellectual enterprise that has been a hallmark of Cornell's approach to writing instruction for over four decades.

In exploring undergraduate writing at Cornell – whether in FWSs or in the upper-division writing-intensive courses administered through the Sophomore Seminar Program and Writing in the Majors, each of which has a distinctive purpose and role within the curriculum – our goal in working with professors from participating disciplines has been to engage questions of writing and disciplinarity at the highest levels of reflection. Through the Institute's hosting of the 1999 national Writing across the Curriculum conference, which brought over 400 participants to the Cornell campus, and especially for the past eight years through the Institute's Consortium for Writing in the Disciplines, Cornell and the Knight Institute have exercised a remarkable influence in this regard over the past decade especially, both nationally and internationally, on cultures of writing and writing instruction in higher education. Cornell's far-reaching decision to decenter first-year writing instruction from its traditional, exclusive home in the Department of English initially to nine disciplines in the humanities, the First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS) Program, has continued to flourish and refine itself over the past several decades and remains the cornerstone of the writing-in-the-disciplines approach that gives shape to the writing of all Cornell undergraduates. Since 1997, through our annual Consortium held each third week in June on the Cornell campus, the Knight Institute has worked with teams of professors and administrators from several dozen universities in the United States, including such schools as Duke, Princeton, Rice, and the University of Michigan, as well as universities from Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. The Institute will continue to build on these efforts through expanded conversations on the subject of assessment both internally, with participating departments at Cornell, and externally, with other four-year colleges and universities throughout the nation and abroad. Further developing what we understand to be an ongoing project of assessment in years to come, which will fig-

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[1] Appendix B details the questions faculty considered and the process followed as they developed rubrics, reviewed portfolios, and reflected on their assessment work.

ure prominently at the Consortium as well as, in 2006, in our hosting of the Ivy Consortium for Directors of Writing programs, we hope to continue to raise the level of awareness concerning questions of writing and disciplinarity, of expectations professors have both of their own writing and of the writing they demand from their students. In continuing our ongoing efforts to evaluate and effectively cultivate the Institute's mission, one thing especially has become clear: given the need to become aware, in the most capacious sense, of the values, methods, and activities of each discipline, including its writing practices, it is vital to respect, in however questioning a fashion, *a discipline's right to represent itself to itself and to others.* (See the summary of the Study findings, Appendix D)

3.   DISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE AND THE CORNELL STUDY OF STUDENT WRITING

In 'Playing Devil's Advocate: Evaluating the Literature of the WAC/WID Movement,' a provocative recent article by Robert Oschner and Judy Fowler (2004), two self-identified 'professional teachers of writing' at the University of Maryland Baltimore County and Fayetteville State University, respectively, the authors usefully observe that '...the case for student achievement in WAC/WID programs, which should become the strongest case for the movement's theory, remains more asserted than demonstrated' (p. 128). Acknowledging that 'no assessment offers incontrovertible evidence and that measuring student learning can be a vexing challenge' (p. 131), they call for a 'careful assessment of existing practices,' understanding that such a project requires 'a major research effort to insure accuracy of results...' In taking up this challenge, in part as a continuation of the wide-ranging discipline-specific reflections on writing and writing instruction at Cornell collected in *Writing and Revising the Disciplines* and *Local Knowledges, Local Practices: Writing in the Disciplines at Cornell*, the aims and investments of the Knight Institute's approach to assessing student writing differ decisively from those of Oschner and Fowler. Apart from what might be called the 'cosmetics' of whatever is called writing, in the view of participating Cornell professors, as one of our central findings makes clear, *the quality of writing and the quality of intellectual inquiry are inseparable from each other.* An important corollary finding, which clearly confirms in our professors' eyes the value of Cornell's approach, is that *writing and intellectual achievement are most meaningfully evaluated by teacher-scholars who are themselves located within the particular fields in which specific acts and instances of writing are situated.* Cornell's approach represents in this sense, as we understand it, a double challenge in the recent history of writing instruction within higher education:

- to the supposed 'professionalization' of writing as an independent discipline unto itself – which risks both a) spurious claims to 'expertise' in various forms of discipline-specific writing and b) the isolation and marginalization of writing from the university's wide-ranging disciplinary concerns; and
- to the split between 'research' and 'pedagogy' within the academy – and the exploitation of 'teachers of writing,' especially in general first-year writing courses staffed by temporary hires – that has given rise to the expansion of this

form of specialization (presenting itself as key to a generalized mastery of 'writing'), particularly in the field of Composition/Rhetoric which 'writing experts' such as Oschner and Fowler claim as their own.

While our Study confirms the view of the 'rhetoric and composition community at large,' as Oschner and Fowler put it, 'that writing is positively correlated to – and generally a cause of – disciplinary thinking, which is, by nature, higher-order thinking and the acquisition of disciplinary rhetoric (Geisler, 1994; Elbow & Sorcinelli, 1997) (2004: 127), our methodology affirms that logic by explicitly entrusting assessment of writing in the disciplines at all levels of the curriculum to the professors hired by the university to teach and pursue research in those disciplines, in this case with support and assistance from the Knight Institute made possible in large measure by the Knight Foundation.

