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CCCC Position Statement

A statement on an education issue approved by the CCCC Executive Committee

CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing

Conference on College Composition and Communication

November 2015 (replaces the 1982 CCCC “Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing”)

Introduction

To serve as socially conscious citizens and productive professionals, college students need to cultivate and refine advanced literacy practices, rhetorical flexibility, and habits of mind that will prepare them to address and influence a variety of complex professional, civic, and social situations. Students who possess a sophisticated rhetorical awareness, an extensive knowledge of genre conventions, and a complement of effective writing, critical thinking, and reading proficiencies are advantageously positioned to succeed in academic, public, and professional settings. Because of their high-impact, student-centered, and literacy-focused curricula, assignments, and activities, first-year writing and other writing-intensive courses help students develop these essential areas of knowledge and literacy practices. Effective writing instruction, then, plays a crucial role not only in students' successful academic performance but also in their performance in professional and public settings.

An investment in the training and professional development of writing instructors is an investment in student learning and success. Moreover, because writing-intensive courses and instruction privilege high-impact practices, periodic feedback and revision, and frequent contact with first-year and advanced students, the professional preparation of writing faculty may also positively affect other concerns of postsecondary institutions, including student retention, persistence, and degree completion. Exemplary writing instructors are highly competent, reflective practitioners who prioritize students' learning needs and experiences, integrate contemporary composition theory and research into their teaching practices, and contribute their disciplinary expertise to improve their departments and institutions.

The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) presents this position statement to provide guidelines for how best to prepare and support postsecondary instructors of writing throughout their careers. In producing this statement, CCCC envisions many audiences that may possess disparate interests, including undergraduate and graduate students; parents or guardians; high school instructors who facilitate Dual Credit and Concurrent Enrollment (DC/CE) courses; prospective and current postsecondary instructors of writing; writing program administrators; department chairs; college and university administrators; and municipal, state, and national legislators. With so many interested groups involved in or concerned about the preparation of those who teach postsecondary writing, there is a need for direction and clarity regarding what principles should inform the preparation and continued professional development of postsecondary writing instructors.

The study of writing is multidisciplinary, building on the work of rhetoricians, compositionists, cognitive psychologists, linguists, librarians, educators, and anthropologists. Effective

college teachers of writing require a broad base of theoretical knowledge, including:

- **rhetorical knowledge:** an understanding of how audience, purpose, and context shape writing
- **linguistic knowledge:** an understanding of professional genres and conventions for writing
- **instructional knowledge:** an understanding of a broad base of practical, pedagogical knowledge and experience, and an ability to apply research and best practices in the field of rhetoric and composition, including using effective strategies for designing writing curricula, courses, and assignments; providing constructive feedback on students' drafts; assessing students' writing formatively and summatively; and working with diverse learners
- **ethical and effective research methods:** an understanding of both secondary and primary research methods, as well as a knowledge of plagiarism, copyright law, and human subjects protection
- **technical knowledge:** an understanding of how to prepare students to address the evolving nature of persuasion and written communication in the 21st century

These theoretical and practical areas are consistent with the CCCC's "Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" (</cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting>), and proficiency in these theoretical and practical areas is best achieved through ongoing formative assessment that incorporates opportunities for professional development and improvement, formal mentoring by more experienced or expert colleagues, and participation in curriculum development and assessment. The principles, requirements, and recommendations below are consistent with and help cultivate the characteristics outlined in NCTE's "Principles of Professional Development" (<http://legacy.ncte.org/positions/statements/profdevelopment>) and TYCA's "Characteristics of the Highly Effective Two-Year College Instructor in English" (https://prod-ncte-cdn.azureedge.net/nctefiles/groups/tyca/characteristics_statement.pdf). Because quality writing instruction is essential for helping students develop advanced literacy practices, CCCC offers the following principles, requirements, and recommendations that should inform the preparation and ongoing professional development of instructors in Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment programs, graduate teaching assistants, and new and continuing faculty.

Instructors in Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment (DC/CE) Programs

Recently, given wide concerns regarding student preparedness for college and their possible careers, Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment (DC/CE) programs have become an increasingly popular option for bridging between secondary and postsecondary educational experiences in writing. The myriad financial challenges experienced by students and their families and the escalating costs of tuition have also enhanced the appeal of DC/CE programs, as high school students attempt to earn college credit at a reduced price. In accommodating this need, many high school instructors are now teaching college-level writing, and the institutions that sponsor DC/CE programs have had to manage myriad foreseen and unforeseen pedagogical, logistical, and economic implications resulting from the proliferation of DC/CE programs. The CCCC's *Statement on Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment Composition: Policy and Best Practices* (</cccc/resources/positions/dualcredit>) articulates guidelines for developing and assessing DC/CE programs, for admitting students, and for hiring and training high school teachers to facilitate DC/CE courses. The principles, requirements, and recommendations below are consistent with that statement, as well as with the "TYCA Executive Committee Statement on Concurrent Enrollment" (http://legacy.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/TYCA/Concurrent_Enrollment.pdf).

