

**LIBRARY**  
**Michigan State**  
**University**

**PLACE IN RETURN BOX** to remove this checkout from your record.  
**TO AVOID FINES** return on or before date due.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**MSU is An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution**

c:\circ\datedue.pm-3-p.1

A STUDY OF THE ARTICULATION  
OF WRITING PROGRAMS BETWEEN  
HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

By

Jill Rae VanAntwerp

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1994

## ABSTRACT

### A STUDY OF THE ARTICULATION OF WRITING PROGRAMS BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

By

Jill Rae VanAntwerp

This study seeks to understand the factors which affect students' success with writing as they move from high school to college. With the aim to ascertain what factors help students successfully make the transition and continue to improve as writers, a study of high school writing programs and college freshman English programs was undertaken. The aim of this study was to determine specific practices and processes which could be incorporated at one or both levels to improve articulation between high school and college writing programs.

A review of the history of composition education at both levels was presented, focusing on the factors which led to current practices. The review was followed by a study of twenty-nine students who graduated from twelve West Central Michigan high schools and attended four Michigan universities nearby. The experiences of these students as they studied writing at both levels provided an indication of what practices in their writing classrooms helped them improve as writers. These results were compared with information gathered about the curricula in these schools and colleges and the

methods used in the various classrooms in which the students were taught.

The experiences of these students suggest that students are most effectively taught writing in a student-centered classroom in which the writing process is encouraged. Multiple drafts of papers should be part of the required process rather than an option. The use of peer groups helps students develop a sense of audience and become self-monitoring writers. Allowing students choice in both topic and mode of writing promotes an interest and knowledge base which improves the writing process.

Articulation can be further enhanced by unified faculties working toward common goals. At either educational level, a faculty should work cooperatively to develop curriculum and practices. An understanding of mutual goals allows a faculty to promote a consistency which allows the student writers to focus on the product as they work with a familiar process. Involvement with programs such as the National Writing Program and the Advanced Placement Program as well as with professional organizations can help faculties of different educational levels develop a mutual respect and understanding which will enhance the articulation of their writing programs.





**Copyright by**

**JILL RAE VANANTWERP**

**1994**

**To Chris, Chad, Mom and Dad  
for their continual support,  
encouragement, and belief.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Marilyn Wilson, my dissertation director, for her careful responses to my work and for always being there when I needed guidance, direction, and encouragement; Dr. Stephen Tchudi for his early guidance of my committee, for his encouragement to begin this process, and for his help in choosing a focus of study; the members of my committee, Dr. Kitty Geissler, Dr. Jay Ludwig, and Dr. Victor Paananen, for sharing their expertise and for providing helpful suggestions and feedback; Dr. William Johnsen for his assistance in the comprehensive area of British Literature; the teachers and students who filled out questionnaires and took part in interviews for sharing their experiences with me so willingly; my fellow graduate students for their continual sharing of knowledge, experience, and the fun of learning; and my friends and family for supporting me always.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
 Chapter	
I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF WRITING IN THE SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES AND THE ARTICULATION BETWEEN THE TWO LEVELS	7
The Establishment of Colonial Schools	7
The 18th Century	8
The 19th Century	9
The First Interest in Articulation	10
Schools in the Twentieth Century	17
Freshman Composition in the Twentieth Century	25
Controversy Surrounding Freshman English	26
Influences On the Freshman Writing Program	29
The Progress of Articulation	31
Barriers to Articulation and Partnerships	36
Implications for this Study Suggested by the History of Writing Instruction	41
II. RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY	44
Selection of Participants	44
Selecting the Schools and the Students	45
High School Teacher Questionnaires	47
The Teachers' Selection of the Students	48
The First Student Questionnaire	48
The Twelve Schools	49
Twenty-nine Students	50
Interviews	51
Questionnaires to College Teachers and Interviews with Department Chairs	53
College Teachers	53

Freshman Writing Programs at the Four Colleges	54
The Second Student Questionnaire	54
My Purpose for This Study	56
<b>III. THE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES</b>	<b>58</b>
Twelve High School English Departments	58
English Department Curricula	59
Writing Instruction	60
Methods of Writing	64
The Effect of Differences Among Schools	66
Conclusions from the Teacher Questionnaires	68
Twenty-nine High School Students	70
The Students' Evaluation of Their Preparation	70
Students Who Ranked Their Preparation	
As "Excellent"	71
Students Who Ranked Their Preparation	
As "Very Good"	72
Students Who Ranked Their Preparation As "Fair"	73
The Students' Writing Assignments	75
The Students' Writing Processes	77
Students' Impressions of Themselves As Writers	82
The Four Colleges	84
University A	85
University A Faculty Responses	87
University B	88
University B Faculty Responses	90
University C	91
University C Faculty Responses	92
University D	92
University D Faculty Responses	95
General Observations on the College Faculties	96
Differences Between the Two Levels Which	
Affect Articulation	100
The Second Student Questionnaire	103
The Students' Re-Evaluation of Their Preparation	
for College Writing	103
The Students' Evaluation of Their College	
Writing Courses	107
The Students' Perceptions of Themselves As	
College Writers	108
Implications for Articulation of Students'	
College Experiences	115

IV. INTERVIEWS	119
University A	120
Joe	120
Janet	125
Bill	131
Conclusions From University A Interviews	140
The Teachers	140
Student Preparation and Attitude	141
University A's Classes	143
Articulation	144
University B	145
Laurie	145
Mary	149
Joan	155
Conclusions from University B Interviews	159
The Teachers	159
Student Preparation and Attitude	159
University B's Classes	161
Articulation	163
University C	165
Carol	166
Judy	171
Denise	173
Conclusions from University C Interviews	179
The Teachers	179
Student Preparation and Attitude	180
University C's Classes	182
Articulation	183
University D	184
Paula	184
Sue	187
Jane	193
Kate	198
Conclusions from University D Interviews	201
The Teachers	201
Student Preparation and Attitude	202
University D's Classes	204
Articulation	205
Final Comments on the Interviews	206

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	208
An Evaluation of High School Course Offerings	210
An Evaluation of High School Teaching Methods	212
Recommendations for High School English Departments	219
An Evaluation of Freshman Writing Programs at the Colleges	224
An Evaluation of Teaching Methods in Freshman Writing Courses	229
Recommendations for Freshman Writing Programs	232
The Impact On Transition of A Student's Personality and Background	237
The Personality of the Teacher	242
Faculty At Both Levels Can Improve Articulation	243
Programs Which Can Promote Articulation	245
The Advanced Placement Program	245
Project Advance	247
The National Writing Project	248
Pre-College Placement Tests and Evaluations of Freshmen	249
Professional Organizations	251
Writing Across the Curriculum	252
Questions For Future Research	253
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES AND COVER LETTERS	256
APPENDIX B: A SAMPLE OF TYPICAL STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	274
APPENDIX C: A SAMPLE STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	276
APPENDIX D: A SAMPLE OF TYPICAL FRESHMAN WRITING DIRECTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	288
APPENDIX E: APPROVAL FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH	290
LIST OF REFERENCES	291
GENERAL REFERENCES	296



## INTRODUCTION

Entering freshmen rarely arrive on college campuses totally ignorant of what will be required of them, and a task which often causes fear and apprehension is writing. Sometimes the reason for this dread is that it has been instilled in these students throughout their high school years. Secondary teachers of English feel responsible for preparing their college-bound students to meet the expectations of college writing instructors. But often unsure of exactly what those expectations are, high school teachers instill fear as a way of convincing their students to work hard, write and rewrite prolifically, and, in some cases, blame themselves instead of the high school teacher if their freshman writing experience is not satisfactory. Other times the fear comes from stories carried back by students who have gone to college before them and have encountered writing instructors who tell students that they can forget what they learned in high school about writing because it is all wrong. As I realized that this atmosphere of distrust and fear was having an effect on the transition of students between high school and college writing courses, I took an interest in what was being done or could be done to promote the articulation of writing programs between the two levels.

I am a high school English teacher. I teach a course entitled "College English" to approximately one-third of the seniors in the

high school in which I am employed. I realized early in the existence of this course that instilling fear in my students was no way to prepare them for college. I made it my goal to become familiar with the writing programs in the colleges most often attended by my students. What I found was a group of programs which were so diverse that I felt I might find their only common characteristic to be that they are designed for entering freshmen. Eventually their similarities emerged among their differences.

My increasing knowledge about the freshman writing courses in the colleges my students most often attend helped me to develop a course of study for "College English" which prepares my students well for their varied experiences in college. My awareness, however, left me wondering what other teachers in other high schools are doing to help their students make the transition from high school writing programs to college writing programs.

I define articulation of writing programs between high schools and colleges as an interrelating of the experiences a student has in the courses at the two levels. At its best, articulation would mean that the writing instruction students receive in their freshman year in college would be a building on the writing instruction they received in high school. This would come about because the teachers at both levels are aware of both programs and are concerned to ease the students transition and to build on his previous skills. At the least, articulation would mean that students are able to move from one level to the other without fear because

the teachers at both levels proceed with a respect born of familiarity with one another's programs.

To understand how this articulation could be accomplished, I needed to know how students make the adjustment, how they felt about their preparation for the movement from school to college writing, and how what they did in high school English classes affected what they did in college writing courses. I wanted to understand how colleges have impacted high school writing programs in the past and what influence is being exerted now. I wanted to know what kinds of collaboration exist between schools and colleges or between the faculties at each level and how they have helped student writers. I sought descriptions of programs in which high school and college teachers work together to make the transition smoother for their students. I also continued my examination of the programs in the high schools and colleges in the west/central area of Michigan.

A review of dissertation abstracts and other research in the fields of school articulation, composition, and writing produced few studies which directly focus on this transition between writing courses. Some related areas of research included studies which looked at the writing programs in one or the other level. Studies of cooperative ventures provided some input although most of these studies were focused on total school/college articulation. An example would be a study of the partnership known as the Boston Secondary Schools Project. One very narrowed study focused on the writing apprehension of community college students. Several studies looked at the impact of in-service training for school

teachers and how it affects school writing. A study of the Wisconsin Writing Project is an example. Another study looked at the impact of English Association workshops on the teaching of process writing. These studies show that writing programs can be impacted positively when teachers at the various levels come together for in-service and workshops. Other studies showed the results of some changes that the college milieu could make in a student's writing ability. An increased use of word processing is an example of a change at the college level which has had a significant impact on college level writing. Another study showed that the accelerating rate of maturity of the basic writer in college advances his or her ability to think and use the language, improving writing as well. These studies touch on aspects of the subject of articulation between school and college writing; however, none specifically makes a comparison between the instruction or instructors at the two levels nor uses student interviews for the specific purpose of finding what their feelings and experiences were as they made the transition.

The most thorough study of articulation has been done by Julius Menacker. In 1969, as Associate Director of Admissions and records at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Menacker published an article in *The Clearing House* entitled "Subject Articulation between High School and College." He discussed academic problems between the two levels and discussed programs which might smooth the transition, notably the Advanced Placement Program. His conclusion states, "Although much is being done to improve student transition along subject lines, much more remains to be done" (223). In 1975 Menacker completed a more ambitious study with the publication of

*From School to College: Articulation and Transfer.* He did a more complete analysis of programs like Advanced Placement, discussed the problems and solutions of articulation and transfer, conducted a case study, and made suggestions for the improvement of general articulation. He discussed curricular integration in general.

Many articles and books relate details of collaborative programs between schools and colleges. Three that stand out are *The National Directory of School-College Partnerships: Current Models and Practices* by Franklin P. Wilbur, Leo M. Lambert, and M. Jean Young (1987); *Partners In Education: How Colleges Can Work with Schools to Improve Teaching and Learning* by Theodore L. Gross (1988); and an issue of FOCUS, the journal of The Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English entitled *Collaboration Between College English Departments and Secondary Schools* (1988).

The articulation of writing programs between schools and colleges can never be an exact science, only an ongoing process, since every school and every college differs in both its students and its mission; nonetheless, a continuing focus on smoothing the transition of student writers between school and college can serve to increase the student's ability to achieve success in the total college program. It is important to know, therefore, what is being done and how the process can be improved for the benefit of the students.

Chapter I of this study will look at the history of writing in the schools and colleges of this nation from its colonial period. Chapter I will also trace the history of articulation between the two levels and discuss the effects each level had on the programs and teaching of the other. In Chapter II, I will describe the participants in this

study and will explain the methodology I used to gather data, opinions, and accounts of experiences. In Chapter III, I will summarize and analyze the information which I gathered on questionnaires. In Chapter IV, I will summarize and analyze interviews with thirteen of the student participants in the study. Chapter V will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study for those who teach writing at either the high school or college freshman level.

CHAPTER I  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF WRITING IN THE  
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES AND  
THE ARTICULATION BETWEEN THE TWO LEVELS

The Establishment of Colonial Schools

As schools and colleges were established during the colonial period of the United States, the purpose for each level of education was essentially the same—to prepare young men for the professions, primarily theology, medicine, and law. College education was for the elite, not the masses. The school education followed suit, designed to develop a readiness for college. In 1662 John Brinsley, a Puritan schoolmaster, published *A Consolation for Our Grammar Schools* in which he described a plan that, although never implemented, had an impact on the schools and colleges of the time. In his plan he included the writing of themes. He described their purpose:

To write Theames full of good matter, in pure Latin and with judgement, and how to invent matter of themselves.

To translate forth English or Latin into Greeke. Also to write theames or verses in Greeke. (Halloran 152)

The emphasis, as can be seen in Brinsley's descriptions, was on the classical languages. It was important to learn to speak and write English in order to work on translations of the classics. In Colonial schooling, written work was primarily used to script oral

presentations, appropriate training for law and theology (Halloran 153).

During the colonial period, primers for grammar school children were written in English, first imported from Britain, then, by the end of the 17th century, printed in the colonies. These books established a catechism and taught what the colonists considered to be important moral lessons. A major purpose for learning to read was so that one might be able to read the Bible.

### The 18th Century

As a new country emerged in the 18th century, religious training gave way as a reason for educating the young to the need for developing unity among the former colonies. Even spellers, such as Noah Webster's publication in 1783, promoted a common culture. Webster's book served many purposes other than teaching spelling, including reading and grammar studies. His book provided common spellings and grammar and hastened the move towards secularization of school material. Oral and written work was often used to promote patriotism, and reading selections were chosen with the aim of providing fitting pieces for oratory (Applebee 4). The famous McGuffey's readers continued this emphasis on oral work with patriotic themes. Thus, a student who had completed grammar school was ready for a secondary school which emphasized the classics and oratory.

During the 18th century, writing formal English gradually became important. The first step in this transition can be seen in the practice of rhetoric at Princeton during the presidency of John



Witherspoon (Halloran 156). Orations in English became the norm. The culmination of reading and writing study, these orations were often political in content and delivered to audiences of the entire student body.

In the schools, English studies first became common in the finishing schools where students did not expect to go on to college. Eventually English studies found their way into schools which were developed in apposition to those emphasizing classical studies. Applebee reports, "Blair's *Rhetoric*, for example was included in the first course of study (1821) at Boston English High School; it was never used at Boston Latin School at all" (13). Girls' schools, usually finishing schools, used English studies. In all cases, however, those students who were being taught in schools using English studies were considered second-rate academically (13).

### The 19th Century

Until the second half of the 19th century, the tradition of oratory continued to be dominant. Writing became important in the colleges when Harvard led the way with a new emphasis on writing for undergraduates. President Charles Eliot (1869-1909) made writing a central component of a new curriculum which he would introduce (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 20). Freshman English was mandated by 1874 and by 1897 was the only required two-course sequence (20).

An interest in writing in the schools arose toward the middle of the century. Two ideas which emerged at this time were that the mastery of English, including written English, was important for all

students, and that English was to be learned through actual practice. Stephen Judy reports, "The 'sensational and utilitarian philosophy' of John Locke was rapidly displacing faculty psychology as a foundation for instruction. Thus, while English instruction in the first half of the century had emphasized memorization and recitation, mid century teachers like Quakenbos and Greene were calling for actual practice" (35). Nonetheless, Judy reports, the methodologies were not consistent. In some schools writing was still a means to provide material for oratory, while in other schools writing was important and done as an end in itself.

The texts of Lindley Murray dominated the grammar textbook sales in the schools by the beginning of the 19th century. Murray emphasized both the art of speaking and the art of writing English. The method was prescriptive, however, and despite all of their practice with the language, most students using Murray's grammar did little actual composing (Judy 35).

The colleges took little note of the high school work as long as the students who came to them were good scholars. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the students who attended American colleges and universities were the best students from such preparatory schools as Boston Latin School. Soon, however, as the public school expanded, greater numbers of public school students sought college educations, including those who had attended finishing schools. Then the work of these schools became a concern of college faculty.

### The First Interest in Articulation

The first far-reaching attempts at articulation between American schools and colleges happened in the mid-1800s. By the 18th century American colleges had begun to switch from classical rhetoric to English works. The Yale administration adopted Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric* as a textbook (Guthrie 61). Harvard soon followed with the same adoption, and Blair became the dominant text in American colleges for almost a century. During the eighteenth century the emphasis of rhetoric shifted to the written language (Horner 102). Endowed chairs more often were called Rhetoric and Oratory, treating the two separately. Later pairings, however, combined Rhetoric and Composition and, more often, Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. Eventually elocution would become a separate study from rhetoric and those increasingly interested in belles lettres would also shun rhetoric, leaving for the title "Rhetoric" the study of composition. Gradually, the use of the title "Composition" to designate the area of study led to the decline of rhetoric as a department or an area of study in colleges and schools. Composition became a required area of study for first and second year students at the college level. This development eventually turned the attention of the colleges to the schools which sent them their students, and an interest in articulation was born.

Up until this time, the schools and colleges had existed in harmonious if disinterested unity. Both the colleges and the Latin schools had taken little interest in the work of finishing schools, considering them not worth attention and their students not worth consideration as scholars. As classical studies declined at both the college and school level, however, the finishing schools and the

preparatory schools found they had much in common. Eventually many more schools were sending their students on to college.

These two trends brought the critical eye of the colleges onto the schools: more students were asking for college entrance than ever before, many from schools not previously considered to be preparing students for college; and as writing became more important at both levels, the colleges became more concerned and critical about the teaching of writing in the schools.

Harvard was perhaps the first college to make specific demands on schools in general. In 1876 Adams Sherman Hill became the fifth chairman of the Department of Rhetoric at Harvard just as the department became less prestigious, floundering in the wake of Eliot's newly created English Department. Hill's assessment of the situation pinpointed the teaching of composition as the demeaning task which lowered the status of the entire department.

In the meantime, a committee had been designated to study the state of composition teaching at Harvard. This "Committee of the Board of Overseers found that Harvard College faculty was engaged in correcting some 38,000 compositions per year in its English 'A,' 'B,' and 'C' courses" (Judy 37). The overseers were appalled at the time spent on these compositions as well as at the lack of polish of the writing. Ronald Reid describes their reaction:

After examining a mass of student themes, it pronounced them intolerable and, taking note of the tremendous amount of faculty time being expended on correcting simple grammatical errors, recommended that the dismal business of teaching fundamentals of composition be relegated to the high schools. (257)

In 1871, shortly before Hill took over the Department of Rhetoric, Harvard instituted an entrance examination. Hill had been instrumental in its design. Its purpose was to verify that entering students could meet certain requirements for entrance into Harvard. Other colleges followed Harvard's lead. Subsequent problems with differences in entrance requirements forced the eastern colleges to gather together and come to a consensus. The power exerted by Harvard is evident from the results of this conference. Harvard's standards for entrance in English were accepted by all. Eventually book lists for preparation would be published, and a set of very strict guidelines for judging essays on the entrance exams was prepared.

Following the inception of the entrance exam, annual reports summarized the skills of each entering class. As a result, Professor Hill and other Harvard faculty developed a very low opinion of the work of secondary schools. Because of the difficulty of judging content consistently, the evaluations had become a very superficial judging of content and a rigorous critique of surface correctness--grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and such secondary characteristics of good writing. The students were not showing strength in these skills. If they were indeed good writers when they expressed opinions relevant to their own lives and interests, Hill and the other evaluators would never discover that fact as they read the assigned entrance examination essays critiquing books from the writing lists (Judy 36-37).

As the Department of Rhetoric came under fire from many sources, and feeling the sting of the overseers' criticism, Professor Hill strengthened his stand that the test expectations were a fair

assessment of the skills necessary to enter Harvard. His department rid themselves of the responsibility of teaching beginning composition, relegating that task to secondary schools if they wished their graduates to attend Harvard. This chain of events had the horrifying effect of dictating the content of the school curriculum, a content narrowed to the skills necessary to succeed on a very superficial entrance exam. Secondary teachers who taught responsibly to prepare students for this test forced the students to spend their senior year reviewing the books on the list and doggedly practicing grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Composition took the form of formula writing based on the popular modes, usually on literary topics far removed from the students' experience and ability to discuss. Eventually the composition courses offered in the colleges which accepted these students reflected the same pedantic, grammatically correct writing that the students had come prepared to execute. This experience in articulation was a failure in that it not only stifled the teaching in the schools but had a resultant negative effect on the teaching at the colleges they entered (Judy 37). The Conference on English appointed by The Committee of Ten in 1892 to examine the secondary English curriculum recommended the Harvard system of rhetoric for all secondary schools (Berlin, "Writing Instruction . . . " 188).

Another approach to articulation was being taken in the Midwest under the leadership of Fred Newton Scott at the University of Michigan. Scott called the Harvard entrance exams and the system of education they dictated the "Feudal" concept. While gaining his education and working his way to full professorship at Michigan, he

had developed a philosophy which he called the "organic" concept. He was able to exert his influence in four arenas: the classroom; his textbooks; organizations in which he had considerable influence including the Modern Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and the American Association of Journalism; and as a writer of pedagogical articles.

In these articles, his attacks on the eastern college entrance exams make his own concept clear. Scott felt that the entrance exams dehumanized the entering student. Rather than being accepted based on the fact that he had spent four years in a high school program which gave him a good broad background in language, literature, and composition, earning excellent grades, and had come with glowing recommendations from a faculty which had worked with him for four years, a student might find himself rejected based on an entrance examination on which he might have been asked to write eloquently on a book or topic with which he had little or no familiarity.

Scott promoted far different relationships in the Midwest. He decried anything which promoted a subservient position for secondary schools, even the word "preparatory" to describe the education they offered. He felt that the use of the term perpetuated what he saw as a fallacy--that the secondary schools existed to prepare students for higher education.

Scott supported the system of accreditation used today in most schools in the Midwest. This method of accrediting schools allowed students from approved secondary schools to enter the universities and colleges based on their four-year records and the

recommendations of their teachers. Scott felt this system to be superior because it promoted a better attitude towards being educated. It implied a very necessary trust in the work of secondary school faculties, and it allowed for cordial, respectful relationships among teachers at all levels. The eastern system, according to Scott, tended "to debase the teacher's standard of values" ("What the West Wants..." 11).

Scott also felt that the writing students did must evolve from their own experiences or research into topics which interested them. While he felt that literature study should go hand in hand with composition, he felt that the topics which the literature inspired should come from the reader's response. He wrote:

That any great gain comes to the student either in literary appreciation or in the command of his mother tongue from the incessant writing of outlines of plots, critical estimates which ape maturity, or characterless sketches of character, has not, I believe, been demonstrated. (14)

He stated further:

The main purpose of training in composition is free speech, direct and sincere communion with our fellows, that swift and untrammelled exchange of opinion, feeling, and experience which is the working instrument of the social instinct and the motive power of civilizations. (19)

The role of the college in this process was as trainer, the site of pre-service and in-service education. In his model the university would train the teachers to develop courses of study, would be able to inspect the work and make suggestions, and, finally, would be able to



continue the process of education once the student arrived at the university. Such a working together in mutual respect, Scott felt, was the model most appropriate to education, like a pyramid, with the elementary education at the base and the peak rising as high as a student could achieve with this working together for his benefit.

Scott's influence on school education was not only his system of accreditation and his department's influence on teacher training. He also wrote many school textbooks, some in cooperation with former students. With Joseph Villiers Denney, of Ohio State University, Scott co-authored two texts, *Elementary English Composition* and *Composition-Rhetoric Design for use in Secondary Schools*. In these texts the authors promote the yoking of oratory and writing with a purpose for communicating which comes from within the student: "They [students] will learn the mechanical and grammatical details of writing, will be careful of their oral expression, and will acquire, through willing practice, one by one the necessary principles of discourse just as rapidly as they come to appreciate the value of these things to themselves as members of society" ( *Elementary* . . . ii). The Scott-Denney textbooks were very popular throughout the Midwest.

### Schools in the Twentieth Century

Both the Harvard system and the Michigan system continued to influence the articulation of student writers throughout the twentieth century. The growth of secondary schools, the mandatory education act, and the increasing number of students choosing to enter college have had an effect on both models, however. While the university is still the center of pre-service training, the content and quality of these

programs vary widely. In-service education has not kept pace with the increase of teachers at the secondary level. It is no longer easy for one university to be the center of education in a state nor to maintain contact with all teachers of English. In addition, while entrance exams continue to be widely used, there has been constant argument regarding the use of such tests and many changes in format. Multiple choice tests replaced the essay for convenience in dealing with a mass of students and proved even more unsatisfactory as a test of a student's actual high school experience. Harvey Daniels claims that the introduction of the SAT and other objective admissions tests "discourage[d] teachers from working on writing with their students" (*Famous Last Words* 223). While there is now a trend towards increased use of the essay, there is also a trend towards less emphasis overall on entrance exams, with a number of educators increasingly becoming interested in student portfolios that bear evidence of high school achievement as the most effective new method of evaluation.

As the century progressed, schools went through a change in focus. According to a report by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, *Continuity and Discontinuity* (1973), during the period from 1910 to 1940, in response to an industrial America, preparation for college became a task aimed at a minority of the students. During this period, secondary school enrollment rose from 15% of American youth to 75% (17). These new students were not preparing for college for the most part. This shift in priorities affected curricula. The report suggests that "schools prepared students more for life, less for college" (1).