The question of expertise in writing assessment, then, extends well beyond WAC/WID to questions of 'expertise' generally, including the expertise of 'writing professionals.' Who can legitimately lay claim to being a writing professional, from which disciplinary perspective(s), and who will assess the assessors? It is because assessment is a question of values that it is at its core such a difficult question. At the core of our ongoing efforts to engage this difficulty is the conviction that disciplines deserve to be, by virtue of their institutional existence, by definition, the arbiters of the value(s), including the values of writing, in their own fields. From an institutional perspective, assessment is a matter of entrusting professors in their various disciplines to do their jobs and adjudicate evaluations among themselves within those disciplinary contexts. At Cornell, this trust extends to and encompasses, with support from the Institute, the teaching of writing in First-Year Writing Seminars as well as the writing-to-learn approaches of the Sophomore Seminar and Writing in the Majors programs. As a recent article in the American Association of Colleges and Universities publication *Peer Review* puts it:

> Faculty [Professors] cannot simply be told that assessment is important, meaningful, and full of insight for their teaching. When they view assessment as the responsibility of 'someone else,' a responsibility prompted by external forces and one with little relevance to their pedagogical roles, they usually resist involvement. While most faculty [professors] readily acknowledge that assessment is important for their institutions, they seldom find individual significance in assessment work aside from what they conduct in their classrooms related to their own courses. ('Creating Learner-Centered Assessment: A Faculty [Professor]-Driven Process,' 2004: 12).

Accordingly, in keeping with positions put forward in Brian Huot's (Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning, Robert Broad's What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing, and Norbert Ellis's On a Scale: A Social History of Writing Assessment in America (2005), as well as in the discipline-specific assessment practices carried out at such schools as the University of Dayton, Iowa State University (AgComm), North Carolina State University, George Mason University, and Washington State University, the Institute sought to develop an approach that would be, in Ellis's words, 'site based, locally controlled, context sensitive, rhetorically centered, and accessible' (p. 294). Attempting to balance questions of process as well as results, qualitative as well as quantitative concerns, we hoped as well to encourage a shared understanding of the disciplinary per-

spectives and discourse communities that inform the range and quality of student writing within the academy at every turn.

In an age of lists and numbers, of data sets and encoded logic, it should come as no surprise that higher education has attempted to accommodate hierarchical models of corporate efficiency through the development of 'rubrics,' lists of features designed to measure successful outcomes and practices. Having begun, accordingly, with the goal of creating rubrics of assessment that might prove valuable across the many disciplines, departments, and fields affiliated with the Institute, the Study yet reveals, as one of its central findings, that *the value of rubrics themselves as a means of a general assessment, even of discipline-specific writing practices, is highly questionable.* Whether discipline-specific or cross-disciplinary, such rubrics tend to offer a relatively superficial means for understanding the fundamental goals of disciplinary work, as well as differences both within and between and among disciplines. A fundamental implication of the varying perspectives professors from different disciplines bring to the issue of assessment is that the value(s) of writing within a discipline depend on that discipline's relative position in the *hierarchy of values* implicitly or explicitly in play within the university, as well as in the broader culture beyond the university, as for example in the relative importance attributed to disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Whether 'hard' or 'soft,' 'quantitative' or 'qualitative,' assessment cannot finally take refuge in a 'neutral' position in pursuit of its 'mission' (a term charged with resonances of speech genres as diverse as the religious, the militant, the instrumental, and the mystical). Like all other disciplines, the discipline of assessment carries within itself its own histories, ruptures, impasses, complications, corrections, problems, interests, investments, currencies, withdrawals (the last three terms drawing again on the speech genre of economics). If the greatest danger of submitting to the demands of the discipline of assessment in particular is of allowing one field's disciplinary values to be compromised by another that regards itself as superior, in a position to judge all others, the most legitimate objection to this submission would perhaps be that one should avoid confusing a particular knowledge and power with a universal, omniscient position. The 'object,' as we say, of an assessment, should thus claim for itself in every case the right at all times to articulate and pose its own questions, those it takes to be the most important and potentially instructive to deepen and advance its own interests. Resolute resistance to a certain objectification of the work of a discipline, especially one that insists on 'outcomes' or 'products' as the true 'business of assessment,' is necessary to ensure a certain salutary autonomy on the part of all disciplines, as of the university itself.

4.   ENLARGING THE FRAME(S) OF ASSESSMENT: INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY, DISCIPLINARY AUTONOMY, AND THE AUTHORITY OF DISCIPLINES

Assessment of what has come to be called 'writing in the disciplines' – in large measure through the leading role Cornell and the Knight Institute have played nationally and internationally over the past several decades in developing discipline-

specific approaches to writing – risks being caught in a deep contradiction. If professors from the various disciplines are asked to teach writing in those disciplines, as they are and do in extraordinary fashion in Cornell, if their autonomy in approaching writing from their particular disciplinary perspectives is to be respected as it would be in other courses they teach within their disciplines, it makes little sense to ask those same professors to cede authority for assessing the discipline-specific writing produced in their courses to 'writing experts' located outside their disciplines who lack the necessary training, acculturation, and disciplinary expertise to determine what counts as good writing in the field(s) in question.

While the Institute cares about and devotes explicit attention to questions of grammar, mechanics, and style – issues we understand to be important and have long addressed in our FWS evaluation form[2] – our primary interest in the present Study has been with higher order concerns, in particular questions pertaining to the discipline-specific approach to the teaching of writing and writing to learn which has been at the core of Cornell's approach for the past four decades. Does a diversity of writing practices strengthen or weaken a discipline within broader institutional contexts understood as relations of power/regimes of truth? Under what circumstances or conditions is the provisionality of truth (in writing) knowable as such? How measurable, from an institutional perspective, is the power of internal fracturing within disciplines, or put more optimistically, of a multiplicity of perspectives within disciplines (as e.g. within the humanities compared to the sciences)? How consequential is such fracturing or multiplicity for a discipline's writing practices? Does disciplinary heterogeneity or homogeneity enhance or diminish a field's writing practices and by extension its intra-institutional presence and power? Are 'disadvantaged' disciplines and their writing practices as a rule (or are there only exceptions) more heterogeneous or homogeneous? What writing standards should higher education seek to encourage within and across the disciplines and who will determine what these should look like, include, and exclude?