Principle: Secondary instructors assigned to facilitate college-level writing instruction should hold qualifications and have access to professional development experiences equivalent to those of instructors hired and assigned to teach writing courses at the sponsoring institution, including:

I. Required:

- At least a master's degree in Composition/Rhetoric, English, English Education, Linguistics, or a closely-related field
- Graduate coursework in composition theory, research, and pedagogy; and in rhetorical theory and research
- Meet and/or exceed the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership (NACEP) Standards for faculty who teach in DC/CE programs
- Mentoring partnerships with experienced teachers of college writing, which should include regular formative assessments of teaching (classroom observations, course evaluation reviews, syllabi and assignment reviews) by the DC/CE program director or faculty liaison from the sponsoring institution

II. Recommended:

- Graduate coursework in and experience with writing assessment, both formative and summative, and working with diverse populations, such as non-native speakers of English, students with special learning needs, and at-risk student populations
- Experience with both formative and summative writing assessment
- Experience with curriculum development

III. Additional Responsibilities of the Sponsoring Institution: As both the NACEP standards document and CCCC's *Statement on Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment Composition: Policy and Best Practices* aver, a postsecondary institution sponsoring a DC/CE program bears the responsibility of initial training and ongoing professional development of instructors who are hired to teach college writing instruction to secondary students. That responsibility includes:

- An intensive initial training workshop or seminar that familiarizes qualified secondary instructor(s) with the sponsoring institution's composition curriculum. This training should introduce participants to the programmatic outcomes for first-year writing, as well as assignments, readings, and assessment criteria and practices, and should provide qualified secondary instructor(s) with a comprehensive discussion of contemporary composition theory and pedagogy. The initial training seminars should be at least equivalent to on-campus instructor preparation.
- Ongoing professional development seminars or workshops that review the sponsoring institution's composition curriculum; outline shifts in disciplinary scholarship related to composition theory and pedagogy; and allow qualified secondary instructor(s) opportunities to reflect on their pedagogy and how it is aligned with the sponsoring institution's composition curriculum and with contemporary research in the field of rhetoric and composition
- Monetary compensation for participation in all initial and ongoing professional development opportunities
- Pedagogical materials, such as copies of sample syllabi, writing assignments, and lesson plans; textbooks; and other course materials
- Support mechanisms, such as class observations, site visits, and reviews of pedagogical materials to ensure quality instruction and alignment with the sponsoring institution's composition curriculum
- Regular assessment of artifacts produced by secondary students completing a DC/CE course and consistent evaluation of the DC/CE program

Secondary and postsecondary administrators, writing program administrators, legislators, and instructors who are interested in advocating for and collaborating to design DC/CE programs, assess established programs, hire and train instructors, and provide ongoing professional development for instructors are strongly encouraged to consult existing guidelines published by other professional organizations, including:

- Standards from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (<http://nacep.org/docs/standards/NACEP-Standards-2011.pdf>)
- "Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing" from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (<http://wpacouncil.org/files/cwpa-statement-pre-college-credit.pdf>)
- "Writing Assessment: A Position Statement" from CCCC (</cccc/resources/positions/writingassessment>)

- “Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (<http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>)
- *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* from the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Writing Project, and the National Council of Teachers of English (<http://www.wpacouncil.org/framework>)

Graduate Teaching Assistants

Graduate programs from across the disciplines provide opportunities for graduate students to serve as teaching assistants. In English Studies, a teaching assistantship often means serving as the instructor of record for first-year writing courses with the possibility of teaching advanced writing courses as a student gains experience and completes degree requirements. First-year writing courses and other postsecondary writing-intensive courses are not only taught by graduate students in rhetoric and composition, but also by graduate students studying other subfields of English Studies, including linguistics, secondary education, literature, and creative writing. Teaching assistantships provide a critical opportunity for graduate students to gain needed experience in the classroom, particularly in the application of practices and content covered in composition and rhetorical pedagogy and theory courses. Such experiences may include developing course curricula, assignments, and lesson plans and cultivating a pedagogical persona.

The authentic classroom experiences that teaching assistantships provide are crucial to the development of effective post-secondary writing instructors. However, assistantships may be misused as a significantly cheaper method for institutions, departments, and/or writing programs to ensure course coverage without the significant investments in salary and benefits for full-time, tenure and non-tenure track faculty. Graduate student teachers inhabit an acutely vulnerable space because they are simultaneously students and employees of a postsecondary institution: their status as both learners and as emerging practitioners in the classrooms must be protected. This is especially true when institutions face difficult fiscal challenges, and graduate teaching assistantships may become exploitative. Graduate programs and the postsecondary institutions in which they are located, then, must treat graduate teaching assistants ethically and responsibly, recognizing that their primary role at the university is as a student and apprentice teacher.