Progressive education was a movement that became widespread with John Dewey serving as a major proponent and theorist (Carnegie

Commission 18). An education system that had been based on faculty psychology gave way to life-adjustment education. Translating and studying the classics for oratory and literary analysis were not considered valuable practices. Real-world writing and speech-making became dominant in the schools. The academic writing considered appropriate by the colleges was not taught to the majority of youth in the secondary schools. Describing the constant change experienced by the composition program in secondary schools, James Berlin asserts that "writing instruction has been a . . . scene of struggle over competing claims about the purpose of education, more specifically about the society the school and college should advocate and the kind of individuals they should encourage" ("Writing Instruction . . ." 184).

When the percentage of the student body which aspired for higher education rose in post-WWII America, the school curricula was slow to respond. While colleges enrolled 15% of the college-age group in 1940, by 1970 they were enrolling 48% (Carnegie Commission 2). The colleges were grappling with the dynamics of growth and had not yet begun to focus on the skills these entering students should have. Writing instruction had declined and was not increased for college-bound students until well into the 70s.

Eventually the schools once again put an emphasis on college preparatory classes; however, while English is required by virtually every high school, the content of English courses across the nation is extremely inconsistent. The textbooks available for English 9 through English 12 or more specifically for American Literature or English Literature are indicators of the focus of the classroom. In the first half of this century, most English classes used two texts, a literature book

and a grammar book. Neither contained specific instruction for writing. The grammar text usually promoted writing as a progression which began with sentences and proceeded through paragraphs to short compositions. The emphasis, however, was on the parts, not on the whole. Literature and grammar dominated the daily work of the English classroom. Writing might have consisted of a research paper or creative writing. Grammar was taught with drills and worksheets and was usually divorced from any writing that was done. Literature texts of this period might have contained writing suggestions but had no writing lessons. Usually no writing was done in conjunction with the literature except at high schools with a college preparatory focus. In these schools, more writing was assigned. Usually the type of writing assigned, however, was literary analysis, promoted and valued by the colleges (Berlin, "Writing Instruction . . ." 203).

The changes which led to a difference in school writing in the second half of the century are varied. The Dartmouth Conference of 1966 endorsed the expressive model of writing. Researchers like Janet Emig (1971), James Britton (1975), and James Moffett (1968) promoted teaching writing as a cognitive process. The protest movement of the 60s and 70s, which had its most intensive expression on college campuses, reinforced the value of personal expression. A new mandate for teaching writing in the schools rose from corporate America. College teachers endorsed this need and urged the schools to increase their writing instruction. The kind of writing being promoted most often during this new wave of interest was expository: writing which could make a point, develop a thesis, persuade or argue. Ironically, however, none of the teachers in the schools were prepared

to teach this writing and the experts in the colleges weren't prepared to teach the teachers how (Berlin, "Writing Instruction . . ." 213). The situation drew national attention with a *Newsweek* cover story in 1975 (214). There was much pressure on teachers to "teach Johnny to write" and much confusion as to how to teach and what to teach and how to begin the process of finding out. Teachers themselves ultimately stepped in to provide remedies, the most significant being The National Writing Project (NWP) organized in 1974 as the Bay Area Writing Project. This program and its many off-shoots, as well as a plethora of programs based on the NWP, are responsible for most of the in-service training which provided the badly needed instruction in teaching writing for teachers of English already in service in the 70s (215).

Responding to the new emphasis on writing, textbook companies became a partner in promoting more writing in the classroom. It is obvious from a look at the latest textbooks that writing is a staple of English classrooms, even when the focus is literature. For instance, the 1994 edition of Prentice Hall's *Literature: The British Tradition* contains a composition assignment at the end of each selection. The editors explain, "This assignment, which may be creative or analytical, is process-oriented, suggesting steps for pre-writing, drafting, and revising" (T7). Unit sections called "One Writer's Process" give students insight into processes used by some of the writers of selections in the text. At the end of each unit there is a complete writing lesson: "Each lesson focuses on a form of writing and guides students through the writing process" (T7). Finally, at the end of the book there are three Handbooks. It might be assumed that a

literature book would contain the "Handbook of Literary Terms and Techniques." This book also contains the "Handbook of Grammar and Revising Strategies" and the "Handbook of the Writing Process" (T7). A textbook like this is in stark contrast to literature texts of previous decades which might contain writing suggestions but had no directions nor a handbook. By the 80s, grammar texts also began to include major sections of writing instruction. These textbooks are a result of a new interest in writing in English classrooms and a new focus on the integration of literature and writing. Many teachers who were trained in the old tradition of teaching literature separately from writing are finding themselves urged by their textbooks to promote more integrated learning. The writing being suggested, moreover, is not the traditional literary analysis. Instead, reader responses to themes and situations are being promoted.

In The National Study of High School English Programs done in the early 60s, Applebee and Squires found little attention being given to writing or any aspect of the English curriculum other than literature (Applebee 211). In their report *Writing: Trends Across the Decade 1974-1984*, Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1984) report that in the 70s there seemed to be more writing instruction occurring and more activities like pre-writing and rewriting; however, they did not feel that the increase in writing meant that writing had improved in general during that time. They did see a trend upward in data from 1979 to 1984. They concluded, "America's schools and teachers tend to be responsive. The current interest in excellence generally, and in writing particularly, is generating positive reaction. If the momentum

evidenced in these data during the last five years of the decade can be continued, we may be on the way to solid improvement" (3).

In *Famous Last Words* (1983), Harvey Daniels, reporting on his own observations and a study done by Muriel Harris of Purdue in 1979, concluded that much of the response to *Newsweek's* 1975 "call to arms" was a spate of rule-giving that served only to make student writing less prolific (they were too busy studying rules) and less communicative:

Students who carry around such a set of rules in their heads--whatever the individual rules may be--are unlikely to have learned to view writing as a process of communication in which the requirements of form and style shift with the nature of the subject audience, and the purposes of the task at hand. (226)

Daniels concludes that the fault was not entirely the teachers', the vast number of whom, he contends, were underprepared and had no time to study the process of writing (227). As stated above, many teachers in the classroom today are the products of college education programs which stressed literary criticism as the only writing style to be used for the college prep English classroom. College students studying to become English teachers during the mid-1900s were immersed in a series of literature classes and could earn a secondary teaching certification in English without having taken a class which provided methods of instruction in writing. Since most of the writing done by these future teachers was literary analysis or research papers, it is not surprising that these two types of writing became the dominant writing assignments in high schools. Few of these teachers

have gone on for further education since the time when writing instruction began to improve in teacher preparation classes.

As new teachers who had received better training in writing entered the work force and older teachers became better prepared to teach writing through in-service opportunities, other barriers rose. When funds for education become harder to get and populations increase, class sizes become unwieldy for the writing teacher. Additionally, the English teacher is called upon to teach an increasing number and variety of skills in the one hour English is offered: media awareness, word processing, group interaction, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and cultural literacy are examples of skills which English teachers have been asked to add to the traditional reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language studies.

Some classrooms are changing. English teachers are becoming more aware of classroom methods for teaching writing which make the classroom more productive and take some of the burden from the teacher's shoulders. Writing Projects are helping many. When federal funding for the NWP was awarded in 1991, director James R. Gray said, " 'The National Writing Project is now the law of the land' " ("National Writing Project Wins" 1). In 1992 there were 154 sites offering professional development through the NWP (1).

The National Council of Teachers of English and its many affiliates are promoting teaching techniques through conferences and workshops. An increase in the use of portfolios as a final evaluation of a term's work, ungraded journal writing, peer group editing and evaluation, and process writing have helped increase the amount of writing done in America's English classrooms without increasing the



teacher's workload. In addition, integrated studies have helped teachers present more than one language arts skill simultaneously. Skills are no longer taught in isolation. A single project, often on which students collaborate, may provide practice in reading, writing, speaking, and listening as well as critical and creative thinking. As these changes affect classrooms across the country, better writing instruction is the result. Nonetheless, these remedies are far from universal. Implementing new methods and designing new classroom styles takes knowledge, time, money, support, and cooperation--attributes many schools lack.

### Freshman Composition In the Twentieth Century

The progress of writing instruction in the colleges during this century also shows periods of change and shifts in emphasis. In the early 20th century, the work of Scott, Villiers, and others who shared their vision ushered in an approach to composition which emphasized the importance of students writing from their own experiences or research into topics which interested them. This approach complemented the life-adjustment curriculum and provided a challenge to the expressionist movement, which had gained impetus at the time. The expressionist movement centered on a study of literature rather than a practical approach to writing. Courses in literature would provide the students models for self-expression. James Berlin suggests that the expressionist movement was an outgrowth of the beliefs held by some colleges (notably Yale and Princeton) that only a few students should be given writing instruction, those students who showed a talent for writing (*Rhetoric*

*and Reality* 35). Eventually the methods of teaching these "geniuses" began to be used for all students, and a literature-based writing instruction became a dominant trend in the colleges. An outcome of the expressionist movement was the growth of creative writing classes in both schools and colleges.

Berlin reports that by the 50s, college English professors, who were usually literature scholars, began to contend that the best way to teach composition was through reading literature and writing about it. If they were responsible for teaching freshmen to write, literature would be their tool. And increasingly, literature professors were responsible for teaching freshman composition ("Writing Instruction . . ." 203).

### Controversy Surrounding Freshman English

Since its inception, freshman composition has become one of the most debated and varied courses in the university curriculum. As Albert Kitzhaber reported in 1963, "Only a few English departments, nearly always at small colleges with highly selective admission policies, have declined to accept responsibility for the course" ("Teaching English . . ." 3). Kitzhaber points out that the course "has been a staple of freshman studies for three quarters of a century and is by far the most populous in the American college curriculum" (3).

Some college English departments see the course as the reason they are able to continue operating, while in other colleges the course is divorced from the English Department altogether. Some echo the opinion of a Central Michigan University professor who stated that "[g]iven the lack of acceptable results from freshman writing . . . it seems to me that the continuation of such courses at the college level

is an essentially spurious activity and could be classified as a racket" (Lawton B11). Richard Larson of Herbert H. Lehman College, CUNY, has done a study of freshman writing programs. *The Council Chronicle* of the National Council of Teachers of English reported on his findings in April 1992:

After analyzing syllabi, policy statements, assignments, and other data from two- and four-year schools, public and private, large and small, he suspects that on many campuses, "first-year composition has become simply randomized exposure of students to a writing teacher who may not know a great deal about writing, reading, or teaching." ("Freshman Composition" 9)

Larson feels that "[s]ome of these problems could be overcome through attention to writing in the academic disciplines, plus a new focus on the mission of freshman writing programs, staff development, and coordination among staff" (9).

Richard Marius of Harvard agrees that there is need for assessment and change: "Everyone agrees that American college students should learn to write well. Nearly everyone agrees that they do not. But who is to teach them? And how are they to be taught? And what is to be expected of them?" (16). Marius discusses the practice of assigning graduate students and young faculty members to the freshman writing classes. This often results in a bad experience for both students and teacher because of the low status of the job, the lack of experience and training of the teacher, and in some cases an overload of students for the task. This happens, according to Marius because a well-run writing program with low class sizes and well-trained faculty would be expensive. The low status and lack of funds to improve the course is often a result of its position as a freshman requirement.

One solution which Marius suggests is to make the writing program a department separate from the English Department. A department with its separate faculty would then have a hierarchy of skills and experience, would have a coordinated faculty who could help one another, and would design a curriculum which was most helpful to students. He also presents some of the problems inherent in this model such as loss of status or political clout. "For writing programs striving for dignity within the university," he writes, "the dilemma of autonomy versus lodging in an English department seems to offer little comfort on either side" (19). Nonetheless, he sees progress in this area and the growth of energetic writing programs with administrations who see the need and value and are willing to invest in them.

Some colleges, as one in this study does, hire part-time faculty to teach many of the sections of Freshman English. In a recent article, Wanda Martin, an assistant professor of English at the University of New Mexico and a teacher of freshman English, gives her viewpoint of the treatment of part-time faculty: "The part-time faculty is not a holding tank for those not yet ready for the job market, nor a refuge for the incompetent. By and large, these people are professional teachers of writing, writers and scholars themselves, often qualified to teach a far larger range of courses than is available to them. But they are in general disregarded by their 'regular faculty' colleagues, who as a group are unaware of their numbers, their credentials, and their contributions" (123).

Some researchers have questioned whether the use of part-time faculty has had an effect on the teaching of the course. Harvey Daniels

reports that "negative attitudes towards students are surprisingly common among teachers of freshman composition" (233). The teachers, he found, were often junior faculty members or graduate students pursuing literary studies. Few had had writing courses themselves much less a course to prepare them to teach writing (233).

In a tongue-in-cheek diatribe in *CCC*, Lynn Z. Bloom, past president of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, gave an all-too-real profile of a writing director and her staff:

"I want a Writing Director who will keep the writing program out of my hair. I want a Writing Director who will hire a cadre of part-time comp teachers to teach all the freshpersons. I want the Writing Director to be a woman and to hire primarily women because women are more nurturing, they are usually available on the campus where their husbands or other Significant Others teach, and besides, they will work for a lot lower salary than men and get along without benefits. . . .

"I want the Writing Director to have the part-timers teach the freshpersons to write decent paragraphs and spell correctly so that I won't have to bother with such trivia when, as upperclasspersons, they take my advanced courses. . . . Furthermore, the Writing Director should insist that the part-timers have their students write multiple drafts, and respond in detail to each version, on their papers and in conferences, no matter how much time it takes; a stitch in time will save nine of mine." (176-177)

Needless to say, Bloom's account is exaggerated for effect; nonetheless, as my study will show, there is much truth in it as well. The status of the freshman composition teacher and his or her position among the faculty is one of the problems of the program.

### Influences on the Freshman Writing Program

Writing at the college level, as at the high school level, has also been shaped by its integration with the study of literature. In all of the four colleges I studied, although in one more than the other three, literature has been used in combination with the work in composition. There has been an evolution in the use of the literature, however, since the literature professors no longer teach the course. Literary analysis papers are not assigned to freshmen as frequently as they once were. Often the literature is a model for the students' writing, other times the literature becomes a springboard for writing topics.

In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, James Berlin traces the many changes that freshman composition has endured. He points out that on a regular basis there were calls for the abolishment of the course. Despite economic pressure, increasing instruction at the high school level, pressure from the literature purists in English Departments, and other reasons to abolish Freshman Composition, Berlin feels the course will continue to exist and needs to exist because "[a]s beginning students encounter an overwhelming array of new ideas and new ways of thinking, the rhetorical training they bring with them inevitably proves--regardless of their intelligence or training--unequal to the task of dealing with their new intellectual experience" (3).

Whereas in the past the instruction in the schools was heavily impacted by the mandates of the colleges, currently college writing programs are being continually adjusted based on changes in writing instruction in the schools. Freshman composition was slowly redefined as high school teachers and college teachers changed teaching methods

in response to new research and the implementation of the resultant methods promoted by groups such as the National Writing Project. The freshmen arriving on college campuses today are more experienced writers than their counterparts only decades ago. The change in the character of the freshman composition faculty also allowed a change in its curriculum, away from literary analysis towards more personal and expressive writing. Increasingly, secondary writing classes and freshman composition courses have been shaped by the same factors. The courses at the two levels, being taught by better trained, more aware faculty who are focused on the needs of their particular students, have taken on a similarity which could provide the best situation for articulation that has ever existed. The obvious difference in the two levels has become, suddenly, the student himself or herself.

Berlin's defense for Freshman Composition provides one of the best reasons for teachers at the two levels to work together to make sure that the students have a course in college which is familiar but which does not duplicate their high school courses, which provides an on-going skill acquisition, and which recognizes the students' need for writing skills which will help them form a new-found awareness of the written word.

### The Progress of Articulation

Articulation between schools and colleges has taken many forms in the 20th century. Increasingly institutions of higher education find ways to impact the transfer of their entering students from high schools.

Advanced Placement programs were begun in 1955 by the College Entrance Examination Board. Julius Menacker (1975) reports that AP testing, with its resultant training of high school teachers, promoted better understanding between secondary and college level teachers. The AP program is still vital and is a major catalyst for articulation. One ironic drawback of the program is that AP classes taught in the high schools are often so advanced that students who do not take the test and, therefore, must take the required freshman composition courses in college fail to find them useful or challenging.

Dr. Franklin Wilbur, Director of Project Advance (PA) at Syracuse University, is a major proponent of school-college partnerships. In 1983 he edited the *National Directory of School-College Partnerships* with Leo Lambert and M. Jean Young. In the directory, 150 projects are given brief descriptions. The editors describe their own program, PA, as "the largest program in the United States offering accredited college courses taught in high schools by high school faculty" (29). The directory describes nineteen programs similar to PA which exist across the country. Other types of programs described in the directory are ones which offer incentives and special help to minority, disadvantaged, and "at risk" students; promote articulation in vocational-technical schools; and conduct writing projects.

The directory describes the National Writing Project (NWP), which was started in Berkeley, California in 1974 as the Bay Area Writing Project. The success of this program has created a demand. Over 140 writing projects operated in 44 states and abroad at the time of the compilation of the directory in 1983 (87). The NWP brings elementary, high school, and college teachers of writing together for a



Summer Institute. These teachers are trained to work together and also trained as consultants who provide staff-development workshops at their own schools and colleges. In a report on the Bay Area Writing Project, Daniels and Zemelman (1985) described one result of a survey of participants: "A majority of teachers (more than 75 percent) saw the BAWP experience as having increased their students' enjoyment and valuing of writing, and as having increased their students' confidence and overall skill in writing ability" (215).

One underwriter of the NWP is the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Ernest Boyer, in the Carnegie report on secondary education, *High School* (1983), praised the NWP and Syracuse's PA, as well as programs designed by the University of Michigan and Yale which reach out to high school teachers to help them better their students' writing.

Throughout the nation, examples can be found of cooperative ventures which foster better writing in the schools. Donald A. McAndrew describes a co-teaching project at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Teachers of high school English visited the introductory writing classes at IUP. The university faculty visited the high schools. The writing workshops being used by the IUP faculty were then modeled in the high school classrooms. The high school teachers were trained to in-service their colleagues with the IUP teachers as consultants. The project was successful, according to McAndrew, because it had a focus and equal involvement of the participants at the two levels. He also felt it helped to close the "ivory tower" gap (3).

Eileen Oliver describes a program of cooperation between high school and college writing programs based at St. Cloud State University

in Minnesota. Oliver stresses the need and the validity of equality between the two levels before the project can succeed. College instructors and high school teachers, according to Oliver, each have something to offer the other (5).

The Ohio Early English Assessment Program is one program that was started as a result of concern about remediation costs at the college level. The plan was to improve the quality of writing of entering high school students by providing writing instruction for their teachers. The project, according to participant Thomas Flynn, was a collaboration, not simply a handing down of ideas. Teachers from both levels worked together to define need, to agree on what constituted good writing, and to develop the plan. Like many writing projects, this program called for summer seminars during which teachers at both levels worked together to create model writing techniques which the secondary teachers would present to their colleagues at workshops. The number of collaborations in the Ohio program grew to twenty between its inception in 1980 and Flynn's report in 1986 (27). Flynn could not report on results of the programs, however, since no formal study had been done.

Franklin Wilbur described several partnerships between schools and colleges in a 1985 article for *The Journal of College Admissions*. Brief summaries of programs in Milwaukee, New York City, St. Louis, New Haven, Maryland, and Pennsylvania give evidence of a desire by personnel in schools and colleges to work together to help assure their students successful passage through both levels. While these programs weren't specifically aimed at writing, the chance for teachers at the two levels in all subjects to work together should foster

improvement in all skills. Wilbur concludes, "We do expect a lot from our schools, but with more than 3,000 institutions of higher education looking for ways to become involved, many of our expectations should be realized and the effects far-reaching" (28).

Many of these partnerships seek to have an impact on the writing students do at the high school level and, in addition, encourage the college level writing teachers to be more aware of the work the high schools are doing. Ernest Boyer suggests that many of the programs were the result of "the shock treatment of remediation" (252), when many colleges were having to offer courses in basic skills which it was assumed the students would have gained at the high school level. Gene I. Maeroff delineated the problem in his 1983 study, *School and College: Partnerships in Education*. Maeroff indicates that the colleges, while being concerned that many entering students were not adequately prepared for college, were partially to blame for the problem because of their vague and shifting standards and admission requirements (9).

Boyer agrees with Maeroff on this point. He cites a 1982 survey by the National Association of Secondary School Principals which shows that the necessity of remediation had an effect on college standards. The study found college admission standards being changed or reviewed in twenty-seven states (253). Most colleges established four years of English as a criteria for admission.

Gordon Ambach, Commissioner of Education for New York State in 1982, as well as president of the State University of New York, feels that remediation is a necessary aspect of total articulation. Nonetheless, he shares the view that a prepared student is a better

student. Ambach, like others who have been mentioned, stresses the need for strong teacher preparation. Too often, he contends, the education department of a university and the subject area departments will not work in cooperation to train prospective teachers. When the students come to college less prepared than expected to work in the subject areas, the two departments blame one another (24).

John Goodlad advocates a teacher training institution different from most operating currently. He is quoted in a 1986 article: " 'We need . . . a collaborative research and training institution that serves as a half-way house between the university and the schools' " (De Bevoise 9). Goodlad feels this kind of institution is necessary because of the "disaffection and sometimes outright hostility" (9) which he feels teachers in the schools aim at those in teacher education institutions.

### Barriers to Articulation and Partnerships

As Goodlad indicates, the relationships between teachers at various levels have often been fraught with conflict. Donald McQuade in a 1976 *English Journal* article described the situation as he saw it:

The responses of the English profession to the financial, social, and pedagogical disarray which now characterize a good deal of American education have consisted primarily of internal bickering, trading insults which reinforce the prejudices embedded in the hierarchical structure of our system of learning, and, as is the case in the armed services, the abuse magnifies as it is passed down through the ranks. Graduate professors snipe at embittered senior colleagues who carp at disillusioned junior faculty who castigate exhausted allies in the high school. (8)

Twelve years later, in an article for CCC, Schultz, Laine, and Savage (1988) examined school-college partnerships. They examined many of the projects described in this chapter. The catalyst for these undertakings was often the complaint that freshmen were not adequately prepared for Freshman English, this criticism being based solely on the writing of the students. But just as McQuade had found, these authors suggest that all of the reported cooperation may be misleading: "much of this work has been marked by acrimony, and the projects have often been less than successful" (141). In many cases the faculties were not cooperative, the programs merely being forums for college professors to tell high school school teachers what to teach.

The authors related some of the history of articulation to make the point that it was often undertaken by groups which were dominated by college practitioners:

All of the speakers, for instance, on the first NCTE College Section panel on the correlation of high school and college composition were college teachers; that was in 1919. Members of the celebrated Conference on Basic Issues in the Teaching of English, a group that listed articulation as the first of its three major concerns and argued for "closer communication and cooperation among the teachers at the various levels," consisted, as Tovatt and Jewett point out, of 19 college professors of English, one professor of elementary education, three college deans, two secondary school teachers--both from wealthy New York suburban districts--a superintendent of schools, a representative of a federal agency, and the editor of a scholarly journal (541); that was in 1958. While schools and colleges are, in general, more equally represented today on committees doing cooperative work, a committee coordinating the "Conference on Joint Responsibility of High Schools and Colleges toward English for the 70s and 80s"

Sch  
Sch  
sch

facu  
lea  
an  
arg  
exp  
H  
pro  
bel  
fig  
ent  
com

had two college co-chairs and 14 consultants, only four of whom were from the schools; that was as recently as 1971. (143)

One program, a 1940 University of Michigan-Michigan Public Schools project, prided itself on the cooperative effort being made. Yet Schultz et al. print a description of the project which suggests otherwise:

"A revision of *Preparation for College English* is now being carried forward under the supervision of Professor C. D. Thorpe, who has been, from the first, the chief guiding spirit of the enterprise. Professor Wells of Michigan, Euwema of Michigan State, Hanawait of Wayne, Limpus of State Teachers College, and McClinchey of Central State Teachers College have been appointed to serve as a central committee and representatives of more than two-thirds of the thirty institutions of collegiate rank in the state have agreed to participate. High-school teachers will also be asked to aid, and it is expected that the pamphlet will be ready for publication by next summer." (144)

The problem is often a lack of understanding between the two faculties. In the November 1988 *College English*, two high school teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with *CE*, prompted by an article on composition theory by Robert Brooke: "In this letter we argue that no useful connection exists between composition theory as expressed in *CE* and the needs and practices of classroom teachers " (Hiller, Osburg 820). They added: "It provides an image of *CE* that is profoundly elitist for it prompts those of us at the secondary level to believe in traditional education class divisions between secondary and higher education and accept as inferior our quaint pragmatism, the tenuous orders we occasionally give to students to promote clear communication" (820).

In a response to this letter, Brooke lists some of the factors that naturally divide the two levels of education: "the existence of different discourse communities within the profession; an institutional-political split between college teachers and K-12 teachers; the existence of a plurality of goals and methods in writing instruction" (821). Brooke also cites an article by Joy Ritchie:

"The division between college and secondary teachers is further accentuated because university professors historically have been one group attempting to use their power and status to influence the work of teachers and schools.... The relationship has always contained the seeds of resistance and mutual suspicion, with teachers from time to time attempting to maintain some autonomy in the face of attempts by government, universities, and other groups to influence and control their work." (821)

In *Continuity and Discontinuity* (1973) the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education looked into the "continuing tension between school and college" (101). As have many who have described this tension, the Carnegie Commission described the "two worlds of school and college" (101). The high school teachers "distrust the academic elitism of the colleges" (101) and the colleges are "disdainful of anti-intellectualism in the schools" (101).