On the basis of the evidence assembled in the Cornell Study, it is possible to distinguish three broad types of fields we might call, respectively, with important implications for writing norms and assessment in each, 'satisfied,' 'conflicted,' and 'troubled.' Perhaps not surprisingly, these three broad types accord with a general sense among professors participating in our Study of the hierarchy of disciplinary values in play within the contemporary university that favors the 'hard' knowledge of the sciences over the 'soft' knowledge of the humanities, with the social sciences situated uncomfortably, ambivalently, and ambiguously in between, sometimes tending in one, sometimes in the other direction. Given the almost exclusive emphasis on the humanities and social sciences in Cornell's First-Year Writing Seminars, where the divide between 'research' and 'teaching' might be assumed to be widest, as it is generally in first-year courses at most four-year colleges and universities, it is especially noteworthy that roughly 50 junior- and senior-level professors from some thirty departments teach FWSs each year. Whatever the 'outcomes' of these courses with respect to writing – and our findings are consistently positive in this regard –

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[2] Appendix A presents the FWS evaluation questions and Appendix C provides a thorough review of the FWS evaluation results.

this exceptional investment of professors' time in the teaching of first-year disci-
pline-specific writing courses is a distinction of which Cornell has reason to feel
considerable pride. The Study demonstrates the importance of encouraging an in-
creased appreciation of this diversity to appreciate and address more fully the chal-
lenges students face in learning to write effectively across a range of disciplines that
tend not to rank as high as others in the disciplinary hierarchy of the contemporary
university.

Where First-Year Writing Seminars draw almost exclusively on the humanities
and the social sciences, and the Sophomore Seminar Program seeks a balance of
courses in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, Writing in the Ma-
jors courses tend by design to move to the other end of the spectrum, with funding
and support almost exclusively in the social and natural sciences. Given this three-
pronged approach, it is instructive and again not surprising that WIM professors in
the natural and social sciences (that is to say virtually all WIM professors) demon-
strate considerably less diversity in the kinds of writing they ask of their students
and a much stronger sense of a hierarchy of writing practices than their counterparts
in the humanities, whose student papers routinely violated the norms of their own
(natural and social science) disciplines. While professors in the humanities tend to
value writing that is deliberately 'troubling,' professors in the sciences may tend to
regard such writing, in all its diversity, as merely troubled, 'baffling,' as one partici-
pant put it, 'a confusing, self-contradictory mess to an outsider.' Thus, where the
two biologists in our Study agree with remarkable consistency in describing a very
limited range and hierarchy of kinds of science writing, and one of the two sociolo-
gists vehemently aligns his field with the pursuit of 'truth' he identifies with the
natural sciences as compared (and valued over) the 'rhetoric' of the humanities, an
anthropologist inclined more to the 'soft,' 'self-reflexive' knowledge of the humani-
ties understands the production of knowledge in her field in particular, but also more
generally, as a 'social construction.' Perhaps most interestingly and symptomati-
cally, while the sociologist leans more toward science, and the anthropologist more
toward the humanities, both worry explicitly about the survival of their disciplines
within the contemporary academy, the one anxiously asserting the value of a 'hard'
knowledge approach to writing and the production of knowledge as the best hope for
the discipline, the other asserting less confidently the value of an alterity and diver-
sity of writing and knowledge production she perceives as threatened.

As these examples suggest, the institutional framing of discipline-specific writ-
ing practices, disciplinary self-confidence (or lack thereof), a sense of the value
placed on the writing of a particular field, and perceptions of disciplinary authority
within the institutional hierarchy are of considerable importance in assessing stan-
dards of writing and student achievement in writing across the disciplines. Perceived
'values' of writing are bound up with questions of relative power within the institu-
tion, where self-critique not incidentally is most pronounced as a feature of the so-
cial science (Anthropology, rather than Sociology or Psychology) most self-
consciously aligned with the 'soft' knowledge produced by/in the humanities. Self-
critical, self-reflexive forms of writing register in this sense as perhaps the only
available refuge – albeit suspect from the scientist's data-oriented perspective – for
establishing disciplinary legitimacy. The suspicion lies near that the high value

placed on such forms of writing in the humanities and the 'soft' social sciences – and the low value accorded them in the 'hard' natural sciences – is symptomatic of the relative powerlessness of the humanities and the social sciences and the comparative uncertainty of the perceived institutional and broader cultural value of their work compared to the more uniform, predictable forms of knowledge/writing produced by their colleagues in such 'hard' knowledge fields as Biology and Psychology/Cognitive Studies, whose value to the institution is concretely affirmed through increasing tangible support from both universities and private and public granting agencies. It is interesting to observe, as a footnote in this regard, that the most insistent emphasis on writing as process and 'conversation' among our WIM and SSP participants, apart from the anthropologist, came from the Study's only mathematician, i.e. from a representative of the field more than any other one might associate with the 'hard' certainty of quantitative knowledge.