Principle: In preparing graduate teaching assistants to teach writing, graduate programs should provide students with varied opportunities to cultivate and apply a theoretically informed writing pedagogy by participating in and completing:

I. Required:

- Coursework in composition theory, research, and pedagogy; in rhetorical theory and research; in writing assessment, both formative and summative; and in working with diverse populations such as non-native speakers of English, students with special learning needs, non-traditional students, and at-risk student populations
- Graduate coursework in teaching with technology, including learning management systems, and experience with facilitating writing courses where students practice multimodal genres of textual production and refine their digital literacies
- Intensive and comprehensive TA training that could include pre-semester training for an extended duration (1–3 weeks), a one- or two-semester-long graduate composition theory course, and frequent workshops discussing aspects of composition pedagogy
- Mentoring partnerships with experienced teachers of college writing, which should include regular formative assessments of teaching (classroom observations, course evaluation reviews, syllabi and assignment reviews)

II. Recommended:

- Participation in programmatic assessment, such as dynamic criteria mapping and portfolio assessment
- Opportunities to train and work in writing centers
- Experience with curriculum development

III. Additional Responsibilities of the Institution and Graduate Program: In treating graduate student instructors ethically and responsibly, institutions and graduate programs should provide the following:

- A monetary stipend that sufficiently defrays cost-of-living expenses for the cities in which the institutions are located
- Monetary compensation for participation in pre-semester comprehensive training seminars or workshops
- Full tuition remission, health and dental benefits, and financial support for travel to academic conferences and other professional development opportunities
- Office space; pedagogical materials, such as copies, gradebooks, textbooks for courses; and other forms of office support

New and Continuing Faculty

Recently hired instructors experience challenges with assimilating to the social dynamics of a particular institution, department, and/or program. They invest significant emotional, psychological, and physical energy in completing institutional onboarding procedures. Such procedures include completing paperwork related to human resources, learning the curriculum and understanding the privileged outcomes and objectives of the programs in which they teach, and modifying their pedagogy to reflect that curriculum and meet the various learning needs of students within a new institutional context. A hiring institution, department, and/or writing program should make every effort to facilitate an easy transition for recently hired instructors.

What is more, CCCC conceptualizes preparation and professional development as an intensive and reflective practice that continues throughout and enriches an instructor's entire career. Effective instructors of postsecondary writing labor diligently to stay informed of disciplinary scholarship, to modify their pedagogical practices to mirror shifts in disciplinary scholarship and accommodate student learning needs, and to foster an ethic of professional development that conceptualizes teaching as a life-long process of intellectual, professional, and personal growth. An institution, department, and/or program must provide ample opportunities for instructors to learn about and apply shifts in disciplinary scholarship, develop theoretically informed pedagogical practices that accommodate the learning needs of an ever-changing student body, and find intellectual and personal satisfaction in the process of continually enhancing their expertise and refining their craft.

Principle: Institutions must hire highly qualified writing faculty who hold at least a master's degree in Composition/Rhetoric, English, English Education, Linguistics, or a closely-related field.

I. Required:

- Graduate coursework must have included composition theory, research, and pedagogy; and rhetorical theory and research.

II. Recommended:

- Graduate coursework in and experience facilitating writing assessment, both formative and summative
- Graduate coursework in and experience working with diverse populations, such as non-native speakers of English, students with special learning needs, non-traditional students, and at-risk student populations
- Graduate coursework in teaching with technology, including learning management systems, and experience with facilitating writing courses where students practice multimodal genres of textual production and refine their digital literacies
- Graduate coursework addressing, and experience working in, writing and/or learning centers

Principle: Hiring institutions should provide all new faculty with institutional orientation, pedagogical training, and support, including:

I. Required:

- Clear onboarding procedures which introduce all new faculty to the curriculum, student population demographics, institutional/departmental structure, technology requirements, and assessment expectations of the hiring institution and the department
- Monetary compensation for all required orientation and training activities
- Monetary, logistical, and office support for developing course materials
- Information and support for preparing materials for contract renewal or promotion
- Professional development training related to significant safety risks that endanger instructors and their students. Such training must include active shooter training, suicide prevention training, and training in administering first-aid.

II. Recommended:

- Formal mentoring programs where new faculty meet regularly during their first semester(s) with experienced colleagues, and which include opportunities both to observe experienced teachers in the classroom and to have their teaching observed by their mentors
- Ongoing formative and summative assessment of teaching by a supervisor
- Professional development training for working with non-native speakers of English, students with special learning needs, non-traditional students, and at-risk student populations

Principle: Institutions should provide experienced faculty with opportunities and support for continued professional development, including:

I. Required:

- Tuition remission for enrollment in graduate-level courses (pedagogy, assessment, ESL, tutoring, digital media)
- Financial support to participate in pedagogy workshops (local and national) to further develop skills
- Financial support to attend or present at national conferences
- Specialized training for working with non-native speakers of English, students with special learning needs, non-traditional students, and at-risk student populations
- Ongoing fair, transparent, and non-threatening formative and summative assessment of teaching by a qualified supervisor and/or peer. Any process of formative and summative assessment of teaching performance must prioritize professional growth, involve a wide-range of evidence, and align with clearly articulated institutional standards of effective teacher performance. See NCTE's "Position Statement of Teacher Evaluation" (<http://legacy.ncte.org/positions/statements/teacherevaluation>).
- Clear guidance on preparing materials for contract renewal or promotion

II. Recommended:

- Opportunities to engage in mentoring
- Opportunities to participate in research, assessment, or curriculum development work within the department
- Ongoing formative and summative self-assessment of teaching

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