Theodore L. Gross in his book *Partners In Education* (1988) also cites what he describes as two different cultures:

The college faculty is split between loyalty to their college, where teaching and service are central, and their discipline, where professional prestige offers the possibility for growth and career mobility. In contrast, teachers are locked into a school, and their status depends on their performance in the classroom unless they leave--as too many of the best teachers do--for administration. College faculty enjoy sabbaticals and leaves of absence that



J  
colle  
stud  
level  
stud

allow time for research. Although some teachers do take study leaves, they have little time to read or do research in their disciplines. Faculty have the academic and financial opportunity for free-lance work in their fields--writing books and essays, developing scholarly projects, consulting with industry and business, serving on state and national committees--whereas teachers too often must find evening, weekend, and summer work outside the educational field simply to make their total salary respectable. Faculty control the curriculum and often the very direction of their college; teachers are bound by bureaucratic rules and regulations. Faculty almost always associate with colleagues in the same discipline, whereas teachers work in densely populated settings but are frequently lonely. There are two different cultures, and their differences must be recognized if they are to be reconciled. (46)

Joy Ritchie recently studied these same dichotomies between college teachers and high school teachers. In an article discussing her study, however, she chooses to focus not on what divides the two levels but on what divides both levels from their desire to teach their students:

In both our worlds, the school and the university, we experience renewed pressure to divorce ourselves from pedagogy as a form of inquiry and, consequently, to accept definitions of our role as teachers that force a wider gulf between us. In the trenches, English teachers face more students, more demands to standardize their teaching, and more barriers to their function as intellectuals. But in the ivory tower we face similar, if sometimes more subtle pressures to divert us from concerns with teaching, learning, and students. Professors in my department have been criticized for their overuse of informal journal writing in literature classes; other faculty members, who have devoted themselves to improving undergraduate education or to programs involving teachers and schools instead of to research, are not promoted. (104-105)

Ritchie ends her article by urging teachers of writing in high schools and colleges to begin to focus on what they know should be done in the classroom to promote good writing. She urges them to support powerful models of teaching like The National Writing Project and to resist the forces that would make them compromise.

In *Coming On Center* (1988), James Moffett had the same message. He states, "Generally, the larger society places certain constraints and demands on schools that conflict with the learning activities advocated by most thoughtful educators" (200). He describes having seen teachers transformed by the NWP who go back to their classrooms and return to stupefying educational practices which are expected of them or which are easier to justify to others if not to themselves.

#### Implications for this Study Suggested By the History of Writing Instruction

While the ability of high school students and college students to write well has been of concern over the decades, improvement overall has never been dramatically displayed. The concern expressed by society in general, as is reflected in newspaper and magazine headlines, has been no less intense than concern by the educators themselves. Disagreement over what constitutes good writing will probably always be a factor in the assessment of student writing; nonetheless, most people have an idea of what good writing is when they see it. Teachers of writing must be concerned with not only what good writing is, but how a student can be taught good writing. The trends over the years and competing models in any era show that there is no more agreement about the methods than there is the results.

With writing as a basis for much college work, it is understandable that writing ability would be seen as a basic skill to have mastered for a student who wishes admission into an institute of higher education. Knowing this, as well as knowing that writing is a basic life skill, it should go without saying that making sure each student achieves writing skill should be the main focus of high school teachers.

When the mandate is so obvious, then it is apparent that there are problems that need attention when the general consensus is that students who graduate from high schools today or at any time in the past are not good writers on the whole. That college-bound students are also not considered to write well enough for college standards is also a great concern. Given the severity of the situation, the evident lack of cooperation between many faculty at the two levels is unfortunate. Nonetheless, the successful programs, and there are many, should serve as models for all faculty who are concerned for their own students.

If the students in this study existed in an ideal situation, this brief history of the progress of writing instruction and articulation suggests that they would have been found working in high school English classes which used a workshop format and assigned writing to be done using the writing process, and they would have moved on to colleges in which the freshman writing courses also used the workshop format and process writing. At both levels, the students would write prolifically and would experience a variety of evaluative measures including peer critiques and portfolio grading. The freshman composition teachers these students encountered would be very familiar with what each student did in his or her high school English

classes while the high school teachers would know that their students were going to continue honing their writing skills at the college level in a format similar to the one they were using. As can be seen by the barriers which exist in achieving such an ideal, few students will ever be a part of this picture. Certainly the above does not describe the reality of high school English and college freshman composition in Michigan.

While many observers contend that writing instruction in the schools is deficient, and that students are entering colleges ill-prepared for writing at that level, I did not find research which focused on a group of individual students from a diverse group of high schools to see exactly what problems they encountered and how those problems were the result of their high school training.

I will examine the experiences of twenty-nine Michigan high school graduates as they take writing courses during their freshman year of college. I will also look at the programs offered in their high schools and colleges. My purpose in this study is to see if the experiences of these students suggest changes which could or should be made at either level to facilitate the articulation of their writing experiences between high school and college. Another question which I will seek to answer is whether or not the kind of writing program offered in the high school or the college makes a significant difference to the success of a motivated student.

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

#### Selection of Participants

The transition of students from high school to college is a process subject to many variables of which the most significant is the student himself or herself. Other variables include the high school which the student attended, the college he or she chooses, and the teachers at both levels. I was interested in how a student's perception of himself or herself as a writer is affected by the change from high school to college, and I wanted to know if specific practices by teachers of high school or college can make the transition between the two levels easier for the students. I decided that a general study of articulation could not portray the transition from high school to college as well as a study of specific students and their experiences. By selecting specific students, I could gain an overview of a variety of experiences from the personal perspectives of the students.

The study I designed gathered four kinds of data: 1) a study of the experiences of a group of students over a two-year period during which they were seniors in high school and freshmen in college, gathered by written responses on two questionnaires, one when they finished high school and one when they finished the freshman year of college; 2) questionnaires for teachers of these students at both

levels; 3) interviews with selected students from the larger group; and 4) interviews with the directors of freshman writing at the four universities.

I selected a group of students to answer questionnaires at the end of their senior year in high school and at the end of their freshman year in college. I then chose a smaller group from those who had answered the high school questionnaire to visit on campus to discuss their experiences in further detail. I visited these students one or two times during their freshman year in college. Until I met the students I interviewed, I had not met any of the students in the study face to face. I talked to many of them by telephone in the process of gathering the questionnaires, but did not use the telephone conversations for the gathering of data.

### Selecting the Schools and the Students

Initially I sent letters and forms on which to indicate the names of volunteers (See Appendix A) to English Department Chairs in 27 high schools in Kent County, Ionia County, Ottawa County, Barry County, Eaton County, and Montcalm County, asking each Department Chair to recruit one English teacher and three seniors (the class of 1991) who would be beginning their freshman year of college in the fall of 1991. I asked that these be students who would be attending one of four universities which I had selected because they are nearby state universities often attended by students from these counties. I limited my study to four-year state universities rather than community colleges or private colleges. I selected schools from the west central part of Michigan because that is the area in which I teach. The initial

mailing went to high schools ranging from urban to rural, affluent to financially limited, and small to large. My goal was to make a final choice of twelve high schools, thus having a group of thirty-six students with which to work.

Ironically, exactly twelve high schools responded to my inquiry. Since I had decided to include twelve high schools in my study, I had to decide whether or not to encourage additional response before I selected the twelve participants. I decided to use the twelve initial respondents for two reasons: 1) they were teachers who had agreed without additional persuasion from me which suggested a higher level of cooperation than if I had resorted to persuade others to join the study, and 2) the twelve schools represented the range in size, financial backing, and locale that I had determined was necessary for the study. I sent the twelve English teachers questionnaires (all questionnaires used in this study are contained in Appendix A), and I sent questionnaires to the 36 students, three from each school, which the twelve teachers had recruited. The twelve schools represent each of the counties named above except Ionia. (More detailed descriptions of the schools appear later in this chapter.)

Since the study which I intended to do would compare the programs in the schools and relate some of the answers to teacher questionnaires, I informed the teachers and students that if they chose to participate, they would not be named, and their schools would not be identified by name at any time in the study. I know that teachers are reluctant to be compared to other teachers or to have their schools compared to other schools. This reluctance has many sources, but a main factor is the vast difference in funding



among Michigan school districts which generates an inability for poorer school districts to have the facilities, equipment, and materials which might be available in more affluent school districts. In addition, the size of a school often has an effect on curricular offerings. The location of the school can also have an impact on the preparation and motivation of the students. Too often, test results and other means of evaluation have drawn comparisons between schools without taking these factors into consideration and have left teachers feeling unfairly criticized. Because of this reluctance to be compared and because I wanted teachers and students to answer questionnaires candidly, anonymity was necessary.

#### High School Teacher Questionnaires

Although I sent my initial query to department chairs, I did not specify that the department chair was to be the teacher who would answer the survey. Six of the twelve were department chairs. I did not know any of the teachers in the study before I recruited them and their students. I did not meet any of them personally in the course of gathering material although I have met several since they filled out the questionnaires. I talked to several of them by telephone to discuss their sending me the questionnaires. I did not use the telephone conversations to gather data. In two cases, however, the teachers did not know all of the statistics about their schools' sizes or college-bound percentiles, and rather than find this data themselves, they asked me to call their schools' administrative offices for these numbers. I did call these two schools for these figures.

### The Teachers' Selection of the Students

It is important to note that the students in this study were selected by their teachers without limitations imposed by me as to their abilities in the English classroom or their overall grade point averages. The only stipulation was that the students planned to attend one of the four colleges I had chosen. This study, therefore, can draw conclusions based only upon students who do well in their high school writing programs because the students who were selected were, with few exceptions, three of the better students in their high schools. While a study might be done on why some students do not succeed in high school writing programs, I feel it is valid in this study to focus on motivated students because their abilities at their time of graduation provide a fair basis for judgement of what can be achieved in their high schools' writing programs. Since the students were all graduates of the Class of 1991, they were all very close in age, their birth dates ranging from September of 1972 to November of 1973. The twenty-nine students who answered the first questionnaire included seven males and twenty-two females. The preponderance of females chosen by their teachers for this study could raise the issue of gender bias on the part of teachers or verify the stereotype that females do better in English classes than males; however, neither issue was investigated during this study.

### The First Student Questionnaire

Over a period of three months after their high school graduations, I worked to gather questionnaires from the thirty-six

students named by the twelve teachers. Eventually I had twenty-nine questionnaires. The remaining seven students had opted out of the study after seeing the questionnaire or had changed college plans. I was able to talk on the telephone to all seven of these students about their reasons for choosing not to participate. The seven non-respondents attended seven different schools, leaving two or three students from each of the twelve high schools I had selected to take part in the study. Because I had at least two students from each high school, I decided not to attempt to add students at that point in the study.

### The Twelve Schools

The high school teacher questionnaires provided information about the schools. I did not ask each teacher specific information about his or her individual practices but sought general information about the entire English Department. This information described enrollments and practices during the 1990-1991 school year.

Of the twelve high schools involved in the study, only one could be described as urban. It is one of five high schools of a large city school district. The school has an enrollment of around 1350 students of which approximately 50% go on to attend a two-year or four-year college.

Six of the schools are in the suburban area of this city. The largest has an enrollment of approximately 1900; the others have between 650 and 1350 students. Two of the schools make up a two-high school district and send approximately 65% on to college, while the largest of the twelve is the only high school in its district and

sends approximately 70% on to college. The most affluent of the suburban districts sends over 80% of its students on to a two-year or four-year college. The other two suburban schools send 60 to 70% on to college.

The remaining five schools are rural schools, three of them serving small cities, two consolidating several small towns. Their enrollments range from 600 to 1170. Fifty to 65% of the students in these high schools go on to acquire some college education.

The teachers who answered the questionnaires described the curricula of their English Departments. I asked the teachers to estimate how much writing a college-bound student might do during four years at their high schools and to evaluate how well these students were prepared for college writing. The teachers wrote about practices, successes, and problems in their English Departments.

### Twenty-nine Students

The twenty-nine students who answered the first questionnaire were not equally divided among the four colleges. Ten entered the largest of the universities, while the other three colleges enrolled seven, five, and three students respectively. After the initial contact, the remaining four students selected universities other than the four I had chosen for the study; however, I still used their questionnaires for general comments about their preparation and experiences in high school. In the questionnaire which the students filled out after their senior year, I asked the students to describe the classes they had taken in high school and to indicate the grades they had

received. The students were told that they could choose not to answer any question asked on the questionnaire. Most students filled out the entire questionnaire although a few chose not to enter grades received in classes. I asked them to evaluate their high school writing programs. They were asked to tell how much and what forms of writing they did. I asked each respondent to describe experiences in writing classes and discuss important aspects of the classes in his or her development of writing skill. I asked the students to describe the processes they used for writing and to give an opinion on their preparation for college writing. Finally, I asked them to write a page on which they described themselves as writers.

### Interviews

After I had divided the students into groups according to the college each planned to attend, I selected twelve students to interview, one student from each high school. I was able to select three students who would be attending each of the four colleges. Later, when one student transferred between two of the colleges, I added a thirteenth student to those to be interviewed, one who attended the college which the transfer student had left.

I interviewed the first two students on November 23, 1991. All other interviews took place between February 1992 and April 1992. (A sample of typical questions asked during the student interviews is contained in Appendix B. A transcript of my interview with Mary on April 9, 1992 is contained in Appendix C). I interviewed seven of the students twice and the remaining six students once. Most of the interviews were done on the campuses the students attended, but

two interviews took place in the students' hometowns during their spring breaks. I called the students to set up the interviews. I used the campus library as the location for most of the interviews. Several were conducted in the students' dormitories, however, either in their private room or in a lounge. I drove to the campus for the interview and met the student at the designated time and place.

I recorded the conversations with the thirteen students chosen to be interviewed. During our discussions, I asked students to describe specific college writing assignments and their degree of difficulty. I asked students to discuss and compare the writing instruction in their high schools and colleges and to describe practices of teachers which they considered successful or unsuccessful at either level. At my request, they characterized themselves as writers and identified sources they considered responsible for their skill or lack of skill in any aspect of writing. They described the class processes which they had encountered in college and described their own participation in the process as well as telling how they felt about taking part and how they related to their fellow students. I also asked them, if possible, to compare their preparation to that of other students in their classes. They responded to my request to describe their feelings about themselves as writers as they experienced college courses and teachers. They explained problems they had encountered and solutions they had applied. Finally, I asked if anything could have been done differently in their high schools to better prepare them for college writing.

### Questionnaires to College Teachers and Interviews with Department Chairs

As I interviewed the thirteen students, I asked for the names of professors who had taught their freshman writing courses. I sent questionnaires to sixteen of these teachers, but, despite follow-up phone calls and letters, I was able to procure questionnaires from only ten of those correspondents. At least one from each of the four colleges responded, however. Because I felt these ten responses did not give an overview of the freshman writing program at each university, I made appointments with the head of the freshman writing program at each university and asked to tape an interview with each. These interviews took place between April 5 and April 8, 1993. I drove to three of the campuses (Universities A, B, and C) and met with the director in his or her office. Since the director of the program at University D lived at a location halfway between my home and University D, we agreed to meet at a local restaurant convenient to both of us. The conversations provided an overview for comparison between the four programs. As with the high school questionnaires, I promised anonymity to the four college program directors and to college teachers responding to questionnaires. (A sample of typical questions asked during the interviews with the freshman writing directors is contained in Appendix D.)

### College Teachers

The college instructors were asked in questionnaires to describe the writing required in the specific courses in which the students whom I interviewed were enrolled. The specific students I was

working with were not identified in my request for information. The college teachers were asked to give opinions as to strengths and weaknesses of the writing skills of all of the students who enrolled in their courses. These college writing teachers were invited to say which skills high schools most needed to teach based on the perceived weaknesses of their students. I asked them to compare themselves to colleagues who taught other sections of the same courses.

### Freshman Writing Programs at the Four Colleges

During the interview with the four freshman writing directors, I asked for details as to requirements of the program of each college, the preparation of those who teach these classes, and the method of placement of students into various classes. I asked for a description of the opportunities available to the students to opt out of required writing courses. I asked for a profile of the faculty which teaches freshman writing courses on each campus and for an indication of the control or lack of control exerted by the Department over the content of the courses. I also sought to gain an idea of the consistency in methods and requirements from section to section of each course.

### The Second Student Questionnaire

At the end of the students' first year of college (spring 1992), I sent the twenty-nine students a second questionnaire. I was able to retrieve twenty-seven of these questionnaires. The other two students dropped out of the colleges they were attending after my



last contact with them, and their families moved from the homes in which they lived during these students' high school years, so I was not able to contact them by mail or phone. It would have been valuable to have discussed their experiences with these two students because their reasons for leaving their colleges and their future plans might have added valuable information to this study. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate either student.

During the course of their freshman year in college, two of the students who had entered the largest university in the study transferred to two of the other universities, leaving the numbers of students at the four selected schools seven, seven, five, and four by the end of the 1991-1992 school year. I also received follow-up questionnaires from the four students at other universities.

In the second questionnaire I asked the students to compare their college writing classes to their high school experiences. A list of English courses taken and grades received was requested. They were asked to describe the methods used in college courses to teach writing and to rate the effectiveness of those methods. I requested an evaluation of how they had improved as writers and what strengths and weaknesses they perceived after a year at college. After asking whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with college writing grades, I asked the students to identify, if possible, the factors which contributed to their strengths or weaknesses in writing. I reminded them of the ratings they had given their high schools on the 1991 questionnaire. These ratings were to indicate how well each student felt he or she had been prepared for college writing. I asked if they would give the same rating after they had

been in college for a year and invited them to tell how their schools could have better prepared them. Finally, I asked for an indication of how they had changed as writers.

### My Purpose for This Study

By gaining an overview of both the high school writing programs and the college writing programs, I hoped to be able to evaluate the students' questionnaires and interview responses to gain an insight as to how students are handling their transition between the two levels of writing instruction in west central Michigan. I analyzed the student responses with my knowledge of their instruction and experiences at their high schools and colleges as a background. I wished to answer the following questions: 1) What factors most influenced a student's college writing experience? 2) What effect did the high school writing experience have on the college writing experience? 3) What factors at both levels aided or hampered a student's transition between the two levels? 4) How significant is the student's perception of the teacher and the relationship with him or her in the success of the student's transition? 5) How significant are the student's personality traits to his or her success in a class at either educational level? My goal was to know which factors were the most important in a smooth transition between high school and college writing programs and which factors generated problems. I hoped to be able to identify any problems which could be remedied by changes at one or both levels of instruction and to tell whether any current practices in articulation could provide such a remedy. In addition, I wished to determine whether there were ways of

improving articulation between the two levels which were not being employed.

To find consistency with such a diverse group of students and the many different factors in their experiences would be impossible. Nonetheless, individual experiences can suggest positive and negative practices and factors. Some students had good experiences and little difficulty in transition. Some students had experiences which were less positive. In Chapter Three I will describe the insight I gained and my impressions of the students' experiences through two eventful years of their lives.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

#### Twelve High School English Departments

I gained information on each school by sending a questionnaire to the one teacher from each school listed in the response to my initial request for participants. Sometimes this teacher was the Chair of the English Department to whom I had directed the letter requesting participants, sometimes my contact was another teacher recruited by the Department Chair. Since the students had had more teachers than my one contact, I asked general questions about the teaching in the school, rather than asking the teachers to focus on their own classrooms. The questionnaires were designed to give me information about the school, the English Department curriculum, and specific methods used in the teaching of writing. I asked each teacher to give his or her opinion about how the department was doing in the preparation of student writers who would be entering college and to identify strengths or weaknesses in the process. It is a limitation of this study that my impressions of each English Department are the opinion and observations of one teacher from each school.

Seven of the respondents teach the AP English or College English courses in their schools. The twelve respondents are veterans, over

half having taught for over 20 years. The remainder have over ten years of experience.

### English Department Curricula

All twelve of the high schools offer four years of English to any student who chooses; however, few of the high schools require four years of English. Most required three, and some required three and one half credits. Of the twenty-nine students who answered my questionnaire at the end of their senior year, all but two had taken four years of English classes. Those two had taken three and one half.

Six of the schools offer classes which are called English 9, 10, 11, and 12 or variations on those titles. Only one of those schools, the smallest in the study, does not offer various levels of the four classes, such as Basic, Regular, and Honors, or Advanced Placement or College English. The remaining six schools offer elective programs after the first two years. Four of these schools offer several sections of English 9 and 10 or English I and II. The other two schools divide their 9th and 10th grade years into classes called Basic Composition, Introduction to Literature, Speech, Reading, Composition Through Literature, or other courses meant to cover the skills of reading, writing, and speaking. While one of these two schools requires nine-week sections during which the students rotate through all of these skills, the other provided several choices of semester classes but required one writing course and one literature or reading course in each of the first two years.

The electives offered by these six schools to juniors or seniors cover the gamut of English offerings: Novels, American Literature,

English Literature, Research Paper, Short Story, Composition, Rhetoric, Great Books, Classical Literature, Shakespeare, Journalism, Media, Creative Writing, Career English, Young Adult Literature, Humanities, Business English, Forms of Writing, and Communication Skills. Some of these electives were also offered by the larger of the schools which were offering English 9 through 12. The larger the student body, the more varied the selection seemed to be the rule. In addition, a larger enrollment seemed to be a prerequisite to offering very specific classes such as Shakespeare. Eleven of the schools were able to offer extras including Drama, Yearbook, Newspaper, Speech II, and Debate. The school which did not offer these extras was the school with the smallest enrollment, a rural school serving a small city.

### Writing Instruction

Each school puts a major emphasis on writing instruction. When asked which of the classes in the curriculum incorporated writing on a regular basis, the teachers indicated that writing has become embedded in the English curriculum and is no longer solely the work of classes called Composition. Five of the responses were simply "All." A sixth answered "Almost all," while the others listed a few exclusions such as yearbook, speech, developmental reading, acting, drama, debate, forensics, mass media, and fiction.

The reaction to a query about problems in their schools' writing programs varied. Some were very disappointed with other staff members who they considered to be the weak links in their schools' writing programs. Several specifically mentioned students' lack of motivation and their desire to take classes which required less effort.

One criticized the administration for a lack of understanding of the needs of the students, which she felt led to poor curriculum decisions.

When asked if college-bound students were prepared to succeed in the writing they would do in college, one teacher answered, "Probably not! Our emphasis has not been on writing in past years." Another wrote, "Many will not do as well as they would like (meaning that they will not earn A's and B's in their college English classes.) Reason: though 20-25% of the English curriculum involved writing, many students refused to do the writing or copied others or put little effort into the assignments."

On the other hand, there were some very positive comments about high school writing programs. One teacher said, "Feedback from college freshmen has always been positive and encouraging." Another boasted about his school's writing program, "We believe we're somewhat unique...." He did not say exactly why he felt that way other than that he described a well-developed curriculum. Another commented that the college-bound students in his high school would "have had good exposure to writing" in four years. In answer to the question about student preparation, one teacher answered, "Absolutely! They've had so much writing they're sick of it!" Although some were a bit more reserved than others in their answers, ten of the twelve felt confident that their motivated students were ready for the writing they would encounter in college.

Having ascertained this confidence in the preparation of their students for writing in college, I asked the teachers questions to determine what forms or kinds of writing received the most attention in their schools. The majority of the twelve schools concentrate on

expository writing to the exclusion of narrative or "creative" writing. While a few of the schools assigned a research paper at every grade level, it was more typically taught at the ninth and/or tenth grade levels and refined in College English or AP classes in the senior year. Students who did not take college preparatory classes did not, then, do research papers beyond tenth grade in most English departments, although they were often assigned research papers of some type in other courses (history or government, science courses, art history, or foreign languages). The instruction in the 9th and 10th grades is seen as adequate to prepare students to complete a research paper for high school classes but not for college. Students entering college were given the most intensive instruction for research in their senior year. One teacher reveals, "We expect a lot from our junior and senior college bound students. The attention of the staff is now turning to what to do about the other 50%."

Other assignments which were typical of most schools were book reports, short essays, short compositions, and literary criticism. Again, while the first three were seen as necessary work for all students, literary criticism was usually limited to upper level college preparatory classes. These English teachers and their colleagues tend to give essay tests or to include essay questions along with objective questions on tests. The use of essay tests is not widespread throughout the high school, however. One teacher criticized those who do not use essays: "Too many teachers and students need more of a commitment to what they are about. Too many simply don't work hard enough. In the high school ranks it is too easy to gain the good will of an administrator just by being visible or doing 'Schedule B'



assignments. So today's teacher sponsors the National Honor Society, shows up at a few athletic contests--and then writes tests with no essays and occasionally grades journal writing holistically. Unfortunately, that's just not good enough."

Half of the schools surveyed offered a class called "Creative Writing." Others indicated that creative writing was included in the kinds of writing assigned in the regular classroom. In general, however, creative writing was offered on a limited basis for those students who chose to take it because they knew they had talent or they wanted talent. It was not considered an important addition to the curriculum for all students. One teacher feels that teachers don't understand creative writing and criticized assignments like "If I were a fruit, what would I be and why," calling them "gimmicky" and a waste of students' time. In some schools, high school teachers talented at fiction and/or poetry writing offered instruction which was valuable to student writers. These teachers often entered their students' work into contests and arranged for other kinds of sharing. Such teachers are not widespread among the English ranks, however. (A look at the winners in state writing contests will show this. Year after year, the majority of the winners are students from the same schools taught by the same teachers. Often these are schools which are able to offer a separate class in creative writing.)

The amount of writing which high school students do varies widely from school to school. The teachers were asked if they could calculate what portion of a college bound students' four years was devoted to writing. Several admitted, "I'm not sure how to answer this question." Others gave it a try. One teacher calculated just over half of the four

years by looking at the course syllabus for a typical college prep program. Two others used the same method to come up with 20-25%. Several responded by listing required assignments. One department chair commented, "Our students are supposed to write every week. That doesn't mean that I get 100% cooperation among the teachers, especially at the 9th grade level." Another teacher reasoned, "Depends on the teacher really. In general, however, I think everyone is very conscious of having students write often . . . ." One school requires a composition and revision every marking period as a minimum. This school (the one which the respondent labeled unique) has used student folders (portfolios), which are passed from grade to grade, for 30 years. One teacher outlined a heavy paper load for college-bound seniors, but added, "The course syllabus for grades 9, 10, and 11 dictates a variety of writing and speaking assignments, but [it is] very difficult to police teachers and how much they are willing to correct."