At all levels of the curriculum, our professors tend to agree that using rubrics to evaluate student writing turns out to be so vague as to be all but useless, yielding unexamined platitudes masquerading as universal values. Only discipline-specific thinking provides meaningful definition, even if that meaning involves a certain disciplinary self-blinding. Disciplinary blindness and disciplinary insight appear, in this sense, to be mutually constitutive. Disciplines need each other, but not so much to complete or complement each other as to give a sense of the limits of each discipline's production of knowledge, a site on the cognitive map to help determine where one is in relation to where one is not. Both in regard to professional writing within their particular fields and student writing produced in their classes, it would be an understatement to say that assessments of quality differ significantly when reading across fields. Thus, an anthropologist from the SSW/WIM portion of the Study writes: 'Reading the first two essays, I was convinced the disciplinary divide was too great for me to evaluate the writing... I couldn't evaluate the papers because I lacked the expertise to judge whether their summaries of theories... were correct.' What is surprising to someone who has worked for some years with writing in the disciplines is perhaps less the emergence of such an awareness of disciplinary obstacles to evaluation as the unexamined assumptions of commonality which, through cross-disciplinary conversation and evaluation of student writing produced in each other's courses, begin to come undone. While certain criteria emerge with some frequency (e.g., organization, coherence, purposiveness), it becomes increasingly clear that what is meant by these terms in each field's specific context – in other words what might be argued to be of greatest interest within particular fields – varies considerably, even to the point of antithetical understandings. What is 'clear' – or at least of clear importance – to a mathematician or a biologist can turn out to be virtually by definition unclear to an anthropologist or professor of literary and cultural studies. What a psychologist considers to be a 'good' poem – quite possibly of questionable relevance and value to the production of what colleagues in the field might consider to be 'hard' psychological knowledge, however interdisciplinarily relevant he considers the poem to his own practices as a cognitive scientist – may appear dated and utterly conventional to someone trained in contemporary poetry.

The issue of 'clarity' itself, for example, which might appear to be a common denominator for all criteria one might want to adduce as irreducible to good writing

across all fields, may look quite different from different disciplinary vantage points. What is clear from the perspective of one field looks like the jargon it is – and may need to be – to another. Why then, we might ask, has jargon – which in many ways might be regarded as constitutive of a particular field's self-understanding, its 'fluency' – come to have such a bad name? One plausible answer to this question lies in the issue of (cross-) disciplinary hierarchies and their role in establishing, maintaining, and reproducing relative institutional privilege and prestige. Another has to do with the work ('legitimate' or 'illegitimate') jargon performs within these regimes of intellectual power both within and across disciplines. Language that accelerates the work of the discipline from within may tend to bring reading to a halt for the 'outside' reader. To condemn this effect is either to condemn the way disciplines work or to ask that the discipline revise a self-understanding perceived as overly hermetic in the name of a broader interdisciplinary appeal. The potential benefits or value of such an appeal or demand for disciplinary transparency – both within and beyond the discipline – are not necessarily self-evident and may be called into question as much as what registers with the non-specialist as indifference to the reader, unnecessary resistance, or willful obscurity.

Is the familiar distinction then in this sense between 'teaching writing' and 'writing to learn' a distinction without a difference? How much does the distinction depend on the individual instructor within a field? Is it an illusion to imagine students may be asked, within a disciplinary context, to write effectively in ways that are not informed by the discipline, or might this depend on individual instructors, e.g. those with a more interdisciplinary or putatively disciplinarily transcendent or non- or anti-disciplinary or subversively multi-disciplinary approach (perhaps in fact non-disciplinarily explicit or disciplinarily self-occluding or self-obfuscating)? The question is always which one(s), and for what purposes. But is this a question only for writing in what are commonly called the humanities, for writing as well in the social sciences, the natural sciences, for all three? In contrast, for example, to a male colleague in the same field who worries about the prominence in sociological writing of 'rhetoric' over 'truth,' a female sociologist participating in the Study worries over the perception among her colleagues that the kind of group work she favors will be considered 'less serious or rigorous writing' than the usual kinds of individual writing they require: 'it is hard to see how we could share an assessment rubric,' she writes, 'with very different educational objectives.' This colleague's disciplinary truth, and approach to writing, turn out to be gendered in ways that challenge the presumption of a disinterested truth available to the lone researcher or student writer.

Taken together, the relative uniformity and predictability of writing practices represented among WIM professors owing to their predominant location in the sciences, like the rich diversity and range of writing practices in First-Year Writing Seminars owing to their location in the humanities and social sciences, and the range of writing practices extending to both ends of the spectrum in Sophomore Seminars located along the continuum in all three broad subject areas, confirms our initial hypothesis about the importance of developing a 'site sensitive' approach that challenges the superficiality of more general forms of assessment. The value of this approach emerged as a point of overwhelming consensus among the Study's partici-

pants, who as a rule came to regard rubrics of even the most conscientious, discipline-specific kind as tending to float above and remain detached from what they most value in their own writing as well as in the writing they ask of their students. While readers in our Study at all levels of the curriculum tended to evaluate most highly papers in their own and related fields, what counts as 'science' clearly holds the greatest prestige and distinction within the current academy, at least at Cornell, with the embattled social sciences next in the hierarchy, intent on pronouncing 'for' science and 'against' the humanities, and the humanities at the bottom of the pile. Where the humanities tends to affirm writing as process, assessment itself as a discipline might be said to align itself most strongly with the sciences in its emphasis on 'outcomes,' overdetermining what it assumes to be of value in this sense from the outset and thus powerfully shaping both procedures and findings, what is found to be of interest and what not, even against what 'we,' depending on our disciplinary perspective, most value.

What emerges perhaps most powerfully from the study is a sense not only of disciplinary specificity, but of disciplinary hierarchies, perceptions of disciplinary value – inseparable from perceptions of writing within and across disciplines – where the values of one discipline make it difficult from an outsider's perspective to appreciate, much less evaluate, what that discipline considers 'weak' or 'strong,' 'convincing' or 'effective.' Not surprisingly, this variability clusters most strongly around the traditional subject areas, the differences between and among the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, where what is considered authoritative from one disciplinary perspective may be considered from another to be lacking credibility or legitimacy. In certain respects, the values of one discipline appear not only to differ from one another, but to be diametrically opposed. Where eloquence is prized in the humanities, for example, it may be regarded as, at best, 'beyond the call of duty' in the sciences or, at worst, perhaps not coincidentally in the social sciences in particular, as a quality evoking deep skepticism. Yet the boundaries between 'truth' and 'rhetoric,' between 'science' and the 'humanities' – with the social sciences positioned uncomfortably in between – and the writing each produces, may be blurrier than sometimes supposed. As Cambridge philosopher of science Peter Lipton has recently written in answering the question posed by the title of his article 'Does the Truth Matter in Science?'

> My conclusion is not straightforward, but then this is philosophy. First, the view that science is in the truth business is natural and attractive. We look to it to tell us how things really are out there, and this attitude is confirmed by the enormous success and progress that science displays. But second, this is not the only way to understand what science achieves. There are other accounts, including those developed by Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, that would affirm the value of science while rejecting fundamental planks of the truth view. And third, when we attempt to settle the question by looking to science's track record, we are frustrated, because the failures of past science do not refute the truth view, neither do the successes of current science establish it. The question remains wide open.' (2005: 183)

While it is important, as K. A. Appiah has argued, to reject the unhelpful and fallacious idea that 'mathematical [and scientific] techniques are intrinsically inimical to humanistic inquiry' (Appiah 2005: 41), and work against the dichotomized 'two

cultures' (humanities vs. science) thinking Smith sees persisting both in the academy and the broader culture (2005: 21), the open-endedness of Middleton's conclusion is a fitting reminder as well of the limitations of more scientistic approaches to assessment that risk contributing to what John Guillory calls 'the larger failure of our educational system and of our society to value the humanities,' rather to inspiring the kind of 'trust in the immanent judgment of disciplinary specialists' (pp. 36-37) that is a defining feature of Cornell's approach to questions of writing in and across the disciplines. Through our present findings, as also through the Study's extensive digital archive of student writing and professor dialogues awaiting future analysis, the Institute has assembled a rich collection of material for meaningful, ongoing assessment for years to come. Perhaps most importantly, in its thoroughgoing commitment to maintain that 'epistemic multiplicity' that is 'crucial for the continued vitality of any intellectual community' (Smith 2005: 25), the profoundly dialogical character of our approach provides a potentially enduring model for professors, advanced-degree students, and undergraduates, as well as others who may be interested from positions and perspectives situated outside the academy, to explore further together the centrality of writing to the work of higher education and the commonality, diversity, and effectiveness of writing within and across the disciplines, a project that is sure to continue to yield inspiring results even as it remains, happily, a work in progress.

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APPENDIX A: JOHN S. KNIGHT INSTITUTE FOR WRITING IN THE DISCI-
PLINES

FWS End-of-Semester Evaluation

This evaluation form was distributed to students taking the writing seminars:

Part I:
The most important reason I chose this seminar:
1) I liked the course description.
2) I thought it would be challenging.
3) My advisor recommended it.
4) It was offered at a time I had open.
5) I could not get into one of my top preferences.

Part II:
For the following questions, choose:
(1=An appropriate amount, 2=Too much, 3=Too little, 4=Far too much, 5=Far too
little)
How much reading did you do?
How much out-of-class writing did you do? (First-Year Writing Seminar guidelines
suggest a minimum of six essays and a maximum of nine.)
How much time was spent learning about writing?
How much time was devoted to learning how to revise essays? (FWS guidelines
suggest that a minimum of three essays go through a process of guided revision.)

Part III:
How much do you agree with the following statements?
(1=Very strongly, 2=Strongly, 3=Somewhat, 4=A little, 5=Not at all)

In class, in conferences, or in paper comments, the teacher emphasized
–choosing the words that best express ideas.
–writing grammatically correct sentences.
–structuring sentences carefully.
–deciding when to use the active voice and when to use the passive.
–developing a strong argument.
–writing well-focused, coherent paragraphs.
–making transitions from one paragraph to the next.
–focusing an essay on a significant problem, hypothesis, thesis, argument, or ide
–supporting claims with pertinent, substantive evidence.
–incorporating and analyzing source material and quotations.
–editing essays to eliminate flaws of grammar, word choice, spelling, and format
–revising essays to enhance interest, clarity, and persuasiveness.
–writing in a style appropriate for a particular purpose.

–writing in a style appropriate for a particular audience.

In this seminar,
–reading and writing assignments formed an understandable progression.
–the level of difficulty of the readings seemed appropriate.
–I learned to read with care in the discipline of the seminar.
–informal/preparatory writing assignments helped me understand the readings and write an essay.
–I had opportunities to confer privately with the teacher.
–the teacher was well-prepared.
–the teacher directed discussions well.
–the teacher treated my writing with respect.
–the teacher graded my papers fairly.
–the teacher returned our papers within a reasonable length of time.
–comments on each returned paper helped me improve the next assignment.
–I felt intellectually stimulated.
–I became a more confident writer.
–I became a more skillful writer.

APPENDIX B: Script for instructor discussions about the seminars

MEETING ONE

First-Year Writing Seminars
September 20 (Graduate Students)
September 27 (Faculty)

Sophomore Seminars and Writing in the Majors
December 11, 2004

Morning
Please address the three following sets of questions. *Be sure that you leave ample time for the third task, which you will need for your work this afternoon.* You may be sharing the rubrics you design for Part III with other SSW participants, so please put these on a separate sheet of paper that we can photocopy.