### Methods of Writing

I included another question which asked about methods of writing or procedures which were encouraged. Five of the teachers answered that their departments encouraged Process Writing (pre-write, draft, revise, edit, share). Others stressed organization similar to that described by one teacher as "introduction with thesis, body with topic and transitional sentences, and conclusion." The teaching of grammar has undergone a decline in recent years as more teachers respond to research that suggests that the isolated teaching of grammar does not produce significant results. The question now is how many teachers are committed to or competent at incorporating grammar lessons into

writing instruction. Comments ranged from "Some teachers are still grammar-oriented rather than using it as a part of process writer's workshop" to "No one apparently cares about or teaches grammar anymore." Other methods mentioned by at least two schools each were Power Writing and Dr. John Collins' Focus Correction and Student Folders. It appeared that most schools assign some writing which requires a reaction to literature other than the traditional book report.

When the teachers were asked if there was consistency from person to person in their departments, the answers were telling:

We try to stress continuity from class to class.

There is not much consistency among our staff. One teacher who's been here 30 years doesn't do any writing at all.

Not really.

No!

We're composing a style sheet this year which seems to be heading in the direction of a composition manual for the high school students.

The writing process is the common denominator of writing instruction. Even approaches to this vary from teacher to teacher.

Writing process, literature based power writing: we all use these methods--the writing process is used by all of us most.

The most consistent procedure seems to be the "error hunt."

There is no set policy in our department.

Many of our better English teachers have developed successful methodology for implementing current and popular pedagogical techniques like "writing process" and "peer critiquing."

One teacher's comment seemed a summary of what many felt:

Writing instruction is left to the individual teacher, and some people do more and a better job than others.

### The Effect of Differences Among Schools

A look at these twelve high schools through the eyes of these twelve teachers can, paradoxically, tell us everything about the teaching of writing in high schools and nothing about such instruction. Although some surely feel their schools stand out, every high school in the country is unique, as is each faculty and each individual English teacher. Nonetheless, these twelve teachers, as they report about their own very specific situations, can tell us much about writing instruction in general.

We know that some schools are hampered by lack of money and resources, even lack of students. The two smallest schools in this study offer very few English classes for the students to choose from. Neither offers students a class for preparation for the Advanced Placement test. As stated earlier, most high schools require only three years of English, so the students who take English in their senior year are usually college prep students and the classes at that level are designed for them. The five students in this study who attended these two smaller schools took the one course offered seniors, which was a college prep course. All five answered questionnaires before and after college. They all received A's or B's in college writing. One student

took three freshman English courses in his freshman year in college and received 2.5 (C/B) in one of the courses but received 3.0 and 3.5 in the other two courses. These students did not seem to be hampered by the size of their high school or the limited course offerings when they entered college writing classes.

In addition to these two smallest high schools, two other high schools in this study did not offer their students an opportunity for AP courses although each was large enough to have added such a course to their curriculum and each had an extensive array of electives. One was a rural school which reported that 65% of its students went on to college while the other was a suburban school which reported that 60% of its students entered college. The students from these two high schools seemed least satisfied with their preparation among all students in the study. On the second student questionnaire, completed after the students had finished their freshman year of college, I included a section in which I reminded the students of the rating (excellent, very good, good, fair, poor) which each had given his or her writing preparation on the first questionnaire which they had completed following their senior year. I then asked, "Would you give the same rating now, one year later, after your freshman year of college?" Two students in the study who gave a lower rating were the only two students from one of these schools. One of the three students from the second school also lowered his rating. Although one of these students earned A's in college writing, the other two students both earned below a B in their college writing courses. These students may have been affected by their school's programs or requirements. One school had no honors or Advanced Placement courses for seniors.

The other had ten semester-long English offerings for juniors and seniors from which only two were necessary to fulfill graduation requirements. A student in that school could take only one semester of writing in his or her junior or senior year.

Other schools are aided by money, resources, and a constituency which values education. The two most affluent schools in the study offered Honors sections at every grade level and Advanced Placement classes at the senior level. The students from these two schools earned A's or B's in college. Only one would lower her rating of her preparation, stating, "College professors expect so much more than high school teachers."

### Conclusions from the Teacher Questionnaires

A comparison of the schools and their curricula shows a great difference in what students are being offered, but all of the students in the study could have taken four years of English classes which included regular writing assignments with a college preparation emphasis. Most of the students in this study did well in college. The factors which may have caused a student to earn lower grades than expected in college writing could not conclusively be said to be the high school curriculum being offered at his or her school although that may be a factor in some cases.

While there is very little consistency in course offerings or teacher preparation or methods in the high schools in this study, all twelve high schools are providing enough writing experiences that motivated students are able to acquire skills which enable them to do well in college writing courses. The difference in the students' levels of

satisfaction with their high school programs were most often caused by the teachers who taught their high school classes.

As the answers on the teacher questionnaires indicated, many departments cannot control how hard a teacher works, how much writing he or she assigns, and how well he or she works with his students in evaluating their writing. This variable, the teacher, does not depend on the size, the location, or economic status of the school. English teachers are not the only group of teachers in which some do a poor job of teaching. Nor are teachers the only group of workers with the problem of ineffective members. A poor worker in any group can be a problem. For these students writers, however, having a teacher who does not give them adequate writing instruction or evaluation before they enter college can be a major factor in how well they do in the college writing class. Schools could monitor a situation like this with more supervision of instruction, but even with an administrative hierarchy which includes an active department chair, there is no person who has the time to be aware of what every teacher is doing in the classroom nor to ask for consistency in assignments. Sometimes such authority is not given to the department chair. Also, there is reluctance, due to collegial courtesy, to criticize a fellow teacher. Teachers who are poor writing teachers may not be so noticeably lacking in teaching skills to warrant such drastic action as being fired. The teaching profession is one in which termination of employment is difficult at best, even when deficiencies are glaring. Thus a student has a good chance of encountering a poor teacher at some point in his or her four years of high school.

### Twenty-nine High School Students

The twenty-nine students who answered the first questionnaire, mailed to them shortly after their high school graduation, were each selected by a teacher from their high schools and, consequently, were almost all top students in their schools. With but one exception, all of the students had grade point averages ranging from 3.0 to 4.0 . One student's G.P.A. was 2.107. This student had received grades ranging from F to B+ in his English classes during four years, including a D+ and a B+ during the two semesters of his senior year. Fourteen of the students reported receiving only A's in English classes, while another eleven reported A's and B's. Only four students were selected who had received less than a B- in any English class.

### The Students' Evaluation of Their Preparation

After asking the students for a list of the classes each had taken in high school with the corresponding grade, I asked the students to evaluate their preparation in the area of writing for the colleges which they planned to attend. They were to use the categories "Excellent," "Very Good," "Fair," or "Poor." Of the four students who had grades below C-, two selected "Fair," and two selected "Very Good." Of the thirteen all-A students, three chose "Excellent," eight selected "Very Good," one chose "Good," and one gave no evaluation. The remaining twelve students were fairly evenly divided: five chose "Excellent," four chose "Very Good," and three chose "Fair."

The eight students who chose "Excellent" represented six schools, while the five students who chose "Fair" represented five schools.



The two schools from which two students each chose "Excellent" were the largest and one of the smallest of the twelve. The five schools from which students selected "Fair" ranged from urban to rural, the smallest to one of the largest, and economically limited to economically blessed. I feel these results suggest that the success of a writing program or a student's viewpoint of the success of writing instruction rests more on the actual instruction and course requirements than attributes of the school such as facilities, economics, size, or number of offerings.

#### Students Who Ranked Their Preparation As "Excellent"

The students were asked to explain the rankings they chose. Their statements show more inconsistency than consistency. Of the eight who chose "Excellent," reasons included success on an AP exam, good grades on papers, a variety of experiences both in writing and literature, a very strong teacher, consistent review over a four-year period of all aspects of writing from mechanics to style, the level of difficulty of AP or College Prep classes which were perceived to be similar to freshman college classes, and a perception of the English department as coordinated and designed to foster improvement over the years. One student mentioned an "excellent" teacher who had taught her over two full years while another student wrote in praise of the diversity of the approaches of several teachers which had given her a wider perspective. The two most often cited factors were the teachers and the variety of assignments. Students also seemed to feel a quantity of work was important. These students had no hesitation about predicting their own success in college writing,

although one made it clear that that was "as long as I take the time and not throw something together at the last second." If they anticipated trouble at all, it was in the unknown of the professor or the workload. One student worried about her vocabulary. Several students banked on their teachers' belief in them and their abilities. One student concluded his statement, "I will have the added experience and knowledge to be able to construct a paper or at the very least make a plausible attempt."

#### Students Who Ranked Their Preparation As "Very Good"

The fifteen who chose "Very Good," or added the category "Good" (which I should have included, but, unfortunately, inadvertently did not), had similar reasons for their evaluations. Feedback from their teachers gave them confidence in their abilities; they worked hard on what was assigned and felt they knew how to do what they had been asked to do in high school; special classes had seemed to them to replicate the college experience so their success in these classes gave them confidence; a variety of experiences gave them increasing hope that they could handle "anything thrown at them"; they had experienced a logical progression of increasingly more complex skills being taught throughout their four-year programs. There was the perception by some that the methods they had been taught to use (especially in research) were up-to-date; they cited the continued emphasis by teachers that writing was a very important skill; and they perceived the quantity of work they had done as good preparation for what they assumed would be even more work in college. As with the previous group, which rated its perception

"excellent," this group gave special praise to specific teachers who were encouraging, knowledgeable, and hard-working. One student in this group based his confidence on feedback about his creative writing. He perceived himself as talented.

These students based their predictions on future success on both grades in school and on AP or SAT test results. It seemed common for teachers to have made predictions for the students, telling them that they were "ready for college" or had written a "college-ready paper." The students trusted these predictions. This group of students who described their preparation as "Good" or "Very Good," like those who had marked "Excellent," had some hesitation, however, in predicting easy success. One said she would do average during her freshman year, another predicted B's. Teachers couldn't erase all fears. One wrote, "In college, I believe the writing assignments may be difficult for me. Writing has always been a challenge to me. My teachers seem very confident of my abilities though." One student predicted "it will take a while to adapt," while another felt he should do acceptable writing "as long as I apply myself properly." Two students were nervous about the time factor, expressing concern about papers for which they would be given less time than they were used to or about occasions when they would be writing under a time constraint.

#### **Students Who Ranked Their Preparation As "Fair"**

The students who chose "Fair" for their evaluation of their high school writing programs were more similar in their reasons than either of the two more positive groups. These five students felt that

they had not been taught enough. One felt the teachers "never really taught us how to write the papers. Everything I learned on how to write, I learned through my own research." This student earned almost straight A's in high school English courses. Her classmate was one of the students who marked "Excellent," and who had commented, "I had all excellent English teachers throughout high school . . . ." These contrasting opinions from fellow graduates again verify that it is the human interaction which leaves the most significant and lasting impression. Another student who marked "Fair" felt there was a lack of instruction in research writing techniques in his school. Another student wrote that she had not had enough writing courses although three of her semester selections were "Basic Comp," "Advanced Comp," and "Rhetoric." I discovered later, after talking to her, that she had filled out the questionnaire after having taken a summer placement test at the university. She had placed lower than she had expected to. Had she filled out the questionnaire first, she admitted, she would have been more complimentary and optimistic. Three of these five students were very pessimistic about how they would do in college writing, one indicating that she was "not anxious to see [her] first graded papers." Another felt she could express herself well but would not do well at short stories. She did not explain why she felt she would be writing short stories in college. The third predicted at least "a satisfactory job."

### The Students' Writing Assignments

I asked the students to try to remember how many assignments they had been given in each of several specific forms of writing: "As closely as you can remember put a number after each of the following kinds of writing to tell approximately how many of each kind you were assigned in total during your four years of high school." I supplied the following categories: essay, essay test, research paper (term paper), persuasive paper, expository paper, written book review or report, other reviews (movie, music, etc.), character sketch, literary analysis, literary reaction, short story, poetry, personal narrative, autobiography, and other. There was a line after each category for the students to provide numbers. Needless to say, the results would not be more accurate than one's long-term memory for the small tasks of life; however, the students seemed to take this numbers game in stride. I felt that one sign of accuracy would be a correlation between classmates. There seemed to be two reasons for a high correlation of numbers between classmates: smaller or more structured schools with few choices in the curriculum tend to give a much more uniform experience to their students, and schools which expect less writing from their students place more emphasis on the writings that are done. The structure in the former and the sparsity of writing in the latter were an aid to memory. Three schools fit the former description, two the latter. The other seven schools provided programs which required regular and varied writing assignments in a variety of courses which students could elect. The students in these schools were not in agreement as to what to call their assignments or how many of each

there were, often because they had taken different classes and there were more sections of each, thus different teachers. The students' confusion as to the meaning of my labels could bode well for writing since one conclusion might be that students are not too focused on modes.

A very positive trend which was shown by the students' answers in this section of the questionnaire was that in half of the schools there is much writing assigned outside of the English Department. To answer a question which read, "Which of the papers listed above were written in departments other than English?" the students listed a wide variety of classes in which they had written essay tests, reviews, reports, research papers, essays, and short stories. The most often listed classes were government, history, and psychology. Other classes named were economics, sociology, physics, chemistry, biology, nutrition, science, math, geometry, Spanish, French, typing, and choir. There have been many articles promoting writing across the curriculum in professional journals in recent years. The answers the students gave to this question suggest that this practice is well established. This could certainly be one of the more positive factors in successful transition of high school writers to college where a student may be expected to write in his or her major field of study and not English classes alone.

I also compared the students' numbers to their teachers' descriptions of the amount of writing done in their schools. I wanted to see if there was correlation, whether teachers and students saw the writing programs similarly. I looked first at the schools whose students listed the fewest writing assignments. One of the teachers

seemed aware of his students' smaller output, but he felt his school offered quality if not quantity. Judging by the answers of the second teacher, I would assume that she would not agree with my deduction that her students' similar lower numbers meant that less writing took place in her school than in most schools. There was no indication that she felt her school offered too little writing experience.

In most of the schools, however, both teachers and students indicate that a lot of writing is being done, especially by college-bound students. In addition to regularly assigned papers, in two-thirds of the surveyed English Departments, at least one teacher made use of daily journal writing.

### The Students' Writing Processes

I asked the students to describe the processes they go through when writing papers. The teachers had described methods of writing instruction which they felt many teachers in their schools were using or should be using. These included using the writing process (pre-write, draft, revise, edit, share), using an expository format (introduction, body, conclusion), and Power Writing. Also, however, there seemed to be agreement with the statement of one teacher that the methods were "left to the individual teacher." The students did not use this "teacherese" to describe their methods, although clearly they had learned the processes in most cases.

Seventeen of the twenty-nine students described a process that matched the writing process described by the teachers. In different ways (but only once with the actual word) students described pre-

writing: "collect my thoughts," "get basic idea," "brainstorm," "make lists," "organizing my information in my head," "brainstorm or cluster to develop ideas," or "think about supporting ideas." After this step many of the students wrote that they outlined the paper, but several of the students indicated that they didn't outline although they had been told they should. Writing was the obvious step mentioned by all students. Some of the students actually wrote that they did several drafts while others only suggested that there were several drafts before they arrived at a final draft. Before the final draft, they polished their papers, describing this procedure accurately using words like "edit," "revise," or "correct." When asked if their methods were considered acceptable by their teachers, most of these seventeen indicated that their methods were acceptable, often adding that this was the way they had been taught or encouraged to write.

Another student described a formulaic method which many high school teachers use to help students organize a paper. This student earned all A's and, in addition, through the AP exam, was able to successfully place out of all freshman English at the college level. Her method: "I first make sure I know the information. Next I make a full thesis, including my thesis statement and three supporting facts. I then develop this full thesis into an essay. All of my teachers taught me to prepare a writing assignment in this manner." Although many educators deride the five-paragraph essay as being too formulaic, this student employed it successfully on the AP exam.

Many of the students who did not describe a structured writing process seemed aware of what procedure was encouraged by their teachers and indicated that their methods weren't considered



acceptable. A sampling of their answers may show nothing more than that students can adapt to situations they must adapt to and will do it in very individual ways. One student described her method succinctly: "I start with general ideas, then I break them down into paragraphs." Another answered that she "basically adapts an opening, filler, then something that wraps everything up," (which may be no more than saying "introduction, body, and conclusion").

A student who earned A's in high school English described an unfettered approach: "I usually first think about what exactly I want to write about, write down these main ideas and then research those ideas. Finally I put everything all together." Her fellow graduate, also an A student, described her process differently: "I usually write down ideas of what I'd like to say or that are relevant and formulate in my head the order. I rarely use an outline and if made to turn one in, I compose it after the assignment is written. Teachers would not approve. They mention the importance of an outline before the essay or paper is written, but I work better without an outline."

These latter two students were one of three pairs of classmates of those who described less organized methods of writing, suggesting that writing process is not emphasized in those schools even if the students or teachers may be using the steps known as "Process Writing." On the teacher questionnaire I asked, "Is there a consistent procedure from teacher to teacher?" The teacher of these two students had answered, "Not really." He also described the writing program in his school as "a good basic program which could be improved." I felt his casual answers matched his students' casual approach to writing.

Another set of classmates who eschewed order when they wrote had been taught in a high school which has a very strong creative writing teacher, who had answered my questionnaire and had, therefore, selected these students. One of the students stated, "There should be more emphasis on creative writing in school, rather than on term papers and essays. The student can express himself greater through creative writing, as well as learn to 'know' himself better." For his method, he wrote the following: "procrastinate, accumulate research materials, skim through selected parts, plagiarize, toss in a few token original thoughts or ideas of my own, process the paper with a computer (fancy fonts and graphics)." He added, "It's not encouraged by teachers," then, in order to explain all of this, continued, "I like to add humor and satire into the 'serious' works, such as reports and critiques." (And, I might add, questionnaires.) His classmate described no process at all, but also focused on creative writing: "I am feeling more and more confident with my poetry. However, prose seems to frighten me." Their teacher describes a department in which "[t]he writing process is the common denominator of writing instruction." Both of these students had taken a class called "Composition" in addition to "Creative Writing." It was obvious that the strength of the creative writing teacher had had a greater impact on them, however.

Another pair of classmates described very similar processes. The first said, "I think about the assignment for a long time, do some research if any is required, put any ideas for what I want to write and how to organize it in the back of my head, and let my subconsciousness work on it for awhile. I might jot down some topics

and details, but usually I will just type. My teachers think my method is terrible, but are satisfied with the result . . . ." Her classmate wrote, "First, I think about what I want to write about. I don't usually write anything down right away. After the ideas float and filter through my brain, I pick the topic that appeals to me the most. Because the topic has been in my head for quite some time, the actual writing of it comes easily. My subconscious already has the sentences pieced together. Then, with a few minor draft adaptations, the paper is finished." It is unclear whether these two are unique, or their school is full of "subconscious" writers who incubate their papers like baby chicks. Their teacher wrote that "[p]rocess writing is encouraged." These two students describe the pre-writing stage of process writing fully, but seem to gloss over the drafting stages.

As I contemplated the above results, I found it significant that among the eleven students who did not describe a structured process for writing papers, there were three pairs of classmates. In looking ahead a year later I found that while two of these pairs had very successful college experiences, the two creative writers were not as happy with their freshman writing experiences as the others. These students found that the kind of writing they had to do in college to get good grades was not always compatible with the kind of writing they had enjoyed doing in high school. While each had a creative flair, they had trouble with the expository prose asked by some college professors they encountered. In his post-college questionnaire, one of these students lowered his evaluation of his training. He gave as his reason: "I noticed that the writing that I was taught in high school was not nearly good enough for college writing."

### Students' Impressions of Themselves As Writers

Before they mailed me their questionnaires, I asked the students to describe themselves as writers in a short letter or essay. I hoped to compare their actual writing to their grades and answers in the questionnaire. The students, however, did not see my invitation to "describe yourself as a writer" as a situation which required polished writing. While some wrote these smoothly and correctly, others were hurried and sloppy. The condition of these letters, moreover, seemed to have no conformity to their grades or questionnaire comments, so I read them merely as additional communications.

One student began with the kind of comment that I'm sure most English teachers hate to read. "I think I am a fairly decent writer, although I would do just about anything to get out of doing it. I hate writing both in and out of school." A second student indicated that "writing becomes a frustrating task, one that I wouldn't voluntarily do." A third stated, "I really don't like to write, it takes me awhile to get started. I definitely don't write for fun." Another echoed that thought: "Some people consider writing fun. I am not one of them. I will write when I have to but not just to do it."

These four students were the only ones of the 29 who shared this dislike for writing, although others said they did not write outside of school. While four is not many, I'm concerned, as an English teacher, since these are four bright, college-bound students. They didn't explain, if they could, why they found no pleasure in writing.

More positive were comments like this: "Writing has always been a favorite activity of mine. While many people look upon it as a chore, I consider it fun and challenging." This student liked writing

both in school and out of school. Other students had a preference. Many preferred writing in school. One said, "I enjoy writing reports and essays as long as it is easy and a well-structured assignment that I can get done quickly." Another, however, found writing "a struggle at times," but mainly in school, adding, "As for writing out of school, I love to write long, detailed letters to pen pals and other friends."

Writing about one's own interests is a proven catalyst to fluent, good writing (Emig 1971, Mayher 1990). The students support this:

In school I enjoyed day-to-day writing assignments and especially creative writing assignments where I was allowed to choose the subject matter or the format.

If the topic of the paper is something that I am quite familiar with or something that I enjoy writing about, then I usually have little or no trouble completing the assignment.

I'd be lost if I was not able to sit down and write how I felt.

I feel I am a strong writer when I write about a topic of my choice; otherwise, I'm a fair to good writer when the subject is chosen for me.

I enjoyed writing in school very much, especially when we could pick the subject to write about. I like to write about my life and my family . . . .

Several students verified that good writers often have a background that gives them an added advantage over other students (Hirsch 1987, Rosenblatt 1978, Taylor 1983). One student wrote, "Ever since I can remember, I have known how to write, whether it be just individual words or stories." Another wrote, "My voracious

appetite for books has allowed me to absorb sentence structure from an early age without my being aware of it." Still another indicated "For me, writing has been an important outlet of my feelings. I have kept a journal for over eight years."

These comments and many more on the questionnaires supported one major conclusion: How well a student will do in any writing program is very dependent on the attitude and background which the student brings to the experience. The teacher he or she encounters is the other major factor in a successful outcome. These same factors were significant to the student's success in college writing courses.

### The Four Colleges

The four universities which I chose for this study are located in west or central Michigan just as the twelve high schools are. These universities are no more than a two-hour drive from any of the twelve schools. All are four-year universities which are part of the public university system supported by the State of Michigan. I will call the universities A, B, C, and D, representing their freshman enrollment in descending order. I sought information about each college's writing program for freshmen from a department chairperson or director of writing instruction. I also received questionnaires from several of the professors or instructors who taught the freshman writing classes attended by the students who were interviewed.

University A is by far the largest of the four universities. This university has an extensive graduate school and is considered a research university. Universities B and C are similar in size to one

another. University B has a larger freshman enrollment; however, because of its more extensive graduate school, University C has a larger total enrollment. There are masters degree programs in most departments at these two universities. University C grants doctorates while University B does not. University D is half the size of these two. The graduate school at University D does not include doctoral programs. While entrance requirements vary, generally the freshman classes of the four universities are similar. The majority of their students come from Michigan, yet each university has students from most of the other states and many foreign countries.

Each university accepts the Advanced Placement test as a means of waiving or gaining credit in the required freshman writing/literature course(s). Other means of waiving or replacing the required freshman course in each university were taking an established equivalent in another department, taking an English class which is approved for English majors to use as a replacement, or taking a placement test (which includes a writing sample) during summer orientation and scoring high enough to be allowed the waiver. While there are slight differences, the four colleges are similar in their waiver guidelines. Depending on the score on the AP test or what kind of placement test was taken, sometimes credit is also given for courses which a student has waived.

### University A

During the 1991-1992 school year, University A required a full year of freshman writing/literature study. Three ten-week courses were designed to improve the students' writing ability with writing

topics derived from literature and non-fiction reading required in each course. A research assignment was included in the third course. This university changed its format in the fall of 1992 and now requires only one semester of writing/literature in a student's freshman year and one semester in a writing intensive course to be taken within the student's major at a later time. The guide for writing instruction for the three-course format taken by the students in this study during their freshman year (1991-92) emphasized the following: getting started; drafting; revising; using effective sentence structure and standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling; editing; and research. The three classes were designed to provide a continual improvement of writing skills. The focus of both the literature and the writing was the American experience. The three courses required of freshmen need not be the same for every student. There were several tracks from which the students could choose with topics such as Americans on Film, American Humanities, or Women in America. Students were not required to continue with the same track throughout the three courses.

Unlike the arrangement at the other three universities, the department which developed and staffed these courses is not the English Department at University A. It is an interdisciplinary department established to provide the general university writing course required of every student. Usually the course is taught by a tenure stream faculty member with a Ph. D. While the focus of the skills to be introduced remains consistent from class to class according to the guidelines mentioned above, there may be a great disparity among the sections in the methods used to teach, the



literature and readings used by the individual faculty members, and the requirements of the course. Because of individual freedom among faculty and the thematic approach to the various tracks of the three-course system, there was opportunity for a very different experience from section to section of the required freshman writing courses.

### University A Faculty Responses

One professor, when asked to comment on the diversity in freshman writing at University A, wrote: "Since the department is composed of a wide variety of faculty, with degrees in a broad range of subjects, we all approach our teaching with various backgrounds; however, statistical studies suggest we tend to be fairly close in grading criteria and end-term grades. "

Two other professors responded simply and divergently to the question about similarity of content and requirements among sections of the same course. One answered, "I would guess that there is considerable variation," while the other responded, "I believe similar, since there is a course syllabus all are supposed to follow." All five professors who responded reported using peer evaluation and individual conferencing as evaluation methods.

When asked what attribute was the greatest determiner of success for a student in the sections they taught, the answers were varied. One responded "self-discipline," while another answered "keep submitting repeated revisions." One professor cited reading ability and another mentioned the ability to "organize, develop, and support a thesis." Another answer is perhaps the basis for all good writing; "Whether or not the student sees any point in writing."

When asked to describe their students' most detrimental writing habits, one answered, "Writing to please the instructor and satisfy the requirement of an assignment." Another listed, "lack of motivation," while one deplored the student's "inflated idea of how good a writer he/she is." The final answer described the difficulty in motivating students to re-write their papers.