I. Writing and Disciplinarity I (career autobiography).
What first drew you to your discipline and what is retaining your interest in writing within that discipline as you proceed in your studies? How would you describe your entry and development within the field of writing you represent? How have you envisioned and revisioned your own writing practices over the course of your studies, and how has writing figured more generally within your field? What are (or were?) your field's captivating powers? Have there been times when you found yourself an unwilling, perhaps unwitting captive to these powers? If so, how have you escaped captivity, or haven't you? What in your field have you found most liberating? Are captivity and liberation appropriate metaphors for figuring your relation to the disci-

pline as you understand it? Which other metaphors or categories might you prefer as most defining?

II. Writing and Disciplinarity II (state of the discipline)
Don't feel you have to answer all these questions – respond to those that seem most appropriate to your current situation.
Drawing on your experience so far in your field, how much or how little do you see writing practices within your field as varying in terms of focus, range, style, and mode of presentation? Which approaches, concerns, and strategies might be characterized, in Raymond Williams's helpful terms, as residual, dominant, and emergent? How do you see the discipline as currently positioning itself in relation to other disciplines, and how are these other disciplines perceived? Have the writing practices of your discipline changed (and not) over the course of your studies to date? What continuities and discontinuities do you see? Does a narrative of progress define your sense of writing (and perhaps righting) the discipline? How open is the field of your discipline's writing practices? What constraints – institutional, cultural, economic – currently govern and shape them? Which texts have played the most critical role in your discipline's self-understanding and in your understanding of your own writing practices, as well as in the past, resent, and future of the discipline itself and its cross-disciplinary engagements? Where does writing in your discipline seem headed at present, and where would you like it to go?

III. Writing, Disciplinarity, and Students' Writing
Given your comments above, what do you look for in students' writing in your classes? What characterizes 'good' writing? *Please construct a rubric to use by which you could evaluate students' portfolios.* Would/could such a rubric include a 'rating' scheme? (Note that we ask for a rubric to evaluate the portfolios as a whole – not simply to evaluate individual papers.) Write clearly – we may photocopy this rubric to share in the group meeting.

Afternoon
INSTRUCTIONS
Enter your responses to each portfolio, according to the rubric you developed in the notebook we provided, carefully labeled with the number of the portfolio and with your name.
When you have finished working through the portfolios, please write a response to the following questions:

1. What changes would you make in your rubric now that you have tried to apply it to portfolios? Does it still work for your discipline? Did you find that a different rubric is needed for different disciplines? What would that look like?

2. What changes did you observe in students' writing over the course of a semester? What disappointed or pleased you in the development of student writing?

MEETING TWO
FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINARS
FEBRUARY 21, 2004 (GRADUATE STUDENT AND FACULTY FELLOWS)

Morning
(1) Please write on the following questions:
What features are most important in your own writing? What considerations come first when you revise? Which come last? End up with a list (of about one page?) of features you consider significant, in order of importance (most important first – e.g., 'ground-breaking thesis'; least ('punctuation of works cited list' last).

(2) When you have finished with 1. above, turn to the two portfolios. Your writing task is as follows:
a) Describe your reactions to each portfolio as a whole (please don't spend a lot of time on individual essays – we want your *overview*).
b) Then develop a list of the features with which you can describe what is significant to you in these students' writing and what happens to it. List in order of 'importance.' (i.e., first might be 'theses become complex' while 'correct use of commas' goes at the bottom of the list) Do *not* work on the model of 'A' paper features, 'B' paper features, etc. Please put commentary on your list in a separate section of writing.
c) How do these features coordinate with the features you considered to be important in your own writing in the writing you did earlier this morning? Is there a match? Or not? Explain.

Please plan your time so that you are able to address all three writing prompts.

Afternoon
Writing prompts:

1. For each portfolio *as a whole*, use your lists from (1) and (2) this morning to examine its features and to rank its success with each. For example, if a 'complex thesis' is one of the qualities you seek, you might rank the portfolio's success with the 'complex thesis' on a 1–5 scale (1 is good) and provide a brief explanation. Order the qualities you examine with the most important first and the least important last.

For each portfolio, also write an overview evaluating the student's growth as a writer, adding commentary as you see fit in regard to the terms you used for evaluation and about any other considerations that have now occurred to you.

2. Finally: examine the WPA (Writing Program Administrator) criteria in the handout which we will give to you as soon as you have finished with your examination of the portfolios (*ask us for this*). Please notice that not all the criteria apply to examination of portfolios; we have drawn a line by the most relevant sections.
• Where does the WPA list of outcomes overlap with your criteria?

- Where does it most notably not overlap?
- Having seen this list, would you change your own list of criteria, and if so, how? If not, how would you change the WPA list?

SOPHOMORE SEMINARS AND WRITING IN THE MAJORS
JANUARY 29, 2005

Morning
Writing prompts:

What aspects of your writing do you consider the most important?

Does the work of different disciplines engender particular rhetorics? If so, how would you characterize the rhetoric(s) of your discipline compared with those of other disciplines?

Are some elements of these rhetorics shared across all disciplines? If yes, which ones? At the highest levels, or only the most basic, fundamental?

Is there much variety in the writing practices of your discipline? And in your own? What do you expect from your students in this regard?

Afternoon
Writing prompts:

What do you think of the diverse writing samples we've given you from anthropology, film studies, economics, and sociology?

Do they resemble those you ask for and receive in your own courses? Applying to the examples given the criteria you've developed for your own discipline, do you find them valuable and useful?

How much and to what extent do you feel it necessary to modify these to arrive at an evaluation that is fair and appropriately specific to the requirements of your discipline?

What differences do you see in the examples given between the values manifest there and those that characterize writing in your own discipline? Having read these examples, what changes would you make in your rubric?

MEETING THREE

FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINARS

MAY 24-25, 2004 (FACULTY AND GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWS)
Portfolio responses based on FWS Director's rubric and closing discussion.

SOPHOMORE SEMINARS AND WRITING IN THE MAJORS
APRIL 30, 2005

Morning
Please read each essay carefully. When you have finished, please respond to the following prompts for each essay.

Develop a list of features with which you can describe what is significant in the student's writing. Please try to emphasize (and distinguish between) disciplinary (local) significance *and* broader (common) concerns.
Discuss how epistemic and rhetorical differences impair your ability to evaluate the writing before you (besides lack of familiarity with the subject matter). Be specific.

Afternoon
Please read each essay carefully. When you have finished, please respond to the following prompts for each essay.

In these writings, we hope to move you from an articulation of your own values, especially as inflected by your disciplinary location, to a larger 'departmental' sense of what constitutes good writing. This departmental approach requires you to think as an ambassador and a diplomat, as well as cartographer: we're not looking for generalizations if none can be found. It's quite possible that there is considerable disagreement about what good writing is and does, and how to accomplish the teaching of effective writing. Is it possible to map the different approaches within your department? (The difference between department and field is crucial here.).

APPENDIX C: FWS STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EXPERIENCES IN THEIR
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC WRITING COURSES

*Figure 1: This chart shows the rise in combined 'A' plus 'B' scores for each semester, for
Question #s 2–33 (from the FWS evaluation presented in Appendix A) Fall 1987 through
Spring 2004*

Figure 2: This chart shows the trend in responses to nine of the questions on the FWS evalua-
tion form (Appendix A), Fall 1987 through Spring 2004.

For the question: 1. The most important reason I chose this seminar:
A. I liked the course description.
B. I thought it would be challenging.
C. My advisor recommended it.
D. It was offered at a time I had open.
E. I could not get into one of my top preferences.
All scores from Fall 1987 through Spring 2004 are reported here:

	A	B	C	D	E
F87	68,03	6,62	7,15	1,48	16,73
S88	74,53	5,62	3,81	1,94	14,11
F88	62,44	4,71	5,88	11,96	15,00
S89	72,04	5,97	3,01	12,33	6,64
F89	58,69	6,28	4,36	16,02	14,65
S90	65,83	6,86	2,52	17,37	7,43
F90	65,96	4,51	5,02	14,29	10,23
S91	67,61	4,97	2,45	17,03	7,94
F91	63,42	4,94	3,80	16,25	11,59
S92	67,60	5,11	2,11	18,04	7,15
F92	67,50	5,80	3,21	14,81	8,68
S93	70,54	4,29	2,33	16,16	6,68
F93	66,88	3,60	3,47	16,79	9,26
S94	65,57	4,93	1,59	21,33	6,58

F94	66,20	4,69	3,44	16,43	9,24
S95	69,70	3,74	1,81	19,38	5,37
F95	66,49	3,83	3,62	18,19	7,87
S96	70,03	3,75	1,90	18,21	6,12
F96	65,21	3,95	3,78	18,58	8,49
S97	69,54	3,69	2,26	17,85	6,66
F97	66,41	3,92	2,98	18,35	8,33
S98	68,72	4,12	1,54	19,67	5,95
F98	67,55	3,81	2,65	19,25	6,75
S99	67,06	2,68	1,39	23,36	5,52
F99	63,19	2,94	2,98	20,26	10,62
S00	63,24	2,96	2,99	20,16	10,66
F00	63,73	3,61	1,94	20,29	10,42
S01	65,09	2,53	0,83	24,71	6,84
F01	65,01	2,96	2,00	20,38	9,65
S02	68,60	3,40	1,70	22,20	4,16
F02	65,06	2,88	2,49	19,49	10,08
S03	67,00	2,78	1,09	23,50	5,67
F03	65,64	2,36	2,25	20,78	8,97
S04	65,13	2,20	1,34	25,17	6,16

Figure 3: This chart shows the trend in responses to question one on the FWS evaluation form
(Appendix A), Fall 1987 through Spring 2004

For the question: 2. How much reading did you do?
      A. An appropriate amount
      B. Too much
      C. Too little
      D. Far too much
      E. Far too little
All scores from Fall 1987 through Spring 2004 are reported here:

	A	B	C	D	E
F87	76,67	12,81	1,89	7,55	1,08
S88	80,34	10,67	1,45	6,54	1,01
F88	76,02	12,92	1,77	7,98	1,31
S89	79,63	12,58	1,73	5,45	0,61
F89	77,30	13,37	2,03	5,93	1,37
S90	77,53	14,60	1,95	5,29	0,63
F90	75,96	15,45	2,68	5,30	0,61
S91	79,17	14,74	2,24	3,59	0,26
F91	77,58	14,24	2,32	4,82	1,04
S92	79,07	14,36	1,64	4,10	0,82
F92	77,58	12,79	2,43	5,73	1,48
S93	79,21	13,70	1,67	4,76	0,66
F93	76,15	14,57	2,82	5,37	1,09
S94	78,75	13,71	4,09	2,23	1,22
F94	77,96	14,57	2,23	4,45	0,79
S95	79,31	13,95	2,73	3,14	0,87
F95	79,86	11,59	2,74	4,61	1,20
S96	82,88	10,51	1,53	4,60	0,48
F96	78,82	12,76	2,45	5,15	0,82
S97	78,31	13,43	2,67	4,75	0,83
F97	78,15	13,23	2,13	5,11	1,38
S98	77,66	12,46	2,17	6,91	0,80
F98	76,42	14,00	2,31	6,61	0,66
S99	79,32	13,49	4,57	1,73	0,89
F99	77,86	13,92	4,86	2,63	0,73
S00	77,86	13,92	4,86	2,59	0,77
F00	74,89	15,67	6,35	1,98	1,11
S01	74,56	16,00	5,57	3,26	0,61
F01	76,21	15,15	6,08	1,60	0,96
S02	78,10	13,80	4,87	2,02	1,20