If these professors could tell high school teachers what to teach, their answers would vary. Revision, grammar and paragraphing, and "the ability to analyze and discuss their readings" were three suggestions.

#### University B

At University B only one semester of English is required of all freshmen – an introductory course in nonfiction writing. The students must take a second semester of writing, however, preferably in the sophomore year. This second semester may be focused on writing in the humanities, physical sciences, or social sciences, but all are still taught in the English Department.

English Department masters degree candidates teach some sections of the freshman composition course. There are about 90 sections, 45 in each semester, of which about half are taught by the graduate students and the other half by temporary faculty or tenure-track faculty. The graduate students are supervised by an English Department faculty member who teaches a required three-day pre-semester workshop followed by on-going weekly meetings. The graduate students receive three credits for this workshop and the meetings. In addition, the supervisor visits the classes taught by the

graduate students. One benefit of the supervision and training of the graduate students while they are teaching the freshman writing course is that they can be shown methods of teaching writing based on current theory, such as process writing, peer editing, etc. What each does in the classroom, their required assignments, and methods of evaluation can also be standardized among these graduate students. Some of the regular faculty who teach these classes also employ similar methods, assignments, and evaluations, but some do not. This may create a disparity in the experience students have while taking different sections of the same freshman course. The students taking courses from regular faculty may benefit from the experience and expertise of these faculty members, a benefit which may be lacking in the sections taught by graduate students. They may also encounter a faculty member with more traditional methods of teaching which do not take recent theory into consideration and whose style may be pedantic and teacher-centered.

Each section must be designed around a master syllabus which gives the types of writing required ranging from narrative to expository, but there is room for a great variety in assignments from section to section. While some professors may stray far from this syllabus, considerations of collegiality, assumptions of expertise, and issues surrounding academic freedom often prevent there being pressure to bring the course more solidly within the guidelines of the syllabus. The departmental syllabus for the freshman course lists five general objectives: fluency and flexibility, invention and arrangement, style, usage and mechanics, and rhetorical skills. Goals in the syllabus include knowledge of the following: the self-discipline

required by writing; the planning-drafting-revising process; the impact of audience and purpose on content and style; the techniques of persuasion; the concept of thesis and support; analytical, evaluative criteria for nonfiction writing; mechanics, basic skills in English; and manuscript conventions.

#### University B Faculty Response

Only one instructor filled out a questionnaire in response to my request. She was one of the graduate instructors. She had used many methods to encourage writing: journals, peer evaluation, group critiques, draft submissions, conferencing. She was very positive about her students: "With very few exceptions, the students have all been very able to handle the challenges of [the course]. What they lack in experience they make up for in enthusiasm and desire to improve their skills." She felt the students lacked an ability or desire to proofread final drafts. She wished they were more receptive to re-writing and revising, and she wished they "were better prepared in areas of grammar, spelling and punctuation."

When asked to comment on diversity among the sections of the same course, she answered, "I try to place a great deal of emphasis on developing the ability to generate ideas, focus and organize work and develop critical thinking skills. Many of my colleagues use a similar approach, while some are concerned mainly with the finished product."

### University C

University C has a system similar to University B, using English Department masters degree candidates supervised by a member of the English faculty to teach freshman writing. Except in special sections not under the auspices of the English Department (Honors College courses, for instance, are taught by faculty from the Honors College although the course title may be the same), all sections of the freshman writing course are taught by these graduate students. This one-semester course fulfills the lower-level writing provision. The one-semester upper-level required writing course will be taken by a student at a later time in his or her major discipline. If the major department does not have such an upper-level writing course to offer, however, there is another English course which fulfills the upper-level writing provision.

The graduate students who teach the freshman writing courses must take a one-week training before beginning the semester course. Then, throughout the semester, the graduate students attend a weekly three-hour seminar. Credit is given for this training. The supervisor evaluates assignments she gives to the graduate students and also visits their classes and provides evaluations. Students who have finished the training may teach two sections. Those who are in training teach one section. Such a system allows for consistency in methods, assignments, and evaluation.

Each freshman must produce six final products, each with three or four drafts. The grade for the semester is provided by evaluating a final portfolio which must contain the six final products which must total a minimum of twenty pages. The instructor can choose the six

assignments from a list, provided by the English Department, of ten types of papers: descriptive, comparative, or casual analysis; summary/response; research report; problem definition; proposal; evaluation; hypothesis-testing; and defense of a position. The guidelines allow the freshmen to choose topics and data from their own fields of study.

### University C Faculty Response

One of the graduate instructors at University C returned a questionnaire. She reported using journals, peer group evaluations, group critiques, draft submissions, and conferencing. She felt that one of the hardest tasks she faced was to break old habits: ". . . most students are too rigid, want the easy way out."

Her most successful students are able to "take the paper's subject (which is usually fairly open) and make it his or her own." She also finds that those who finish assignments on time "can make best use of peer revision and conferencing." Her biggest complaint was that the students seemed to have been " 'work-sheet' ed to death as far as grammar and mechanics are concerned" and she added that they are "far too worried about doing things the 'right' way, aren't aware that there are many 'right' or correct ways." It was her observation that all the sections of the course were fairly similar although she described her approach as "more flexible."

### University D

University D offers a one-semester English class which fulfills the writing requirement. There is a course, however, which is designed

for students not considered to be at college level writing. This course is also one semester. If a student is placed in this course, he or she must then take two semesters of writing in the freshman year, since the first course counts towards graduation but does not fulfill the writing requirement. The first course concentrates on personal writing. Several biographical writings are assigned as the class focuses on voice, detail, and audience. Then these writings are combined into an autobiographical piece with a central thesis. All students in this course are part of a peer writing group which must meet at a writing center once a week for an hour. Tutors at the writing center assign writing exercises either provided by the writing instructor or designed by the tutor. The tutors are junior and senior students at University D.

The second course, the course which actually fulfills the writing requirement, focuses on essays across the disciplines. Research is a component of at least one assignment. There are no standard syllabi for either course, but there are goals provided for the instructors along with the course descriptions and guidelines published by the English Department. Generally the instructors design their courses with a great deal of freedom based on these broad guidelines. The guidelines give general suggestions for assignments and texts, but the instructors are free to choose their own. This policy allows for a great diversity from section to section of each course. Another course, which uses literature and requires papers which analyze the literature, is offered to fulfill the writing requirement for those who wish the literature focus. This third course is like an honors course,

however, and students must score high on the placement examination to qualify.

Whether a student is placed in the first course or the second course is determined by a one-hour writing examination during summer orientation in response to a prompt. Two graders score the examination. Approximately 70% of the students are placed in the first course. This course is not considered remedial, but since only the second course is necessary to fulfill the requirement, placement in the first course has become tantamount to placement in a remedial course in the minds of many of the students. Two students made specific comments on their final questionnaires regarding their placement in the first course. One said, "Although my high school English classes taught me some important things about writing, it didn't give me enough background in writing to start on the same level as others in college." I wondered, when I read this comment, how she would have felt if she knew that 70% of the freshmen were placed at the same level she had been. The other student wrote, "The classes at [University D] were not as hard as I thought they were. I was better prepared than I was led to believe with placement scores." Due to complaints from students, the English Department at University D is studying the two courses to determine if the first course has, in actuality, become a "hidden" requirement. After a student has passed the required course in the freshman year, he or she must also take a second writing course in the sophomore year or later in either the English Department or in his or her major academic discipline.



Almost every section of the first course is taught by adjunct professors. Due to budget restraints, the department has a low number of tenure-track positions and cannot staff the many sections of the two freshman courses needed for all students to complete the requirement. There is adjunct training in the fall, although many are unable to attend. The adjuncts must have masters degrees. Some are experienced, many retired from teaching at the high school level.

Five of the seven students in the study who attended University D took both of the courses offered for freshmen. Three of these five expressed dismay at having been placed in the first course after having earned A's and B's in high school English, yet all three rated the first semester course as "excellent." University D has designed a good two-class series for average freshman writers. While they may need to cut costs by joining the other three universities in decreasing to one semester except for very severely limited writers, the two classes provide a very solid writing foundation for the students. The problem, which they have already recognized, is the negative connotation attached to placement in the first class.

#### University D Faculty Responses

Three instructors from University D responded with questionnaires. When asked about common standards, one instructor answered, "Every instructor determines how many papers students will write. Some classes require two papers--others ten or more." Another answered, "I think that I build the course around each individual class or section more than my colleagues do . . . . I don't think my courses are typical of classes in this course." The third

commented, "I'm sure that I focus more on organization and technical correctness than my colleagues do."

One second-course instructor was fairly critical of the first course: "In my opinion, the emphasis on autobiographical writing doesn't help college writers much, especially in the areas of grammar and mechanics where they generally need a lot of help. Writing autobiography also encourages narrowness of thinking in students, I believe." She adds, "I'm continually surprised by how many of my students [in the second course] cannot consistently write correct and coherent sentences and paragraphs."

Two of the instructors wished students had learned to value re-writing before entering college. One comments, "Again, they need to know that several attempts (drafts) are necessary to produce good, effective and interesting papers." The third instructor suggested three improvements: "taking personal responsibility for learning to write well; paying attention to detail—editing, etc.; students don't realize how much the way they write reflects on them personally."

### General Observations on the College Faculties

If all of the freshmen at these four universities were viewed as one group, a significant fact is that almost half of them are not being taught writing by tenure-stream faculty. About one-third of the students are being taught by graduate students with bachelor's degrees, usually in English, and some classes in methods of teaching writing. Another group of freshmen, approximately one-eighth, are taught by adjunct or temporary faculty. These teachers may have a Ph. D. degree, but most have a master's degree. Some are not trained

in writing or even English while others are veterans of high school and/or college classrooms. Almost half of the students are taught by tenure-stream faculty, most at University A. Many of the tenure-stream faculty at Universities B, C, and D, however, have not completed their doctorates.

It is a common assumption of students and their parents that when the students leave high school to attend a university that they will be taught by professors who are better educated and more highly skilled teachers than their high school teachers. Given the increasingly higher education of high school teachers, this is not an assumption that one can make anymore, but the chances are even slimmer when it comes to freshman writing courses. The most extreme case in this study is the student who left a high school where she was taught Advanced Placement English by a teacher with a Ph.D. and many years of experience, and went on to college where she took a freshman writing course taught by a graduate student working on a masters degree who was in front of a classroom for the first time. The student ended the class with the feeling that she had wasted her time. Other cases were similar although not as extreme.

It would be incorrect to state that the level of education or the years of experience a teacher has determines his or her ability to teach writing. Nonetheless, the practice of using graduate students to teach freshman writing is a practice that has to be questioned when discussing articulation. The use of temporary faculty, while not necessarily a problem as far as training for the position, can also be problematic because there is less consistency, and, perhaps as in the

case of University D, less control in how the material is presented or in how the students are evaluated.

One student in the study was in a classroom at University D where the teacher could not control the students. A temporary faculty member, this woman left in the middle of the semester due to medical problems. Only with the faculty replacement did this student feel she was receiving quality writing instruction. Another student was in a classroom at University B in which she was told by the graduate instructor to forget everything she had learned in high school about writing papers. A student at University C was initially pleased to be chosen to take the Honors section of the required freshman English course. She did not have one of the graduate students used by the English Department for this course because the Honors College hires its own professors. Her professor was an adjunct professor, a retired faculty member who ran a highly controlled classroom in which the assignments were all literary criticism, a format not promoted by the English Department for the required freshman writing course because the course is considered interdisciplinary. In the end, this student was very unhappy with the professor's pedantic approach to writing and his strict writing expectations which remained difficult to perceive throughout the semester.

These experiences were not the usual experiences of the students in the study, only some of the worst experiences. Some conclusions can be drawn, however, from these stories. The first is the obvious. The college faculty is not necessarily a better faculty than the high school faculty. Knowing this might help the students approach

college writing with less fear. Admitting this might help the two faculties work together with more respect and cooperation.

The adjunct faculty are mixed in both their experience and education. They are the group less apt to be supervised or trained for the classes they teach. When discussing the temporary faculty who taught the first writing course at University D, the freshman writing director described some by saying they are "people who are in business who like teaching on the side, some are writers who are writing and want the income but they don't want to work full time." While she indicated that some pretty good people walk through the door, she admitted that there isn't a lot of consistency in the abilities of the adjuncts or their methods in the classroom. The English Department at University D has twice as many adjuncts as full time positions. This university needs to train and monitor its temporary faculty in the same way that the graduate students are supervised at Universities C and B.

The graduate students in Universities C and B are more closely supervised because of the classes they must take while serving as graduate instructors. While these graduate students are carefully chosen, it is possible that they are no more skilled at writing than their best students. It is not a requirement that these students have any previous education in teaching methods or techniques. Given the current economic situation, the use of graduate students to teach at universities is a practice here to stay. The colleges who employ graduate students to teach freshman writing are on the right track when they require constant supervision and adherence to proven classroom practices.

Some faculty members, often younger ones who have not developed the professional standards of the older faculty, perpetuate the contempt towards high school writing instruction that has caused articulation problems. A department could promote attitudes which don't denigrate the high school experience while building upon it. Graduate students who are being prepared to work with college freshmen could benefit from a direct requirement to respect the work of their colleagues in high schools or to show respect whether they feel it or not.

To ensure consistency in the experience that students have in freshman English, all faculty, including tenured faculty, should have departmental guidelines to promote consistency of requirements and evaluation in the sections of the same course.

The students who encountered the problems summarized above had a more difficult time learning about themselves as writers because they were not getting useful feedback nor feeling that they could rely on their past experiences.

### Differences Between the Two Levels Which Affect Articulation

Several of the college faculty who answered the questionnaires believe as the Harvard faculty did over one hundred years ago that all students who enter college should have mastered grammar, spelling, and mechanics completely. Those who made these comments included both tenured faculty with doctorates and graduate students. It is a mistake to suggest that high school teachers should abandon writing instruction until students are masters of the syntax. High school teachers also struggle with

students' deficiencies with the language. If the teachers at the two levels need to agree on any one truth about students of writing, it should be that very few will have fully mastered grammar, spelling, and syntax, and that learning to incorporate correctness in writing is an on-going process which will continue for a lifetime, most certainly throughout formal schooling. The teachers at both levels should demand correctness in final drafts, but should continue to help the students learn what resources are available to help them achieve correctness. It is detrimental to a student's growth in writing to suggest that he or she is a remedial writer because of spelling or grammar miscues at either the high school or college level (Emig 1971, Shaughnessy 1977, Bartholomae and Petrosky 1986).

There are several aspects of the college writing classroom that are clearly different from high school and these are the factors which college professors can take advantage of to move students beyond high school level writing. One is the greater degree of academic freedom. College students are seen as adults. No matter how conservative or controlling, a parent is highly unlikely to try to control the assigned readings or subjects for discussion of a college classroom as he or she does a high school classroom. This freedom allows the college professor much greater latitude when seeking to appeal to the students' interests. When answering the questionnaires, many of the students cited their pleasure at being able to choose their writing topics and of having a greater freedom in subject matter. The availability of a much more extensive library enhances this advantage.

Another advantage that the university has over both high schools and community colleges is that the students are, for the most part, living on campus among their peers, no longer under the heavy influence of home and hometown. While this lack of parental authority can cause social problems for the students, academically the situation is positive because the students are more willing to explore and experiment with concepts or theories which they would not feel free to express at home or in their high school classrooms.

Not all professors take advantage of this new freedom of expression being experienced by many college freshmen. When the discussions are limited by a teacher-centered classroom atmosphere; stifled by a rigid adherence to dated topics, methods, and literature; and intimidating due to a lack of respect for the students' ability or past experience, then articulation will fail.

The college writing classrooms which introduce new subjects for thought, which incorporate reading and discussion into the classroom practices, and which encourage peer interaction are sure to benefit from the new freedom and increasing independence of the students. The transition from high school to college is best achieved when the student finds not a repeat of the high school classroom but the more sophisticated classroom she expects to find in college. When the college professor has an open classroom with current topics, when he or she encourages the students' new-found freedom, and when the professor is willing to accept the student writer with the abilities he or she brings, then the articulation will be successful. The second student questionnaire verified many of these observations.



### The Second Student Questionnaire

Twenty-seven students responded to a second questionnaire at the end of their freshman year of college. The questionnaires were designed to elicit a comparison to the evaluations made a year earlier when the students had completed their senior year.

### The Students' Re-Evaluation of Their Preparation for College Writing

On the first questionnaire, the students had been asked to evaluate their preparation for college writing before they started college. On the second questionnaire they were asked if they would give the same evaluation. Seventeen of the students felt they had predicted correctly. Seven felt they would lower their estimations after having been through their freshman year, and three would raise their estimations. The final rankings included eight "excellents," seven "very goods," seven "goods," four "fairs," and one "poor." These rankings were not necessarily related to grades. Most of the students earned B's or A's in college writing courses. There were only four students who earned grades in freshman English courses which were less than B. One was the student who ranked his preparation as "Poor." A year before he had ranked his preparation as "Very Good." On the second questionnaire he wrote, "I noticed that the writing that I was taught in high school was not nearly good enough for college writing." The other students with grades below a B ranked their preparation as "Good" or "Very Good" just as they had a year before.

As another means of evaluating the students' high school writing training, I asked the students what more their high school writing

courses could have done to prepare them for what they encountered. The comments the students made in reaction to this question often were indicative of the different classroom formats between their two experiences. If a student encountered a workshop approach in college in which much peer editing was done, he or she often answered the question by suggesting that the high school classroom should afford more opportunity for peer review. If the student had encountered a process format in college during which he or she had worked on multiple drafts and was graded on process and improvement rather than a final draft done outside of the classroom and not returned for re-writing, then the student often suggested that multiple drafts and process writing should be part of the format and evaluation procedure in high school. Five students answered that their high schools should stress punctuation, spelling, or grammar, although one seemed to give this answer because she could think of nothing else: "Actually my high school prepared me enough for college English, but if I had to pick one, it would be grammar." She was one of five students who essentially said nothing needed improving. Those five students represented five different high schools and three of the four colleges in the study. This was true of other comments made by the students. There was not a correlation between school or college attended and comments made throughout the questionnaires.

Some students felt their high schools did not emphasize enough writing:

They could offer an in-depth writing course that is not review of basic and structural grammar and vocabulary,

but challenges the student to broaden his writing ability by writing clear concise, relevant essays of many different styles on many different topics at many different lengths.

I think they could have put a little bit more of an emphasis on writing. Basically most of the teachers gave an assignment and never really explained how to write. We had to learn how to write on our own. They could also have put more emphasis on the style rather than the content of our writing.

My high school could have taught the style of writing used in colleges for papers and taught more grammar skills.

Focus more on writing styles.

Assigned more composition papers for practice and provided more techniques to improve on students' weaker areas of writing.

It could've offered more writing courses. . . . we focused way too much on literature. In college you don't need to be all that familiar with Chaucer or Shakespeare unless you're an English major. You need to be able to write effectively for ALL MAJORS!

Students mentioned specific concepts which they would have liked to have known before college. One wished he had known to use details in his writing, while another said she needed to know how to "show" and not "tell." Many were concerned with topic selection, feeling that they had not been free enough in high school to choose topics. Several students commented that they had had to do long research papers in high school whereas in college they were asked to do shorter papers, both research and persuasive, for which they had to generate a thesis. They felt the high schools could have asked for more, shorter papers, and they were concerned that they had not

been asked to think about their focus enough in high school. For some, the concept of a central thesis being the focus of the paper was finally arrived at in a college course. One commented, "The thesis was heart and soul for college work and at times my thesis statement was lacking." Another wrote, "My high school teachers could have introduced topic writing and made it into a fundamental part of the class. The only kind of writing I was exposed to was analyzing literature and poetry and having to prove a specific given thesis." A third suggested argumentative writing, "coming up with a thesis and being able to argue a point effectively." One student who was a satisfied "A" student was still in agreement with this idea: "The only thing I think could have helped is if we had more assignments in high school where we had to come up with our own writing topics instead of always having them given to us."

Two of these latter four students were from the same rural high school and a third was also from a rural high school. That fact that the schools are rural schools does not seem to be a significant factor because in central west Michigan teachers, even in rural districts, are not isolated to the point that they could not attend conferences or college courses. It is unlikely that these teachers are unaware of the desirability or practice of allowing students choice in topic selection because this practice is not uncommon among high school English teachers. A more likely reason may be that the schools are smaller. They may not have made significant change over a period of years because of a very limited curriculum. Schools with a larger selection of classes tend to change the content of those classes more often if for no other reason than that they may be taught by only one or two

teachers who feel free to make small changes often and sooner as the need emerges. A smaller high school may have a more static classroom routine because the same course is taught to all students in a given grade and one teacher may not feel as free to make changes in the routine.

### The Students' Evaluation of Their College Writing Courses

I asked the students to evaluate their college courses which taught literature, composition, or a combination of the two. The rankings I provided were the same rankings I had asked for when they ranked their high school preparation. "Very Good" was the description most often chosen. "Excellent" and "Good" were chosen less often and by almost the same number of students. Only a few chose "Fair" or "Poor." The students added comments to explain their choices:

This class did not teach composition, we were expected to already have those skills, although we were allowed to rewrite our term papers for a higher grade.

I learned quite a bit this semester. It just expanded and was more detailed than my high school writing.

It was a frustrating experience, but I learned how better to deal with a frustrating teacher. I'm not sure how much my composition has improved.

The professor tried to teach the process and procedures for writing but failed to explain how to improve the techniques students had already known.

The teacher did an excellent job transforming us from high school writers (dull and boring) to college writers (vivid and full of life).

I thought my high school teacher was a better teacher than my college instructor, but she [college instructor] still made some improvements with other students.

I learned a different style of writing that I will be able to use more in future coursework rather than analyzing literature as in my high school class.

I gave the students a list of the elements of a learning situation (teacher, content, students, assignments, classroom style) and asked them to rank them as to the importance of each in the effectiveness of the college writing courses. Most of the students ranked the teacher of the class as the most important element in the effectiveness of the class. If the student did not think the professor was the most important element, then content or assignments was chosen. The least important element according to the majority of the respondents was the other students. Classroom style also did not have as much of an impact on the students although those who did mark classroom style were evenly divided between considering it significant because of a strict classroom focused on the teacher (which was not seen as positive) and because of a student-centered workshop approach (which the students favored). The factors coming in second behind the teacher were the content and materials used or presented, and the assignments.

### The Students' Perceptions of Themselves As College Writers

When the students were asked what their strengths were and from where these strengths came, their answers could be divided into three groups. One group cited strengths such as vocabulary, creativity, voice, or personal writing which they attributed to their

families or their own personalities. A second group named specific skills which they had learned while in college and which became their strengths. Examples are paragraph transition and self-evaluation. Almost half of the students selected a skill which they attributed to a high school course. These skills were grammar (mentioned by three students), organization skills (mentioned by four students), descriptive writing (mentioned by two students), knowledge of literature, and the writing of introductions.

One student's strength was another student's weakness, however. Ten students mentioned mechanical errors such as incorrect grammar, punctuation, or spelling as their greatest weaknesses. Several students felt that keeping a focus was difficult:

As a result, the beginnings are rich with detail and well thought out happenings, but the ends were more "thrown together."

I don't do very well at sticking to one topic and logically following that topic. I tend to wander.

I had difficulty stating a point and then supporting it with facts or ideas because I would often stray from my idea.

It was evident that college courses had helped the students be more aware of themselves as writers. Students seemed to have learned what makes a good paper and could explain their weaknesses well: "generalization," "instead of critiquing something, I attack it," "I would not develop paragraphs fully," "transitions, being too wordy, not writing powerful introductions or conclusions."

One student's weakness was coming up with ideas, whereas one felt his strength was getting the ideas while his weakness was

organizing them. Several students had trouble with research, some in finding the material, others with organizing it, and still others with the wording. Several students felt their weakness was a result of a difference in viewpoint between high school teachers and college teachers. The students had heard their high school teachers say to express their own opinions while some college teachers felt the students were unable to separate fact and opinion. They described the kind of papers they had trouble with:

Research papers that were to contain no opinions of your own....

Research papers, factual writings, and any kind of readings that showed no creativity or personal opinion or input.

. . . he [the professor] kept saying that we were just describing what the book said or repeating what we had taken down in our notes when writing our papers. Well, that's what we had done in high school and that was how you got A's (by showing that you knew what was being taught). He wanted us to evaluate what we had learned and rephrase it . . . . This was really hard--you really had to know what you learned, instead of just writing in detail everything the teacher said. Frustrating.

When I asked the students to write about factors which they identified as contributing to their success, they listed hard work, interesting subject matter, enjoyment of reading and writing, good background knowledge and preparation, an interested and helpful professor who was easily approached, easy assignments, a focus on content rather than mechanics, a focus on mechanics rather than content, peer-editing, and acceptance of rewrites. Factors identified



as contributing to poor grades or grades lower than the students considered acceptable were lack of time, unclear instructions from teachers, missing classes, procrastination, lack of organization and classroom control on the professor's part, and too many facts to learn for objective tests.

Finally, I asked the students how they had changed as writers during their first year at college. Although never worded the same, the most frequent change to be gleaned from the students' answers on this question is that they are more aware as writers. They can look at their papers with more knowledge and are better able to judge their own writing and, therefore, improve their own writing. Students said they spend more time now on each piece of writing and are more careful about correctness. A significant change for many of the students was a new awareness of audience. As a result, they feel their writing is more interesting. One student answered, "I write with more depth and description. I have to bring the paper to the reader, not just write down facts or opinion on a topic." Another says, "I put myself in the reader's position and tried to liven it up so that they wouldn't fall asleep reading it." Still another writes, "My overall style is more mature, and I know how to keep a reader's attention through the whole essay or paper." Maturity was a factor cited by several students. Being on campus away from home and high school, especially for those from rural settings, has expanded the knowledge of many of the students, and they see this reflected positively in their papers. One student talked of a new self-confidence:

By showing my writing to my peers, they are able to pick up the flaws in the writing that I didn't. I could then work to improve the areas where I had made mistakes. This method also gave a little boost to my self-confidence. It showed me that I was not the only one who made mistakes in my writing.

While many of the students had had group experiences in high school, none felt high school grouping matched the peer group work they did in college where participants were more motivated and the work of the group was more mutually responsive and equally shared.

Five students said they had not changed as writers. There were two students in this study who did not take any required English or composition classes as freshmen because they had passed AP exams which allowed them to waive these requirements. Both of these students answered that they had not changed as writers. I know these students are good writers, but after reading about the growth experienced by most of the other students, I began to think that students shouldn't waive the freshman writing course because there are skills to be learned that can't be learned in high school simply because it is high school. A third student took one course from an instructor whom she perceived to be much less knowledgeable than her high school teacher. (I received questionnaires from both teachers, and the student's perceptions are correct if one bases this judgement on education and experience in teaching. My judgement based on the comments on the questionnaires also backed up the perception that the high school teacher was much more adept at his teaching although the graduate student was not a poor instructor.) The remaining two students were from the same high school. Each

was somewhat resistant to change, having been nurtured in high school by a teacher who thought him an excellent creative writer while encountering college instructors who found his writing much in need of repair. One of these students answered: "I seem to not care about grades anymore, so I treat my subject matter with contempt now." The other, while not changing his writing style, is more open: "If anything, I believe my mind has been opened to many new and interesting ideas."

I left a section for additional comments at the end of the questionnaire. Most students wrote in that space. Their conclusions are enlightening. It is apparent to me that the students saw a great change in themselves and their writing during their freshman year. Many credited their high schools with contributing to this change because they provided the skills which allowed them to succeed in college; others saw the change as a result of the very different experience they encountered in college. Sometimes their comments very honestly pointed out the problems at both levels of education.

There is no comparison between college writing and high school assignments. I don't know how I became such a good writer when I look back at the type of writing I was required to do in high school.

I try not to fear writing as much as I did in high school. College has helped me get over that fear.

I think that the most important thing for students to have is an instructor in high school who takes the time to sit down and show them what they can do to improve their writing skills. The teacher should show them the result of a good mixture of vocabulary, style, and structure and make their writing assignments shorter so that quality not quantity becomes the goal. My [high

school] teacher not only expected high-quality work, but she did everything possible to help us excel.

I write papers I never dreamt I would be writing a year ago.

Every instructor has something different in mind so you need to "learn" your professor and adapt your writing to what he/she wants . . . . You just need to adapt your writing for whatever class you are taking. This may sound really harsh or bad to some people, but it is the plain and simple truth in most [college] classes.

It is really incredible how college writing expectations and professors' abilities to teach are so much different than the average high school teacher. If high school teachers would be just a little more aware of the importance in writing abilities that are needed before entering college courses, I think things would be a little different.

The biggest adjustment was the realization that my professors have no idea who I am (and could probably care less). In college, you have to constantly prove your talents, over and over. This differed from my small high school experience because the teachers were familiar with my work and knew my capabilities. As a result, I think I was a lazier writer in high school because I knew I didn't have to knock myself out to prove my abilities to the teachers.

College professors expect so much more than high school teachers. They are very picky and often don't tell you what you need to improve.

No system will be perfect, but I feel that I've never been hampered by what I did or did not learn in high school.

### Implications for Articulation of Students' College Experiences

The last statement made is one which many students could have said. These students did well for the most part in their freshman English classes. Nonetheless, the students' responses to the second questionnaire suggest several changes which could be made at both the high school level and the college level to improve articulation.

After having experienced college writing, students looked back on several assignments which are typical of high school English classes and suggested they be altered or eliminated. One of these assignments is the long research paper. All 29 students had done at least one research paper in high school. In many high schools this is an important part of one or more classes and is often the longest paper a student does. One student specifically suggested more, but shorter, research papers. Another student asked for a greater variety of papers. She wrote that her high school had focused too much on writing about literature or on reading literature. One student described her writing in high school as "analyzing literature and poetry and having to prove a specific given thesis." Other than these literary analyses, the only other paper she mentioned was a research paper. It is my conclusion that fourteen of the students answered the question "What could your high school have done to better prepare you for the writing that you had to do in college?" with suggestions which lead to one kind of format for high school writing classes. The students want to be assigned more, shorter papers for which they develop their own theses. The theses for these papers, they feel, should be topics of interest to them and not an analysis of literature. While the students do not mind literature

as a part of the classroom format, they don't want it to be dominate. They want to do more writing. When they write in reaction to literature, they want to choose a topic which is an issue of a general or personal nature which they can argue or persuade others to accept or which they can explore in an expository format. Within these fourteen answers there was a clear request for practice in topic development. There was a request for teachers to help them develop style in writing. Several felt they could have been taught to be more detailed and less general as they wrote. Their answers show that they think high school teachers should become more involved in the process of writing and not be so focused on the finished product. Those students who prior to college had never been involved in writing multiple drafts with feedback several times in the process from either teachers or peers or both wished they had been able to experience such a format in high school.

When asked what strengths they brought from high school, seven students mentioned organizing details. Several attributed this skill to the research papers they had done. Two students said their best skill was writing introductions or conclusions, again because these aspects of a paper had been emphasized. The high school format, it appears, emphasizes organization of a paper but not content. I feel that this may have something to do with the students' maturity. As mentioned earlier, the college teacher has the advantage of a student who is suddenly on his or her own and trying new ideas and philosophies almost daily. Still, high school teachers could be promoting critical thinking skills by the junior or senior year. Helping these younger students explore issues in their personal lives

or in the world around them can be done without bringing out protests from those who are afraid the schools are teaching values if the teacher is careful not to promote one viewpoint and if the student is allowed to select the topic.

When asked how they had changed as writers in a year's time, the students' answers showed that many now grapple with one paper more thoroughly. They have learned, especially through the use of peer groups, to read what they write with an audience in mind. One student wrote, "I can actually read my papers and come up with the central idea or message that was intended to be contained in them." This may seem an ironic statement. It may be hard to believe that anyone who wrote a paper doesn't know what the central idea or message is in that paper. This student's statement supports what is often true about student writing, that too often it is a mindless activity done to fulfill a requirement to pass a class to graduate. The student at both levels often follows a routine in which he or she adjusts each new paper based on a few comments written by the teacher in the margins of the previous paper. As each paper is written, it is forgotten and the grade and comments are applied to a future paper, not to improving what is written in the paper for which they are intended. This is the major fault of a format in which papers are written to be read and evaluated by no one but the teacher and only in final draft form, never to be revised. This is why revision of papers is such an excellent teaching tool. For many students in their freshman year of college, learning to revise was the most valuable writing practice they were given.

It is clear from the questionnaires that many students had valuable writing classes in both high school and college, while others had useful classes at one but not the other level. It is clear that certain practices such as the use of multiple drafts, peer group evaluations, and student-selected topics are valuable aides in the development of writing skills. Research confirms this conclusion (Myers and Gray 1983, Moffett 1988). These methods could be used at both levels. Ideally, practitioners at both levels should be working together to promote the widespread use of these techniques. If these students had been given the benefit of such a format in their high school years as well as at college, articulation would be more easily achieved and transition would be smoother. What these students learned at one level would not only be reinforced by the other, but by the end of their freshman year of college, every one of them would have had the chance to have become an excellent writer.



## CHAPTER IV

### INTERVIEWS

In this chapter I will summarize the interviews with thirteen students. I will divide the students into four groups determined by the universities they attended. In addition, I will analyze the results of the interviews at each university.

I initially chose twelve students to be interviewed from the group of twenty-nine who filled out the first questionnaire. They were selected so that I would have one from each of the twelve high schools and three at each of the four universities. A thirteenth student was added because one of the twelve transferred between two of the universities. At that time, I added another student from the university that the transfer student had left. Having already agreed to be part of the study by filling out two questionnaires, the thirteen students were not reluctant to be interviewed as well. Several, in my opinion, felt very good about being asked to be one of those who would be interviewed. Only two of the students proved to be hard to schedule even after agreeing to the interview process, and only one of those seemed to find the interview process uninteresting. All others were very vocal and seemed willing to give whatever time I needed. I will use pseudonyms in referring to these students and their universities.

University A

## Joe

Joe was an out-going young man who was very easy to talk to. I first interviewed him in April of his freshman year. By then he was in the third of the three freshman literature/writing courses required at University A. Joe had taken the same track of the freshman offerings throughout the year. The track he chose had as a theme "American Radical Thought."

Joe had attended a rural high school. His high school grades had included an A in English 9, a D+ in English 10, and A's in three semester electives: Composition, Journalism, and Creative Writing. In college he had earned 3.5 the first term and 2.0 the second term. He was confident that this third term would result in another high grade.

I asked Joe if he could account for the D+ in high school and the 2.0 in his second term at college. I told him I wondered if he could explain the inconsistencies in the grades he received. It was the teacher's reaction to his unique style of writing in both cases, according to Joe. He explained that in high school he had learned to love creative writing. The teacher who had selected him for this study, in fact, was his creative writing teacher. She had given him good grades and praised his writing. She was not the only teacher, however, that was satisfied with his ability to write. The A's he received in all English classes he took in ninth, eleventh, and twelfth grades attest to this. His tenth grade teacher, however, had not found his writing satisfactory. Joe said he liked this teacher but could never write papers which met his standards. He said the

teacher said Joe generalized everything. When I questioned whether there were other factors which he remembered which affected his grade, Joe could think of none. He remembered that he did all assignments completely and did them on time. One result of this experience, Joe indicated, is that since then he has never been confident that a paper he writes is good because he feels his judgement of his own writing is not accurate. As a creative writer, Joe received much praise, even being elected the "class poet." Nonetheless, he said that although many people praise his writing, he never really knows himself whether something is good.

During his first term at University A he had by chance taken a class from a woman whom he found to be the perfect teacher for his style. She was dramatic, even theatrical in her manner of teaching, and her assignments and lessons were very unusual. She had announced that there would be a paper due every two weeks. The theme for the term's writing was finding one's own place in American thought. The students were to write from their own experiences. Within that broader framework the specific topics were the students' choice; papers could be on anything a student wanted to write about. Joe thrives when he is given license to create, so free choice in topics appealed to him. He said the teacher looked at the writing for creativity and quality of writing. Joe said he wrote oddball things; for the first paper, he re-wrote an idea he had used in high school, a farce about a guy he named John Doe. The teacher had really enjoyed it, he said. He laughed at this point in the interview and said that he had won a kind of an award. Joe guessed it was kind of juvenile, but I could tell he was pleased. The professor gave

him her "Outstanding Achievement Award" which he could turn in at a later time for a one-day extension on a paper. (Joe gave me a hand-out on this award--the professor explained that it was a way to say that a piece of writing had merit even when the idea had not been dealt with well enough to receive a 4.0.) When I asked Joe what grade he earned on that paper, he said she really didn't grade papers because she didn't want them worrying about a grade. She just made comments on the paper. Since he was going to be graded at the end of the term, Joe worried a little about the grade anyway. He was quick to add, however, that her comments were very useful. He earned a 3.5 in that course.

His second term class was based on the theme "Paradox." He gave an example: after reading a book on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the paradox the students were asked to examine was King's dream versus the reality of the society in which he lived. Joe found this class more demanding because the reading assignments and the paper assignments overlapped so that while writing a paper which was based on one novel or book, Joe was reading the next novel. For the first paper, the professor said he wanted the students to use their imaginations. Based on his grade, Joe felt the professor did not care for his imaginative writing. He had questioned the professor for more input, and was told to use imagination but to be concrete as well, to include facts. Joe said he tried to be imaginative while using facts, but he still failed to produce a satisfactory paper. "For some reason, things just did not click with us. I could write anything for her [the first term teacher], and she would enjoy it, but for him it was like I had to figure out what he wanted. I wasn't writing for

myself, I was writing for him, which I didn't do for her. It was for myself, but with him I had to write trying to please him, and I did not find that good at all." As stated above, Joe earned a 2.0 from this professor.

With these two experiences behind him, Joe made sure that he chose a section for the third term which was taught by his professor from the first term. Again he found the class stimulating. The third term was based on cultural pluralism. There were assigned readings by authors such as Nora Ephron, Leroy Jones, Hunter Thompson, and Robert Heinlein. A requirement of the third term at University A is a research paper. His professor said the general topic would be "Sub-cultures." She gave three choices: 1) interview a Vietnam veteran; 2) pick two or three people who can be defined as members of some sub-culture and do a paper about the sub-culture; or 3) interview 50-100 people about their attitudes toward some sub-culture and write a paper based on the results. The students were also divided into groups in the class. Each group was to find a member of some sub-culture to come in and talk to the class. Joe felt this class had an interesting atmosphere. Many of his classmates were in his first term class and, like him, had chosen this professor again.

Joe said that a conference with the professor was required third term. He had gone in for a conference first term, too, even though it wasn't a requirement. He just went to get some more feedback than he was getting with written comments. Joe felt that this professor was very good at conferencing.

Joe said he had not done any writing at University A other than in the three required literature/writing classes. His American

government class had a final exam which featured short essay answers on some questions. When I asked Joe about midterms and finals in the writing classes, he said his first professor had good tests, some multiple choice, some essay. His second professor had an optional essay on his objective final, but Joe had decided not to do the essay since he felt that the professor didn't like his writing. Joe said, "There was an optional essay at the end, but I was just so happy to get my 2.0, I was not going to jeopardize that with him, so I just left that one off."

I asked Joe about his high school background. He had avoided literature classes after his general 9th and 10th grade years. He said that three English credits were required, but that no advanced literature class was required. The school he had attended offered American Literature I and II, English Literature I and II, Contemporary American Literature I and II, and Fiction. None of these classes, however, was required for graduation. He had taken only writing classes in his junior and seniors years. When asked if he felt he had been hurt at all by his choices, he said perhaps he would have been better at classroom discussions if he had taken literature classes in high school. He felt he would have had a broader knowledge of literature to which he could make references, a practice he had observed in classmates. He did not feel, however, that avoiding these classes had any effect on his writing ability.

Joe thinks he is poor at mechanics, never knowing where the punctuation goes, but even though both professors marked mechanical errors, he has not had many of these marks on his papers.

When asked if he was learning anything about writing, Joe said, "I am just learning more or less through myself as I create, I would say, and she [his first and third professor] leaves it open to that. Dr. — [his second professor], he just wants what he wants. You give it to him. You don't really experience anything. You just try to make him happy."

### Janet

I interviewed Janet twice during her freshman year. The first interview was in November. Janet had not taken the first of the three freshman literature/writing courses at University A because she earned a 2 on the Advanced Placement test, and the university accepted that score as sufficient to allow her to waive one of the three courses.

Janet's suburban high school sends approximately 90% of its graduates on to college. She had given her school a rating of "excellent" on her first questionnaire. She earned B's in English during high school, and her overall grade point average was 3.7. Janet wanted to be a student in one of the special programs at University A, but she did not apply soon enough to get accepted. Her disappointment with that situation caused her to consider leaving the university after her first year. At the time of her first interview, she was dissatisfied with her classes and the university.

Although Janet was not in a class in which she was being asked to write at the time of this first interview, she still had formed the opinion that high school teachers should start asking for harder papers at an earlier time. After Janet had some good writing

experiences in her second and third terms at University A, she was able to be more concrete about what a high school teacher should do. On her second questionnaire, she wrote:

I think that the most important thing for students to have is an instructor in high school who takes the time to sit down and show them what they can do to improve their writing skills. The teacher should show them the result of a good mixture of vocabulary, style, and structure and make their writing assignments shorter so that quality not quantity becomes the goal.

Janet added that she had actually had that kind of teacher, but she felt that she had not been asked to be as detailed in her writing as she should have been.

At the time of the first interview, she was taking a class in the Air Force ROTC program in which she was required to give a mini-speech in a format similar to writing she had done in high school. The instructor required an introduction, body, and conclusion in the speech. He assumed that all of the students could handle an assignment like that and did not give instruction. Nothing written would be handed in to him. He would give credit/no credit grades after listening to the speeches. Janet was confident that the speech would not be a problem for her.

I asked Janet about other classes she was taking. She said that her Political Science class was all lecture for 90 minutes. The tests she has had so far were multiple choice and she assumes all future tests will be. She feels forced to take notes on minute points all during the lecture in order to do well on the tests. Her grades at this time were much lower than they were in high school, and she was upset with her overall experience.



I interviewed Janet a second time in April during her third term at University A. She had taken the second required literature/writing course during the second term and had earned a 3.5 in the class. She had also taken a Political Science course in which six papers and a take-home final were assigned. She earned a 3.5 in that class, too.

By the time Janet had come this far in her freshman year, she had decided that not only wouldn't she change universities after her freshman year, but that she would try to graduate from University A in three years. She gave finances as her reason for both decisions. Janet did not seem as frustrated or as dissatisfied with the university as she was the first time I talked to her.

Janet was very satisfied with the writing course she had taken second term. The professor was a retired professor who had come back to teach part-time. She felt he was a good professor. She found him very organized and clear in all of his instructions. Aspects of his classroom included peer pair work and multiple drafts of each paper. Each student in the class was to pair with another student and edit papers in draft form. There was a peer edit sheet with questions which each student had to answer about the other student's paper. The sheet listed parts of a paper which were required, such as introduction or conclusion and other attributes of a good paper, and had questions about whether the writer had included each aspect. (Janet did not have a copy of one of these sheets, so I could not see the actual questions.) Janet felt these sessions were valuable except for her first one. For the second paper she had found a classmate who was near enough her equal that she felt they could evaluate

each other well. She had continued to pair with that classmate the rest of the term. The professor would also examine the paper and write notes on it before the final draft if the student wished him to. At that time he would also give a grade to show how he would evaluate the draft if it were a final copy. Janet took advantage of this optional early grading and found it was very helpful.

Janet listed the progression of grades she received on her final drafts of five papers: 3.0, 3.5, 3.8, 4.3, and 4.0. She felt the steady rise in grades showed that she had learned to be clearer and more organized. When I asked her what a grade of 4.3 meant, Janet said that the professor had indicated that her paper was so good that a 4.0 would not suffice. As she said this, I felt that Janet was very proud of her writing.

In Janet's second term class the students read from *Norton's Anthology of Non-fiction*. There were general topics given for the papers which related to some of the readings. The first paper was to be on the environment, and Janet had chosen deforestation. Her second paper was to be on a chosen sub-topic from several given main topics. She chose from the main topic "20th Century Scholar" and chose as her paper topic a contrast between Fitzhugh and Douglas, two historical figures she had read about. The students were not required to do research for their papers other than what they read in their anthology. The only topic which did not interest Janet was transcendentalism. The professor prepared a course guide in which he had included everything he wanted the students to know about topics, assignments, due dates, and manuscript form.

I asked Janet whether she felt her work in high school helped her in this class. She said she did not know where her writing ability came from, but it seemed to her that reading and writing came easily all her school years. Janet discussed her first peer pair classmate, whose writing was poor. She had very poor mechanics, and, according to Janet, her organization "was shot." Janet felt these problems were based on the high school this girl attended although she didn't know where the girl was from.

Janet concluded that it was the professor who made this class good for her. "I felt the teacher was a good teacher. I think he was the one who made the class interesting because it's basically a generic class. Some people can have the exact same class and have a bad teacher and hate the class. So it mainly had to do with the teacher."

Unlike her first Political Science course, the one she selected second term had much writing in response to questions raised by the professor. She wrote four two-page papers, one one-page paper, and one four-to-five-page paper, and for the final there was a three-page paper. There was no instruction on how to write nor drafting done in class. The professor gave the due date and expected to see a completed paper on that date. Actually, according to Janet, he really didn't want a "paper" because he asked them to dispense with introductions and conclusions and just deal with three related questions he gave for each paper. The subjects--Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, etc.--were boring to Janet and she found it very hard to pay attention or write papers for this class. She said the professor wasn't looking for an organized paper, he was looking for

thought on the readings. This course was once listed as a requirement for her Political Science/Pre-Law major, but it had since been dropped as a requirement. She earned a 3.5 in the course and felt that grade showed that she was a good writer.

Because she liked her second-term writing professor so well, she took his recommendation for the teacher she selected for her third term class, which she had been to twice at the time of the interview. Of this third-term professor, she said, "He seems to be somewhat--I don't know if the term 'crass' would be appropriate or not--he seems to be somewhat rambunctious." Janet felt her second-term professor spoiled her with his organization. Of her third-term teacher, she said, "This man doesn't seem to have any idea when the assignments are due."

Janet stayed in the same track, "Writing The American Experience," for her third term. Research is a requirement of the third term writing class at University A. There would be three papers in Janet's class, the third one being the research paper.

During this interview, Janet said she thought she would do well in the third term writing course even though she did not enjoy research papers. She said she was going to do the best she could. On her final questionnaire, Janet reported that she received a 4.0 in the class. Also on the questionnaire, she wrote, "During my [second] term of [writing] my professor was always there to help read over my assignments and let me know what needed more work while my [third] term professor left me on my own to figure out what was needed. A general lack of organization made my job as a student

that much harder during the [third] term because I had to try and figure out what he wanted."

On her final questionnaire, Janet again rated her high school as "Excellent" in its preparation of her for her college writing experiences. She wrote, "I would give the same rating now, because Mrs. — not only expected high-quality work, but she did everything (except write the paper) possible to help us excel."

### Bill

Bill attended a suburban high school, from which 65-70% of the students attend college, and graduated with a 3.44. He received either an A- or a B in the four English classes he took which were full-year classes named English 9, 10, 11, and 12. On both the first and second questionnaires, Bill rated his school "Very Good" in its preparation of him for college writing.

After he had attended Summer Orientation for University A, based on a placement essay examination, Bill was offered an option of a series of English classes focused on writing for science rather than having to take the interdisciplinary courses that most students take to fulfill their writing requirement. Bill is a physiology major. He decided to take the series because its focus would be appropriate for his major.

I interviewed Bill twice. The first time I talked to him was in November when he was taking his first term of English. The instructor was a graduate student working on a Ph. D. in English. Bill liked the English course because it was aimed at science majors. He felt it allowed him "to put down what I feel in exact details; [when]

writing everything else I can be abstract, but here I have to be straight to the point." He was assigned four papers, one every two weeks for eight weeks, and he kept a journal in which he was to complete four pages a week to be handed in weekly. For the journal he was instructed to write about some experience he had had each week and then to write what he might have learned from that experience.

Bill said his instructor assumed that the students in the class were already good writers. The instruction was aimed at style or content, but not at mechanics or manuscript form. There was a required style book which provided manuscript form.

Bill said that his biggest problem with writing in college was giving enough specific details. He felt this was the main improvement he could make in his writing, since it was his impression that details were not demanded in high school. I asked what process he used for writing in college. He said that once a topic is given, he narrows it to the specific focus he will take in his paper and then begins writing. He hands in a second draft for feedback from the instructor, then re-writes again. He doesn't mind this re-writing because he does it on his computer. So far in college he had completed this process over a period of one week. In high school he had used a similar process but without a computer. While the teachers in high school considered the first copy they saw the final copy, he was allowed to re-write for a new grade. The difference in the two procedures at the two levels may seem a matter of semantics until one considers that Bill is motivated. He felt few of his high school classmates actually took advantage of the opportunity to re-

write for a new grade. In his college class, re-writing was part of the required process. His college paper grades were a little bit lower than the grades he received on papers in high school, but he said he wasn't upset about that.

His class met three times a week. During one of those sessions every other week, he met with a peer group of four students. Each student brought a copy of his or her paper for all members of the group. Attendance was very important to the peer group process, so poor attendance was factored into the final grade. Bill was definite that the peer group process helped him get a better grade. He had felt this way in high school, too, but there was little use of formal peer groups in his high school. Once in a while they got into groups in high school classes, but usually it was in his social group after school that he experienced mutual help with papers.

For Bill's first English class, students were required to read *The Double Helix* and the science section each week from the Sunday *New York Times*. One weekly assignment in the class was to summarize an article from the *Times*. This was an in-class essay quiz since the students could not choose the article nor look at it while writing. The teacher indicated that she wanted to test their memory for the details of what they read. One of his assigned papers was based on *The Double Helix*. The students were to select some idea or theory which they had developed while reading the book and write about it using the book as a source. One of the assignments in the class was to go to the University A Museum and write about some science object or display observed there. Another assignment involved Bill and his classmates in a project designed by his

instructor. They wrote descriptions of career fields to be used by the students in the second class of this course series taught by their instructor. Each student interviewed a professor in a science field (Bill chose a chemistry professor) and wrote a paper on the interview. The goal was to make it clear to students who would be reading the paper what a career in that field of science might be like. The students in the next class would then use the papers to see if they wanted to consider that field as a career field and choose that field for a writing project the instructor would assign. Bill enjoyed the project, especially the interview.

I asked Bill what he was learning about writing from these assignments, and in response he described his experience when he was at the museum. At first, he said, he just wrote down everything he saw. Then as he started writing his paper, he realized that he was "seeing" it again, using a lot of detail and being selective about the detail. He felt his journal brought out the same attention to detail as he wrote about his experiences and how they affected him. Bill said that in high school he used reference books for details, whereas now he uses original sources. Because of this, he felt he was learning more about writing with detail. He also felt that his assignment with *The Double Helix* taught him not just to write about what the idea of the writer of a book was but to reach for an original idea of his own as a reaction to reading.

I asked Bill to compare and contrast high school and college writing. He said that in college the papers must be more focused, more detailed, and longer. It isn't his writing that is different now, it is the content of the writing. "It's not that I'm a better writer or a



smarter writer, I just feel that I can express my feelings better, that's all. It isn't like style or format, that's all about the same."

When I asked Bill about writing in other classes, he said that he wrote out lab results in chemistry, but that in psychology they just "fill in bubbles."

I asked Bill what he had observed about other students' writing and how he compared his writing to theirs. He answered,

There's a couple of people in there [who] write--the way they write and the words they use and how they put it all together, it's so, it's just so much better to me than my own writing, but when we get our papers back, our grades are about the same. I think it either is how we get our point across or just what we have in our papers. I don't know, it seems like that even though there is writing in [their papers] that seems to flow better and looks much better and sounds much better, they're--they just get about the same grades [as I do] I guess, about the same.

Bill has met students at University A whom he judges as not ready for college writing. They have problems getting started with papers, and they don't know how to set up a paper. He felt they didn't like the idea of having to do a paper at all. He felt good that he had come with an understanding of how to do a paper. He blamed the students' high school if a student did not have any idea of how to do a paper.