F02	74,88	16,23	5,78	2,25	0,85
S03	73,90	16,90	5,07	2,84	1,31
F03	72,71	18,05	4,61	3,82	0,82
S04	74,49	16,70	5,44	2,24	1,12

Figure 4: This chart shows the trend in responses to question three on the FWS evaluation form (Appendix A), Fall 1987 through Spring 2004

Column A change in score 87–89 to 02–04	Columns A+B change in score 87–89 to 02–04	Explanation of 'change in score':
		Average score for 2002–2004, less the average score for 1987–1989 equals **increase (+)** or **decrease (-)** in score.
-4,17	**0,56**	

APPENDIX D: NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM THE STUDY

We selected for the Study nine tenured or tenure-track professors and eight graduate teaching assistants from nine different disciplines for the First-Year Writing Seminar Program; five professors for the Sophomore Seminar Program; and five professors and five TAs for Writing in the Majors. Their responses to the central questions that preoccupied the Study from the outset evolved over a series of meetings, held in 2003-2004 (FWS) and 2004-2005 (SSP and WIM), designed to address a broad range of issues concerning discipline-specific faculty and student writing, assessment, and the production and evaluation of disciplinary knowledge within and among participating disciplines (see Appendix B). Among highlights of the findings gleaned from the Study are the following:

First-Year Writing Seminars
The Institute's quantitative evaluation form measuring student perceptions of their experiences in FWS courses demonstrates considerable value and reliability for assessing student achievement in writing. *The accompanying statistical summaries (see Appendix C) provide compelling evidence of substantial improvements over the past decade in the effectiveness of the Institute's discipline-specific approach to teaching writing in FWS courses.*

   Graduate student instructors tend to approach the teaching of FWS courses in less explicitly disciplinary terms than faculty. Faculty insights from the Study can help graduate students give more serious thought to the characteristics and values of writing in their disciplines. FWS end-of-semester evaluations, which provide excellent supplementary insight into expectations for student writing, can benefit from more emphasis on these insights.

Sophomore Seminars
Sophomore Seminar faculty value the creative edge of interdisciplinarity the program allows them to explore with their students and colleagues. They tend to have a strong interest in pushing the boundaries of disciplinary discourse and in seeking connections with colleagues who have similar ambitions for their own field.

   There is value at this level in observing conservative discursive practices in gateway courses to the disciplines. Some seminars are more experimental than others in engaging students in the actual production of (or resistance to) established disciplinary discourses. In general, faculty find it difficult to reconstruct normative expectations for work in other fields – i.e. discipline-specific concerns, protocols, and conventions – from samples of student writing produced in those fields.

Writing In the Majors
In keeping with the goals of WIM, faculty tend to use and assign writing primarily to enrich learning of the subject, rather than to teach writing itself, though the latter goal remains a desirable learning outcome. Amounts and types of writing vary in

conjunction with other forms of active learning and performance (e.g., formal presentations, student-led discussions, poster sessions, or field studies).

The 'tilt' toward the sciences and social sciences in Writing in the Majors tends to give priority to the kinds of objective reporting, analysis, and argument commonly associated with scientific knowledge and professional literature. WIM writing and reading assignments are likely to include the forms and functions of specialized, professional literature in the field. Expectations, assignments, and evaluation criteria among participating instructors tend to be specialized and diversified. WIM faculty in the sciences, mathematics, and economics see the least variation in writing in their fields. Those in sociology and the graduate student in education observe the most. Views of writing among WIM teachers, located primarily in the sciences and social sciences are heavily influenced by the forms and functions of scientific communication. Many of these seemed baffled or dismayed by readings from the humanities that depart from the familiar order of scientific explanation.

All Programs
FWS, SSP, and WIM teachers are most concerned about the quality of their students' thinking. They tend not to be as concerned, even in FWS courses, with matters of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other matters of 'mechanics' or 'correctness.'

What faculty value in student writing is based on what they have experienced and valued in their own disciplinary writing. Given the multiplicity of theoretical, historical, and practical positions in their departments, they often find it difficult to think of themselves as ambassadors for their own discipline or spokespersons for their colleagues. Notwithstanding profound conversance in conventional disciplinary discourses, they do not necessarily see their writing practices as representative of those in their discipline.

FWS, SSP, WIM participants believe strongly that disciplines generate distinct rhetorics. While they see considerable definition and constraint in the writing practices in their fields, controlled primarily by professional journal standards, they disagree about the values and effects of these constraints for student writing. They are less clear about or committed to the nature of common features of writing across disciplines, or to the importance of those commonalities.

The most insightful evaluation of student essays comes from readers based in the discipline. Meaningful readings of student essays can be performed only by readers expert in the appropriate fields. Where strong divergence occurs in rating student achievement in writing, this divergence tends to occur between a member of the faculty looking at a paper written in his/her discipline and a reader located in a different discipline. Readers from different disciplines may use the 'same' rubric yet interpret the terms of the rubric very differently.

Faculty value the Institute's receptiveness and responsiveness to practices in the disciplines at all levels of the curriculum. They recognize the power of existing genres in the fields as apprenticeship vehicles and the importance of using exemplary and sometimes maverick writers in the field to attract and inspire students new to the field. They express the values they look for in their own and in student writing most vividly when writing in prose in the context of discussing their disciplines, not in

bulleted rubrics. The criteria by which they examine their own and students' writing are embedded in their disciplinary practices.