Bill was required to have a conference with his instructor twice during the term. He had had both conferences at the time of the interview and found them helpful. He learned about his problem with examples and details during these conferences and found that

his instructor felt that he was showing improvement. During this class, he realized how much he liked writing. He also enjoyed the interview with the chemistry professor. During his second conference, his teacher told him about possible careers in science writing, and he is now considering declaring a journalism minor.

My second interview with Bill was in April. By then he had finished two terms of his English series. He had received a 3.5 from the class we had discussed during his first interview and a 4.0 during the second term class. He had had a different teacher during his second term class, also a graduate student working on a doctorate in the English Department. The second term class used fiction readings instead of non-fiction. Bill said the teacher didn't teach writing style or mechanics, but on her feedback on writing drafts or in conferences she let the students know if they were doing well on papers and what their problems were. She also gave feedback so that students knew how they were doing in class participation.

One of the papers he did in the second term was a reaction to an assigned writing. The students read *Fantastic Voyage Two*. Bill decided to compare the happenings in the book to the Cold War. He did research on the Cold War in books and magazines. He received 3.0 on that paper. The grade was a combination of two grades: 3.5 on the paper and 2.5 on his analysis of his peer group's reaction to drafts of his paper. The students met with the peer group outside of class time, although sometimes class was canceled to allow peer group time. Bill was required to write about his group's on-going reaction to his writing of the paper. He attributes his lower grade on that section to his group's lack of meeting time. He did not have

much to write for this aspect of the total process, and it affected the combination grade. His instructor felt that the paper flowed well and was well organized. There were some marks on mechanical errors, but not many.

The second paper Bill did in that class was a research paper on laser surgery. He received 3.5 on that paper. When I asked Bill about the comments on that paper, he said, "Well I got that back at the end of the term, really late, so I really didn't look it over really that much." There was no peer group process analysis as part of that grade. Instead, each student had to submit an annotated bibliography to show his or her research. There was a requirement that they had to include various kinds of sources, including kinds that Bill usually wouldn't have included like other students' papers or movies. Bill received a 4.0 on the bibliography. By grading annotated bibliographies and peer group analyses, the teacher stressed that the process and on-going evaluation was as important as the finished product.

Part of the final grade was class participation. The students were expected to voice their opinions on topics being discussed in class. Attendance also counted. There was no final or midterm. On a teacher questionnaire, Bill's instructor in this class said she graded using a combination of 80% written work and 20% class participation. Bill felt his improvement in writing and his class participation helped him get a 4.0 in the class.

Bill was into the third week of the third term at the time of the interview. He had selected the same instructor whom he had for the first term of English. He didn't choose her over his second term

teacher. He would have been happy with either one, but his schedule worked out better with the class taught by the first instructor. When we talked, he had completed the first draft and was working on the final draft of a research paper on astronomy. From what he knew about other series of courses which students can take to fulfill their writing requirement for University A, Bill is certain he has done more research than most students do in their first year. He assumes that is because he is taking the series which focuses on writing for science.

The writing process third term involved giving the instructor and members of his peer group a draft of each paper. There were four members of each peer group. After receiving feedback from members of his group and the instructor, Bill wrote his final draft. The final draft of the paper on astronomy was due the week I talked to Bill. In the meantime, however, he had already begun the first draft of the second paper, also a research paper. His first paper was six pages long. His second paper must be eight to ten pages long. There would be two more papers, which he assumed would be research papers also. There would be no midterm or final.

The students in the class had been assigned Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. Bill said they would debate issues from the book. Each student was responsible for introducing ideas for debate during class discussion. In addition they must hand in a one-page written response to each section of the book. Finally, there was an option of keeping a journal. For extra credit, the students could write three pages a week on anything they were observing, learning, or seeing.

Bill said he learned more in high school writing than he had previously thought. He felt that some of the students he observed in his college classes were better writers than he was, so he was shocked at the grades he received. His grades were better than he expected them to be. He actually thought college would be harder. He did work very hard and his roommate teased him about the amount of time he spent in the library. He had learned that he must have details in his writing and felt that being more concrete and specific was the improvement he saw the most from his high school writing. He feels that college writing stresses audience more than he remembered high school writing doing. He didn't use a process greatly different than what he did in high school except that his use of a computer for writing meant that he made more changes and wrote more drafts of his college papers.

Virtually all of the writing Bill did at University A was in his English classes. Most of his tests in other classes were multiple choice tests. In his third term Psychology class he could write an optional paper for extra credit.

On his final questionnaire, Bill reported receiving 3.0 for the third term class. Bill is glad he took the science writing series. He liked the focus on science and felt he learned a lot about both writing and science. Bill answered one question differently than many of the others in the study. When asked what factor from a list of given factors was most important to the effectiveness of the classes he took, Bill ranked "Assignments" first and "Teacher" second. Only one other student ranked "Assignments" first. I feel this has to do with Bill being able to take these science-oriented English classes to fulfill

his writing requirement. Because his interests focus on science, these assignments were very interesting to him and helped make the entire class experience more satisfying.

### Conclusions From University A Interviews

#### The Teachers

The teachers these three students had are varied in their educational levels. While the English Department instructors are graduate students, those who teach in the interdisciplinary department which offers the required writing course were mixed, some with Ph. D.'s, some without. Most of these teachers were using a variety of writing techniques: drafting, peer groups for editing and feedback, conferencing, thematic units using literature to inspire and suggest writing topics, student choice of specific writing topics, non-traditional research, group projects, and journals. These techniques not only helped keep students' interest, but served as catalysts for learning. Bill and Janet felt they had learned more about writing from their classes. Joe, who feels he learns more from himself as he explores writing than from a teacher, didn't feel he had learned as much. According to Joe, one of his teachers allowed that exploration, the other did not. It would be easy to accept Joe's evaluation of his two professors. One was nurturing and supportive and Joe had a good experience; the other was rigid and demanding and Joe had a bad experience. Another viewpoint, however, might be entirely different. Joe's first teacher, as described by Joe himself, was unusual to the point of eccentricity in her lifestyle and elements of learning which she introduced to the classroom. Could it be, then,

that Joe's first teacher accepted any imaginative writing regardless of style or format while Joe's second teacher asked Joe to adhere to standards established by the department which included specific requirements of style, content, and format? I think the answer can clearly be that either viewpoint may be right. What is learned is not that either teacher is a poor teacher, since there is not enough information from this study to make that judgement, but that the combination of a teacher and a student can result in a poor writing situation.

Janet felt that one of her teachers could have been better if he had been more organized. She found him a hindrance to the process at times. Nonetheless, because Janet was determined to succeed, this professor was not cause for her to do poorly in the class. While Janet and Bill described how they had improved in their writing both in the interview and on the final questionnaires, Joe wrote on the final questionnaire, when asked how he had improved, "I don't believe I have."

### Student Preparation and Attitude

There are other factors that may be a source of Joe's writing problems. One factor is his preparation for college writing. His description of his own high school program shows that he did not select a good variety of classes for college preparation, although his high school offers a good variety. One could fault the high school for not requiring Joe to take a literature course at any time during his last two years. Joe's experience in tenth grade English caused him to be wary, and he selected classes from then on over which he had

some control. His favorite high school teacher taught all but two classes he took: his tenth grade class in which he earned D+, and a journalism class. In college, Joe fell into the same habit. He did not progress in his writing skill with the professor who evaluated him with the 2.0. He reacted to that situation by signing up for a third term section taught by the professor he had liked from first term. Joe's personality may be a block to his learning any kind of writing other than that with which he is comfortable.

Bill, on the other hand, is very motivated to succeed. He saw each assignment as a challenge. In Bill's mind, the assignment was the important aspect of the class. He liked both of his professors, but he did not at any time in the questionnaires or the interview, discuss the personalities of his teachers as a contributing factor to his success or failure as a writer. Bill's preparation for writing was solid. He did well in a high school writing program which offers only the four years of traditional English. While he did not describe doing a lot of writing in high school, he felt he learned a lot from what he did. Bill's very receptive personality is extremely conducive to benefitting from learning situations.

His hard work was a major component for Bill. When I asked, on the second questionnaire, what factors contributed to success or failure, Bill answered, "Hard work and a lot of time is what made my grade. I worked hard and I got the grade that I worked for." In answer to the same question on the questionnaire, Joe and Janet mentioned their teachers or the format of the classroom. Janet did well in her classes, nonetheless, because she was motivated to succeed. The same teachers, assignments, and classroom styles can



be seen as challenges by one student and obstacles by another. Joe requires a very specific situation to feel nurtured as a writer. Joe also only wants to write in a certain way. His failures don't change his style of writing; they merely motivate him to avoid situations like the ones that caused him failure. Janet succeeded as a writer. Throughout school, she perceived herself as a good writer and every experience she has had has confirmed that perception. She had an excellent preparation before entering University A. She did well in a four-year, four-class format which was aimed at college prep students and had rigorous standards. Thus, despite her dissatisfaction with the University in general and her dissatisfaction with one of her two writing teachers, Janet still performed well in her classes. Bill did not even consider criticizing his teachers or the classroom and assignments they designed. He could have been critical of his first writing teacher for asking students to do a research project which she intended to use in her second class, perhaps feeling that she had students doing work which she should have done herself. Judging by our conversation about that project, however, it never even entered his mind to find fault with the assignment. Bill always focused on the assignment and what he could do to complete it well.

### University A's Classes

The students at University A had an interesting variety of classes to choose from. Despite the guidelines which dictate certain requirements of each of the three classes in the series, the classes were quite different from section to section. There were several

tracks of the required class to choose from, based on themes. The University required the readings to be by American writers, but there was not a required set of readings. Teachers could choose their own readings to assign, depending on how they chose to introduce the thematic topic they were teaching. Assignments also were left to the teachers, although they were required to assign a minimum number of pages and writing and introduce certain kinds of writing. The option which Bill had, the writing focused on science, was an excellent option for skilled students with science majors. The variety available at University A was much broader than was available at any of the other three smaller universities.

It was disappointing, nonetheless, to realize that the students were not being asked to use or practice their writing skills in any other classes they took. In one class, Bill could write an optional paper for extra credit. Janet wrote several papers in one of her classes which were not required to have a "paper format." Some tests had short answer questions which might give practice for writing skills, but most tests given at University A were multiple choice tests. Freshman writers would improve in the use of their writing skills if given the opportunity to do so across the curriculum.

### Articulation

Bill and Janet learned that college writing was different than high school writing. They learned that it is more focused and that the writer must keep an audience in mind, something they didn't find stressed in high school. They learned that they had to be specific, using more details in their writing. Bill learned that he must use

original sources to seek those details. Bill also learned about many non-traditional sources for research. While papers are longer in college, they are also more focused. Janet says she has to fight adding extraneous information in order to make a paper longer, but she also learned much more about the kind of detail and style that adds to a paper and appeals to an audience. Bill and Janet could be said to present a good picture of articulation. They were well prepared to meet the expectations of University A in high schools with solid four-year programs of English. They did well in the classes they took in their freshman year in college and can list specific skills which they learned. They have confidence in themselves as college writers. Joe is an example of poor articulation. His high school had a good program available but did not require Joe to take four full years nor require him to select a rounded program of college preparation English. Neither of Joe's college teachers were able to move him forward in his writing, whether nurturing or demanding in their motivational style. Joe was resistant to change.

### University B

#### Laurie

Laurie attended a rural high school. During her four years of high school she earned almost a perfect 4.0 (3.974). She earned an A in every English class she took. Those classes were English 9, Speech/English 10, American Literature (in 11th grade), and College English (in 12th grade). All of these classes are full year courses at her high school. After taking College English, Laurie took an

Advanced Placement test and earned a 3; thus, she was able to earn credit for the only English class required of freshmen at University B.

When I had asked Laurie to rate her high school at the end of her senior year, she had checked "Very Good" for the preparation she received for college writing. At the end of her freshman year, she repeated that rating. Laurie enjoyed college, and she had no trouble with assignments which involved writing.

I talked to Laurie twice during her second semester at University B, once in March, when she was home for spring break, and once in April. In March, Laurie told me about a speech class she had taken during the first semester. The speeches had to be written first. The instructor felt it was important that the students define an audience for the speech and write specifically for that audience. While they could use only an outline of the paper when delivering the speech, they were still required to write it as a paper first. The graduate student who taught the class gave them a booklet which contained a sample paper. While Laurie had used MLA style parenthetical notation when doing research in high school, her instructor required a footnote page. The first speech he assigned was called a motivational sequence. The students had to present a problem and then present solutions. Her instructor collected the papers during the drafting stage, then gave them back with comments. Laurie's paper contained comments about her need to adapt her speech to the chosen audience. The second paper written in the class was not for a speech. Instead, the students did a videotape analysis. They were taped in conversation with three other students, then each of the four students analyzed the verbal and nonverbal skills of the other

three. With these three critiques and her own impressions of her skills, Laurie then had to write a paper analyzing her verbal and nonverbal skills.

Laurie had two criticisms of this professor. Even though she did well in the class because of her ability to write, the professor had told the class that "everything [they] learned in high school was wrong and [they] had to start all over." Laurie felt the comment was unwarranted and didn't take the advice. She also felt the instructor could have been clearer as to his expectations. She received B's on the papers and a B+ in the class, but she was working for an A, and she is not sure why she earned a B on her papers. She did approach the professor for an explanation after the first paper, but she did not find his answer adequate to explain his grading. The answer, as she understands it, is that she received a B because she did not write an A paper. It was Laurie's feeling that the professor was looking for specific attributes which he was not able to make clear to the students.

Laurie also did five papers in a biology class. The professor was very accepting of the students' styles of writing as long as the content was clear. Laurie liked doing the papers because she could pick the topic. They were to write about controversies in biological science. Laurie received an A on each of the papers. She also wrote a paper in her computer class and received a B.

A ten-page paper and two five-page papers were required for Laurie's class called Introduction to Elementary Teaching. The professor didn't specify a style or format, only the required length. The longer paper was autobiographical, relating her educational

experience. The shorter paper was to be a research paper on an educational issue. Laurie felt comfortable doing these papers without specific instruction on format or documentation since she had done research in high school. She wrote the papers on teenage suicide and latchkey children, researching in books, journals, and magazines. Laurie did not know how she had done on these papers when I talked to her. The professor had indicated that he would not be returning the papers until after he had given them their final grades. The papers would be available in the summer. Tests in the class counted much more than the papers in the final grade. Since Laurie scored in the 90s on each test, which were multiple choice and true/false, she was not worried about her grade.

Although Laurie does well on all tests, she prefers essay tests. Laurie's philosophy and computer professors used essay questions for testing. Laurie prefers essay tests because she can choose how she answers and the words she uses, and she is able to show what she knows about the subject.

Laurie will take the required writing class offered to sophomores at University B, and she feels she has things to learn in that class. She is glad she had the option of taking the Advanced Placement test, however, because she does not feel she would have needed the freshman class from what she knows about it. Many of the students who lived in her dorm came to Laurie for help on papers. Some were frustrated with their lack of ability. A lot of them did not feel that their professors gave enough instructions for them to proceed with their papers. Laurie felt these students needed step by step instructions to write a paper. None of them blamed high school

writing instruction; most blamed the lack of directions or instruction in the college classes. Laurie remembers that one of her high school classmates who was having trouble with papers in college was a B student in her College Writing class in 12th grade.

While Laurie wrote on her final questionnaire that she felt the classes at her high school could have taught grammar more intensively, she said in her interview that her professors did not mark anything about her grammar, spelling, or punctuation. On her final questionnaire, she wrote that if she has a problem with writing, it would be making spelling or grammar errors. Laurie felt that she had grown as a writer during her freshman year even though she did not take a writing class. She felt she had become very independent and confident about writing assigned papers on a variety of topics.

### Mary

Mary attended a rural high school, one of the smaller schools in this study. Approximately 50% of the students attend college after graduation. The school offers six full-year selections for college preparatory students: a year each for 9th and 10th graders and four selections for juniors and seniors. Mary selected one class each year, including American Literature in her junior year and College English in her senior year. She received an A in each course. On her first questionnaire, Mary described a variety of writing in those four classes, and she answered that she felt she wrote "quite a bit." She rated her preparation for college as "Excellent." After taking the semester writing course which is required of all freshmen at

University B, Mary reaffirmed her evaluation of her preparation, writing, "My experiences in high school helped me greatly in college."

Mary took the required writing class during her second semester in college. I talked with Mary twice during that semester, once in March when she was home for spring break, and once in April.

Mary was taught by a graduate assistant. She liked the routine of the class. Her instructor had the students break into peer groups of four. The peer groups were used constantly during the process of writing a paper, first for help with theme development, then for editing and proof-reading. There were two times during the process of writing a paper that the students had to bring a draft to class. They brought copies for everyone in their groups the second time. The instructor provided a list of questions to help group members evaluate papers. The instructor also took a copy of the second draft which she returned with comments.

Mary said her grade in the class was to be based on three writings which she would choose from her portfolio of writing at the end of the semester, a journal, a final exam essay, and class participation. On her second questionnaire, Mary reported receiving an A in the class.

The first time I talked to Mary she said that the class was working on a paper based on a short story by J. D. Salinger. Mary felt this paper was harder than any paper she had written so far. During the course of this paper, the teacher required that each student have a conference with her. Mary also felt free to approach this teacher any time during class work periods and during her office



hours, and indicated that the instructor was even open to receiving calls at home if necessary.

When I talked to the director of the freshman writing program at University B, he gave me a copy of the departmental syllabus for the course. Seven writing assignments were very clearly described on this syllabus. From Mary's description of her assignments in the course, her instructor followed the syllabus.

Mary said that she did not do this kind of process writing in high school. She had experienced peer groups in high school; however, the focus of the group's work was proofreading. Mary felt that the peer groups were helpful, but she also felt she was more helpful to her classmates than they were to her. She said, "I feel like I could really have someone be more tuned into my writing than some of the comments I'm getting." The entire class (approximately 20 students) discussed past writing experiences during an early class session. She concluded that her experience was much stronger than many she heard described. Some students had had very little writing in high school, while others described programs that were focused heavily on research writing. The members of her peer group were three students who had not participated in strong programs of writing in high school.

In addition to the seven papers, Mary's class wrote a journal in which they made three entries a week. The instructor looked at the journals at the end of the semester as part of the evaluation process she went through to determine a semester grade. The journal entries were focused on the theme "What Is Normal, Anyway?" Mary enjoyed journal writing. She was not anxious about her grade

in the class because she had good feed-back from the instructor and high grades on papers. In addition, she was very thorough in her journal entries and attended every class session.

Mary was satisfied with her instructor's response to her as a writer. She said, "I am learning to write for her style." She reported this positively, as if it were the way to succeed in a writing class. She felt her success with writing was due to a program of good writing and language experiences beginning in elementary school and continuing throughout her schooling. Mary did not feel her freshman English class in college was as difficult as it could have been. She felt she was more challenged in high school. She wrote a lot of literary analysis in high school, so she thought the college experience should have more reading and response of the type she was used to.

Unlike Laurie, Mary did not have many writing experiences outside of her English class. She is a business major taking classes in math and accounting. One course she had second semester, a psychology class, had essays due on a regular basis. In addition, the psychology tests were all essay tests. She does well on essay tests and prefers them to multiple choice tests. She does not think she will use her writing ability much in her major. She also does not envision herself using a lot of writing in a career as an accountant.

In April I talked to Mary about the progress of her English class. She felt she had learned to be more specific and detailed in her writing. The assignments were designed to encourage the use of details to back up opinions. She had written a movie review and a

literary critique. In those papers she was to be as objective as possible, backing up each statement with evidence.

During a second required conference with her instructor, Mary was required to bring three papers from her portfolio which she was considering re-writing for her final portfolio evaluation. During the conference, the instructor gave her suggestions for re-writing. At the end of the semester, Mary would submit her portfolio with the three final drafts, her journal, and a take-home essay which would serve as the final exam.

Between our two interviews, Mary discovered that she would have a paper due in her accounting class. She had to write a company to have three years of annual reports sent to her. Then, in a written evaluation, she was to analyze the company based on their annual reports. She was required to read books on business strategy and refer to them in her paper. The professor stressed that he expected a polished final product.

Mary also took a course on the use of the library. This course was only for half a semester. Mary easily earned an A. There was a paper required to show mastery of library use, research techniques, and bibliography format.

Mary said in our March interview that her required English course was not challenging. In April, I asked her if she would say that the class was necessary. She was strong in her opinion that it was. She said that she improved as a writer. (On her final questionnaire, she wrote, "I am definitely more detailed, concise and write papers I never dreamt I would be writing a year ago.") She added, however, that not every section of the course is the same.

She knows students who had been required to submit a final draft of a paper each week without experiencing any of the writing processes which her instructor required. She thought the class was easy and even though she feels her writing has improved, she thinks she could have easily gone on to the sophomore required class without having taken the freshman class. She took a CLEP test offered by the university, but she did not succeed in waiving the freshman requirement. She felt that "on that test [she] did not get to express [her] ability to write." One reason she gave to support having a required freshman English class is that, in her opinion, students take college more seriously than high school. She felt her high school program was equally as good and very intensive, but she feels that many of her high school classmates did not work hard in high school and didn't take the class seriously. She thinks the motivation is better in college, an opinion held by at least one researcher (Berlin *Rhetoric and Reality* 3).

Mary's instructor filled out a questionnaire. In answer to a question about the greatest strength of a good student, she answered, "A willingness to see an initial draft as a piece of writing subject to change." In contrast, she feels a bad habit is being "resistant to revising work. When they break out of the 'one draft is enough' pattern, their writing improves greatly." Mary's description of the sections of this course taken by her classmates suggests that some students are never asked to arrive at this realization which Mary's instructor deems so important. Another question on the instructor questionnaire asked about section discrepancy. The instructor answered, "There is a great deal of variety in approaches to teaching

[this course] within the department. I try to place a great deal of emphasis on developing the ability to generate ideas, focus and organize work and develop critical thinking skills. Many of my colleagues use a similar approach, while some are concerned mainly with the finished product." Neither Mary nor her instructor indicated whether or not the courses they were describing were taught by English department professors, graduate assistants, or both.

### Joan

Joan graduated from a suburban high school which sends 65-70% of its students on to colleges. In addition to offering three levels of English for four years, Joan's high school offered an additional array of electives including Business English, Composition I and II, Creative Writing, and Advanced Placement English. This is an unusual number of course offerings (twenty different course titles) for a school with a student body of approximately 650 students.

Joan did not take advantage of any of the unusual offerings in her school's curriculum. She took four full-year classes: English 9, 10, 11, and 12. She did not qualify for the Honors sections of those classes. Joan chose not to list the grades she earned in high school. She graduated with a 3.1 grade point average. In her first questionnaire, Joan indicated that she had to write at least six pieces of writing each year to meet requirements to pass English in her high school. In addition, she reported writing in history, Spanish, anatomy, and band. Joan rated her preparation for college writing as "Excellent." She reaffirmed that evaluation a year later, after taking the freshman writing course at University B. She gives credit in

particular to one teacher who taught her for two of her four years in high school. I asked each student to attach an essay to the first questionnaire. Joan's was clear and showed a knowledge of writing; however, a lack of sophistication with wording and other miscues show the kinds of problems that Joan said (during our interview) she was having in college.

Joan is a biology major at University B. She considers her major pre-medical, since she wants to try to be accepted at one of Michigan's medical schools. She received a 3.0 for her first semester of college. At the time of our interview, she estimated the second semester was running close to 3.3. I interviewed Joan only once, during the second semester of her freshman year. She had taken the required freshman English class first semester and had earned a B+. Joan had written six papers in the class, each three to four pages typed. She remembered that some of the types they had done were analytical, narrative, and descriptive. Her descriptions seem to match the course syllabus I had obtained from the director. There was a process used for each paper which involved peer groups of three for help in editing and proofreading, and grading of a draft by the teacher, which then had to be re-written. Joan handed the re-written papers back to the professor. He kept them for final grading. She said she did not get them back with a final grade. She earned either an A- or a B+ on the drafts which were graded before her re-writes.

During the first semester Joan also did a six-page research paper for biology. She received a B+ on that paper. For that paper, the students were instructed to buy a book which explained how to

document the research and set up the manuscript. She said the book was for use with scientific writing. She didn't remember the title of the book or the style of documentation. Joan also wrote a paper on a psychological issue in her psychology class second semester. At the time I talked to her she was working on a second psychology paper, a reaction to information in her textbook. The psychology papers, three to four pages each, could involve research if the student chose.

Joan explained her grades, less than an A on most papers, but at least a B, as the result of wording problems. She said that she rarely received feedback on any of her papers which suggested problems with the content. Often, however, there would be other comments which indicated problems with her wording. She said there was never a specific item marked or a correction so that she could see exactly what was wrong. Joan said she was strong in punctuation and grammar. The written comments would more often be ones, such as "re-read sentence," which suggested that she had worded her sentences incorrectly or unclearly. Joan tried to correct this wording problem as she did re-writes, but she was clearly frustrated about it. She didn't think she could improve. Her statement to me showed that Joan did not always speak with grammatical correctness. She said, "It seems like every paper I've wrote(sic) . . .I've wrote has always had a 're-read this sentence.' " Joan concluded, "I'm just not writing the sentences right." She wasn't sure she would improve. She said, "It's kind of set in me." It is highly likely that she is not as aware of syntax and wording as she would need to be to write A papers on a college level.

Joan said her English grade was based on the six final papers. Each counted 1/6 of the grade. The final was a re-write of a paper. Her teacher did not lecture the class or present lessons in writing, language, literature, or any language arts subject. The writing process was the content of the course. Her teacher's format was to have the students do two papers, have a conference, and then re-write one of the two; thus, they re-wrote three of their six papers. Joan said she did no reading of literature or any other reading for the class except of a magazine which she had chosen for a writing assignment on identifying audience.

Joan did not know where her re-written papers were. She knew that her instructor was keeping them in a folder. She thought maybe he would be giving them to the sophomore writing class teacher although he did not say this was what he would do. There were three required conferences with the instructor during the semester, which Joan didn't mind, but which she did not find helpful. She felt the teacher seemed positive about her writing. In their conferences he said that every paper she wrote could be an excellent paper based on her topics and content. She concluded, "He told me if I just cleaned up the grammaticals, that I'd get an A on every paper." (Joan defined "grammaticals" as the sentence structure; she gave as examples fragments or misuse of words or phrases.) Joan said that one thing she liked about the conferences was that class was cancelled for each of the three weeks when they had conferences. On her final questionnaire, Joan wrote that the only change she had made as a writer is that she checked her sentence structure more carefully.



On the final questionnaire, Joan praised this teacher and gave him credit for running an excellent writing course. During the interview, I asked Joan if she knew his status in the department of English. She did not know whether he was a graduate assistant or a member of the English Department's full-time staff. Because she called him Mr. \_\_\_\_ , and because he came to take the place of their first teacher who left for another job after the first week, she guessed that he might have been one of the graduate assistants.

### Conclusions from University B Interviews

#### The Teachers

The two English teachers who taught Mary and Joan used very similar formats including peer group work and requiring multiple drafts. Mary's teacher used more literature and seemed more involved with her students than Joan's teacher. Mary's teacher was one of the graduate assistants who teach almost half of the sections of the freshman English course. It was not clear whether Joan's teacher was a graduate assistant or a younger member of the faculty. Both Joan and Mary liked the format of their classes and found their teachers well-prepared and likable.

#### Student Preparation and Attitude

Despite liking their teachers, neither Mary nor Joan reported getting a lot of help or benefit from the class. Mary said she writes much better now, but did not feel that the class was as challenging as it could have been. Joan seemed to have problems with writing that she could not fully understand and, therefore, which she was doomed

to repeat  
writing a  
her," yet  
her back  
herself o  
standard  
attention  
myself, s  
the misc  
would sa  
oral dial  
student  
the unde  
spending  
also can  
reflected  
high sch  
Honors  
had a 3.  
freshma  
training  
college.  
writing  
highly a  
about h  
writing  
of a typ

to repeat with every paper. Joan has a positive feeling about her writing ability. She feels that her problems with wording are "set in her," yet she does not display the level of understanding to discuss her background within her family or her neighborhood to reveal to herself or me whether her problems come from years of non-standard use of the language in everyday discourse or lack of attention to detail. I am not capable of making such judgements myself, since I know nothing about Joan's background. Judging by the miscues I have seen in her writing and heard in her speech, I would say that many of her writing errors stem from patterns of her oral dialect. These are some of the hardest errors to correct since the student cannot merely develop a sophistication with the language or the understanding of her mistakes by studying a few books or spending time in a semester of freshman English. I would guess, but also cannot confirm, that some of Joan's grades in high school reflected this same problem. Joan did not tell me what she got in high school courses, but she did tell me that she did not qualify for Honors or AP English. She was in Regular English in high school and had a 3.1 GPA, so I can guess she was a B student. Her B+ in freshman English at University B shows that she did have good training in high school English and that her writing is adequate for college. I did not feel that Joan wanted to work very hard at her writing skills, however, despite her desire to compete in such a highly academic field as medicine. She seemed rather noncommittal about her peer group, her conferences with her instructor, and re-writing papers. She said she used a word processor in college instead of a typewriter as she did in high school. When I asked her if she

did more re-writing as a result, her answer was "No." It seemed her favorite weeks were when class was cancelled to give time for conferences.

Mary is very motivated to do well and has an excellent background. Despite her disappointment at not being able to waive the freshman English class, she used the class well to improve her already good writing. When Mary wrote on her final questionnaire that she is writing papers she never dreamed she would be able to, I think a major factor is a year's worth of maturing and new experiences to write about. It was probably good that Mary took her freshman English class second semester so that she would have more maturity to bring to the class.

Laurie is probably the best writer of the three University B students. Ironically, even though Laurie did not take Freshman English, she may have done more writing in her freshman year than either Joan or Mary. Certainly she did as much. With no instruction being provided in the classrooms for most of those papers, Laurie earned an A on almost every one. In fact, she was quite disappointed with the B+ in her speech class because she felt the teacher, while suggesting that their high school instruction "was wrong," had been unclear about his own expectations.

### University B's Classes

The departmental syllabus for University B's freshman English course is very specific and clear. While teachers are not required to follow the syllabus exactly, it suggests the kinds of writing assignments they should assign and indicates how many different

kinds should be assigned for the course. The teachers who adhere closely to the suggested assignments will be providing students a variety of writing experiences and a good quantity for a semester of writing. Both of the teachers in the study did follow the syllabus fairly closely. Mary's teacher, who is a graduate assistant, would be required to follow the suggested format. If there is a lack of consistency in content among the sections of freshman English, it might be because, as several individuals have suggested in this study, all faculty members, especially tenure-stream faculty, do not feel an obligation to follow either content suggested by the department or methods suggested by current theory. Some sections, therefore, may not have the format found in Mary and Joan's classes. The use of peer writing groups, multiple drafts, re-writing, and other such aspects of the writing process are not required of everyone who teaches freshman English at University B. One student at University B, who was not an interview subject, wrote on his final questionnaire about a professor who "was a horrible, boring speaker who went off on tangents about the good ol [sic] days when everything was perfect." This student spoke of putting off writing a paper until the night before it was due. He mentioned a poor attendance record. His grade in the class, nonetheless, was a B. This suggests that the student was not put through a multiple-draft writing process, was not part of a peer group process which would have required better attendance, and, it appears, was judged only on final products. He had an experience far different than Joan or Mary's.

One very strong aspect of the total program at University B is the quantity of writing that these three freshmen did in other

classes. The difference between their experiences and the experiences of the students interviewed at University A is startling. The three University B students wrote papers in almost every class they had taken, from speech to accounting. Their professors were also more inclined to use essay tests as opposed to multiple choice tests. This back-up from other departments certainly conveys the message that writing is an important and useful activity in many fields of study and that there is a purpose for learning how to write well. The widespread use of writing across the curriculum is commendable.

### Articulation

Laurie was well served by an articulation program in which both her high school and college participate, the Advanced Placement Program. Laurie was certainly capable of writing well in her classes without having to take the freshman English class. She was well prepared at the high school level, but if there was any doubt, the use of the AP exam helps the university have an outside opinion on the preparation of individual high schools.

Mary also took part in an articulation program provided by University B, a CLEP test which students take before they take summer orientation. Mary was not able to waive freshman English based on the results of the test. She indicated to me that she didn't think the test provided an adequate indication of her writing ability. Her writing ability was confirmed by her A in freshman English; however, and she did not find the class a total waste of time. She said on her final questionnaire, "I learned quite a bit this semester.

It just expanded and was more detailed than my high school writing." The fact that Mary's instructor was a graduate assistant shows that the program University B has established to train and monitor graduate assistants can have very satisfactory results.

Joan had what she considers a very good writing program in high school. She says she does not remember being criticized in high school for the wording problem which was her major stumbling block in college. She did not change much as a writer in freshman English. The fault could lie in several places. Why didn't Joan have an idea of this problem with wording when she was in high school? Many high school teachers do not deal with stylistic considerations when teaching writing because it seems too judgmental. Judging style does not lend itself to the concrete, "this is right, this is wrong, ten points off here, five points off here" method of evaluation used by some teachers of writing. Trying to correct a student's speech and wording patterns is often very political as well. Sometimes such judgements are construed by students as judgements on family and culture (Daniels 1983, Rose 1989). In the high school community, the teacher often knows the parents and family, often lives near them, and is certainly subject to their criticism. As a result, a student may not only come to college with these wording problems still part of her or his writing, but may also come with no idea that the problem exists. Joan's teacher at University B felt Joan had a problem with wording. College teachers are more often insulated from the feelings of the students' communities and families. They can criticize a student's use of colloquialisms, poor grammar, and awkward structure without as much concern about ramifications beyond the

rhetical ones as high school teachers have. The reaction of Joan's teacher, however, was not effective. Joan remembers talking to him about the problems he found with her writing. She learned she had to clean up what she called her "grammaticals." The teacher also commented in writing on Joan's papers. Joan knew something was wrong because she was being asked to "re-read sentence," but what she didn't learn was exactly what was wrong with the sentences she was being urged to re-read. When she conferenced with the teacher to hear his explanation, she did not learn how to do something about her wording problems. Even though he was asking Joan to re-write papers, he was not handing back the re-written papers with new grades and comments on them, so she wasn't learning as much as possible from the process of re-writing. Perhaps Joan herself isn't working hard enough to solve this problem. She admitted that even with a word processor, she doesn't re-write any more than she did in high school. If there is a failure here, it may not be considered a failure of articulation. Joan is a solid B student from high school who went on to become a solid B student in college. No one would call this failure. But there is still a writing problem here which no one has been able or willing to address.

### University C

The freshman writing course at University C is a one-semester course taught entirely by graduate assistants supervised by the director of freshman writing. When I talked to the director of freshman writing, she told me that most of the freshmen take this one course. She was amazed at the result of my survey which



revealed that of the five students in the study who attended University C, only one had taken the course. One student had received credit for the course through the Advanced Placement Program. One student had chosen to be in the Honors section of the course, which, although it has the same course name and number, is taught under the auspices of the Honors College and, therefore, is not controlled by the English Department at all. One student had taken a course called Technical Communications offered by the Engineering Department which will fulfill the writing requirement instead of the English course. The fourth student had taken part in an experimental linking of two English Department courses. One was the required freshman course, but because of its linkage with the other English course, its content was different. This option might have been chosen by an English major or a liberal arts major who would want more English credits than those earned by taking the one class which all university freshmen must take. As a result of it being linked to another English class, the course would have had more of an emphasis on literature and literature-based writing. This experiment was dropped after only one year, ironically the year during which the students in the study were freshmen. It was the director's opinion, therefore, that the experiences I would be describing in my study would not be the experiences of the typical freshman except for those of Carol, who took the traditional course.

### Carol

Carol may have had the most intensive background in English of any of the students in the study. Her articulation experience is the

reverse of what most people assume will happen when a student moves from high school to college. In high school, Carol took Advanced Placement English in her senior year from a teacher with a Ph. D. who had once taught at the college level. Carol received a B+ the first semester and an A- the second semester. She had been in Honors English classes during her first three years in high school and had received an A, a B+, and an A during the three years. She also took a speech class during her senior year and earned an A. Carol attended the largest high school in the study, a suburban school which sends 70% of its students on to college. After this intense four years of high school, Carol went on to University C where she took the basic freshman composition course from a graduate assistant who was an English major working on her Masters Degree. In retrospect, Carol herself realizes how unusual such a transition was. She wishes she had decided to take the AP test so that she could have waived the required composition course. She thought the course would offer a review of grammar and mechanics, instruction she felt she needed, but it didn't. Not only does Carol think her high school teacher was more challenging and a more experienced and knowledgeable teacher, she also thinks that her Advanced Placement class in high school was made up of much smarter students who were better writers and more motivated students than those in her college class. She graduated with over three hundred students, many of whom were much better writers than she was. There were two sections of AP English offered during her senior year. Only about ten of her classmates attend University C. Carol did not seem to think that she had been a good writer in high school because of her B average in a

pool of students which contained many excellent writers. In comparison, she found herself wanting in ability. She did not realize that at University C she would rank as one of the better writers. This perception caused her to decline the chance to take the AP test. She thought she needed freshman English. On her final questionnaire, Carol reported receiving an A in the course, but in response to the request, "Describe how you have changed as a writer in the past year," Carol answered, "I don't think I've changed at all."

In Carol's estimation, the graduate assistant who taught the class worked hard and did a good job of setting up a classroom where students could learn. Carol felt "she [the instructor] still made some improvements with other students." I interviewed Carol once, in February, after she had been in the class for one month. The semester would run until April 20. By the time I interviewed Carol, she had written two papers. The teacher had a theme for all of the writing, "Our World." The "world" in the theme was the student's personal world. After six or seven papers, all of the writing would be combined into one large autobiographical paper. There would be no library research. All of the writing was to be from personal experience or based on information from non-traditional research such as interviews.

Carol described the teacher's format. The students were in peer groups of two or three. The first draft they wrote was evaluated by the peer group. There was an evaluation sheet for the students to use which covered such aspects as content, organization, style, and mechanics. After a re-write based on peer-group feedback, a second draft was written for the instructor. Each student had a personal

conference with the instructor and then wrote a final draft to be submitted for a grade. When the students were to have their individual conferences, class was cancelled for one of the three sessions a week. The departmental guidelines stipulate the process which Carol described, including a conference with the instructor for every paper. Carol's instructor had not returned the paper when I talked to Carol, but in her conference the instructor had already told Carol she would receive an A. On the first of the two papers the entire group passed all of the papers around and then discussed all of them. There were thirty students in the class. Of these experiences, Carol preferred the individual conference with the instructor. Carol also preferred larger peer groups. Although three or four is typical, in high school Carol remembered working with seven or eight and felt that livelier discussions were the result of working in a larger group.

The instructor hoped the students would work from models, papers which she provided for students to read. She felt that if she provided too many rules about the papers that the students would be stifled. Carol and her class had received no lessons on aspects of a paper such as introduction, conclusion, etc. Instead, the class read and discussed the models which were provided and then each student worked on a paper.

In addition to the papers, each student kept a journal of personal experiences as a resource for the papers and additional practice in writing. The students were to write three pages a week, preferably a page each on three different days, about "whatever." At the time of the interview, the instructor had not yet asked to see

the journals. Carol said "She'll read them if she wants them." Carol said that she was not entirely sure what her instructor wanted in the journal since she had given no instruction except "write."

Carol's instructor filled out a questionnaire on which she wrote of the students, "They are far too interested in the rules or what I wanted in their papers. I tried to teach them that each paper has its own internal logic--and that there are some ways that are better than others . . . most students are too rigid, want the easy way out. "

Carol used a computer to do her college papers. In high school she wrote by hand and then typed the papers. She did not think she would like working on a computer, but after having had the experience, she said she would not switch back to hand writing. When using a word processor, she definitely felt that she re-wrote more. Carol wished that the writing class were more demanding, perhaps including reading and literature-based assignments, since she enjoyed English and would work harder if necessary.

Carol is an elementary education major. She had not done much writing in other classes at University C when I talked to her. In a government/social studies course she had written a few essays . The professor was pretty strict about how these essays were to be written and made a lot of corrections. After Carol questioned some of his corrections, to her surprise, he agreed with her. It surprised her that he agreed so quickly. It was Carol's opinion that he had high standards but was not always very correct himself.

## Judy

Judy attended a rural high school where she earned a 3.973 grade point average. She had taken seven semester electives during her four years of high school as well as a full year course in her senior year to prepare for the Advanced Placement test. She earned a 3 on the AP test and was given credit for the freshman English course at University C. It is unusual for a rural high school to offer as many choices as the English Department at Judy's high school does: there are fourteen titles, mostly in one-semester units. Such a diversity of possibilities in writing, literature, and speech requires the staff to take a very close look at each student's program. The staff assists the students in setting up four-year programs to best prepare each for whatever goals he or she had in mind. This requires more work with each individual student to make sure the four-year program is well rounded. It also requires each teacher to have three or four different classes for which to prepare. Judy rated her preparation as "Excellent." She had taken Composition, Introduction to Literature, Speech, Writing for Publication, American Literature, Research Paper, Novels, and the AP English class. She had earned an A in every class except the speech class, for which she earned a B.

I talked to Judy during her second semester at University C. She seemed very confident and at ease about being in college. She did not take an English course during the first semester, but when I talked to her in February, she was taking an interesting two-class cluster for general education elective credits. I received information about this cluster from both of the professors; each filled out a

questionnaire about the class he taught. One of the classes was Film Interpretation, which is a General Education elective although it can function as an elective for English majors or minors as well. The other course was Christian Tradition, a religion course which can also be used for a General Education elective. Less than half of the students who select this cluster are freshmen. For the content of the course the professors chose film and literature which raise religious questions or portray stories from religious history. Student response comes through both discussion and writing. Both the midterm and the final are essay tests. In addition essay quizzes are used to test reading. A longer paper is assigned which is a comparative analysis of a film and a book or of two films. The professors do not spend time in the class teaching writing techniques. It is assumed that the students who select the cluster have learned how to write well. The students are asked to purchase a style book for critical reviews and analyses which explains terms and techniques they should use in their papers, essays, and quizzes, and both professors spend time in class discussing the comparative analysis and how they wish it to be done.

Judy felt very confident that she could do the work required by this two-class cluster. She earned a 4.0 grade point average in her first semester at University C. She is a bio-medical major and finds the classes in her major easy, as well. At the time of the interview, every test Judy had taken at University C had been a multiple choice test. She would take essay tests the second semester in the cluster described above and had been told by her bio-med professor that he would give essay tests. Judy did not think she would do much

writing in her four years at college. During her senior year she will have to do a thesis if she wants to graduate from honors college. She will have to do a project, write a paper, and present both to a committee of evaluators.

Near the end of the semester I talked to Judy by telephone. She told me that she had finished her paper in the religion/film interpretation cluster. Each professor had received a copy of her finished comparative analysis and had graded it with an A. Judy remained as confident as she had been when I talked to her earlier in the term. When I received her final questionnaire, I was not surprised to see that she had received an A in both classes. She reaffirmed her rating of "excellent" for her preparation for college writing. As was the case with several other students who had experienced a good high school writing program, however, Judy answered the request to describe how she had changed as a writer with, "I don't think I have."

#### Denise

I talked to Denise twice during her freshman year at University C, in February and in April. Denise struck me as a very determined and bright young woman. She was interested in the study I was doing and began the interview by asking questions of her own. As we talked, Denise let me know that she intended to earn high grades in college and that she was ready for a challenge. Her desire for a challenge, however, had led Denise to what she considered a bad experience, taking an Honors Freshman English course.



Denise was a good candidate for an honors course. In high school she had earned a 3.987 grade point average. Her high school was a suburban school with an enrollment of 750 students in four classes. Students are offered a variety of classes which allows a good four-year program for a college-bound student. After taking English I and English II in ninth and tenth grades, students choose semester electives to round out their English programs. No Advanced Placement or Honors classes are available. The teacher who filled out the questionnaire on the school commented, "It's a good basic program which could be improved."

After earning A's in English I and II, Denise chose Novels, Creative Writing, American Literature, and a self-study course of novels arranged as an independent study. She earned A's in all of these classes. Denise rated her preparation for college writing as "very good," and predicted she would do well in college. On her final questionnaire, however, Denise said, "I found out that being top-notch in a little town high school does not necessarily translate to being in the same position in college. My essay format has improved in the past year, but it still needs more. I would change the rating to 'fair.' "

Denise took two English classes during her freshman year in college. The first was to fulfill the English requirement. It was the honors section of the required English course. As stated above, when I talked to the director of freshman English, she informed me that the honors section is not taught by a member of the English Department. The Honors College has autonomy. As a result, the professor who was hired to teach the honors section Denise enrolled

in was

studen

De

final c

how t

much

receiv

the in

diffic

Du

all wr

*Jacke*

on th

then

unins

unhe

own

had t

I a

class

stude

teach

"Whe

woul

I got

beca

and i

in was not required to follow the same format which the graduate students follow in every other section of the same course.

Denise was very unhappy with her teacher. She wrote on her final questionnaire, "It was a frustrating experience but I learned how to better deal with a frustrating teacher. I'm not sure how much my composition has improved--judging from the grades I received in [the second English class I took] on the written reports--the improvement was slight if at all or [the second teacher] is a very difficult grader."

During our interview, Denise explained that the professor focused all writing on pieces of literature assigned (*King Lear* and *White Jacket* were two). The teacher brought in two articles he had written on those two books. He led discussions in class on the books and then assigned critical analyses. Denise found these discussions uninspiring and felt that the professor's articles were difficult and unhelpful. She seemed to question his purpose for bringing in his own writings. Denise said she spent a lot of time in the library and had to struggle to do well.

I asked Denise to describe the writing process used in the classroom. Denise said that the teacher never "taught" writing. Each student was to bring a rough draft to class for peer evaluations. The teacher did not read that first draft unless asked to. Denise told me, "When he gives an assignment, he would want one thing, but he would never really explain so much that that is what he wanted, and I got a paper back where I only got like 20% on or something because what I had done was what he hadn't asked for supposedly, and it was what he had asked for as far as we knew." Denise said

that her classmates shared her frustration with the teacher, and they often talked about him before he arrived or after he left class. Most felt that the teacher was very elusive about what he was looking for.

Denise got into the habit of going to the professor frequently and writing as many as five drafts of each paper. In one of these conferences the teacher suggested that Denise was not reading with much attention, so she re-read each book for a closer look. Denise kept re-writing and going back to the professor until he was satisfied, and then she was satisfied. She said she felt every re-write was better than the one before. She had not done much re-writing in high school. She developed the habit as a reaction to the professor's dissatisfaction and her need to achieve a good grade in the class. Denise used a computer in her college course which aided the re-writing process. Despite learning from re-writing and developing what can only be a good habit, the use of multiple drafts, Denise was upset with all of the drafts required to please her professor because "he didn't offer his help as such; you had to go and ask." She added, "He reiterated a couple times that frustration was a big part of the learning process, and he had said once that he structured his assignments around that, and he didn't want to offer as much help because he thought we learned more through being frustrated and trying to work our own way through it."

The last paper assigned in the class was different than the others, a theory analysis. The students were asked to apply the theories of the present to the novels and plays they were reading. Denise had never written anything like the professor wanted. She felt she was being asked to learn how to do it on her own. Denise received an A

in the  
checki  
work v  
in Den  
the fir  
reason  
meant  
able to  
the te  
to hel  
as ups  
bothe  
class e

De  
psych  
cours  
litera  
not w  
He ju  
psych  
psych

Dr  
cours  
educ  
Denis  
know  
and h

in the class and attributes her success to her hard work and constant checking with the professor. She learned most from the one-to-one work with the professor. Nonetheless, this was not a pleasant class in Denise's opinion. When Denise contested the 20% she received on the first assignment, she said the professor did not agree with her reasoning but finally offered the points because they obviously meant so much to her. She said she answered that she wanted to be able to earn the points. Denise was able to express her feelings to the teacher without hesitation. He accepted her challenges and tried to help her. Denise said he told her she was doing well. He was not as upset with how anxious Denise became as she was, and this bothered her. She said she and her classmates were glad to see the class come to an end.

Denise also had to write a paper for her psychology class. The psychology class was integrated into the cluster of honors college courses which contained her English class as well. The same literature was used by each class in the cluster. The professor did not want the students to use the library for the papers he assigned. He just wanted them to express their thoughts on certain psychological ideas. The students were supposed to apply psychological theories to the situations in the literature.

During her second semester, Denise took a children's literature course offered by the English Department. Denise's major is special education, and this course can be used as part of her program. Denise enjoyed the class. She found the professor very knowledgeable and interesting. The professor had taught children and had written children's literature, so Denise felt she was a good

role model. The class involved reading children's literature and preparing group projects to demonstrate methods of presenting the literature to children. Writing in the class included short answer questions on the midterm and quizzes, a take-home final essay which was to be seven typed pages, and one written book review in which nine or ten aspects of children's literature must be discussed in a four-page paper on a children's book. The group project was the major focus of the course rather than any of the writing.

When I talked to Denise the second time, she had just turned in the book report. The teacher had provided the students with a model report. Denise felt that all aspects of writing would be important to the professor, not just content. In the model report, the teacher pointed out an error with tense and indicated that she would look at grammar and mechanics. Denise thought she would do well in the class, but at the time I talked to her she had received no major grade.

On her final questionnaire, Denise reported receiving BA for the class which would be similar to a B+. Denise was not happy with that grade and decided that the professor graded hard. She wrote, "I don't think my final deserved the grade she gave, but even with my grade—I still would probably receive a 'BA.' However, I'm still not entirely satisfied [with the grade] because I know I should've done better." Denise suggested on the questionnaire that it was a lack of effort on her part which resulted in a grade less than her goal of an A. Denise's conclusion after a year of writing instruction and work at University C was written on her final questionnaire: "I've learned that it takes more work than I had previously thought. I need to

give the writing projects much more time and at least two or three drafts are necessary to produce a workable copy."

### Conclusions from University C Interviews

#### The Teachers

The students I interviewed at University C clearly had a variety of opinions about their writing instructors. Nonetheless, what I concluded from talking to each of them is that the teachers were expecting the students to do a lot of practice with writing, and in the literature-based classes, significant reading in preparation for writing. The problems encountered by Carol and Denise were not, in my opinion, the fault of their teachers. Instead, there was a mismatch between the students' expectations and the teachers' expectations. Carol's graduate assistant did not expect to have students with the skill in writing which Carol had attained in high school. It would be assumed that a student who had taken a full-year AP course as intensive as that which Carol had taken would follow through by taking the AP test and waiving the freshman English requirement. Carol's freshman teacher verified that this is sometimes a problem when she wrote on her questionnaire, "In most cases, a few students in the upper and lower ranges slip through, and they tend to get less out of the class than the average student."

Denise's instructor expected his students to work harder and to work with more advanced material. That is not unusual for the teacher of an honors section. Denise, although she qualified to take the honors course based on her summer orientation writing examination, found the work very frustrating. She concluded that



she had not been as well trained in high school as she had thought she was. Because she received A's in high school, Denise assumed she could get A's in college and that she was well prepared for an honors section. She did get an A in the Honors English course, but she did not like what she was expected to do to earn it. Her professor gave literary analysis assignments which were typical of the assignments given to English majors during the era when literary critique held dominance. According to the director of freshman English, Denise's professor was a retired English professor and would have had his primary teaching years during that earlier time. Literary critique is not expected of the students in the regular freshman English courses, if for no other reason than that the department realizes that the freshmen are not all English majors. Nonetheless, despite Denise's frustration, her professor gave her a great amount of personal time to help her with her problems with his assignments. He saw her frustration as a good sign and even Denise admits that she improved as a writer. The other English teachers who taught courses to Denise and Judy used a variety of approaches and materials which each of the students reported to be enjoyable. They had no trouble carrying out the work in the classes.

### Student Preparation and Attitude

Judy and Carol were two of the better prepared students in the study. They attended very different high schools, however. Judy's school was rural and smaller with a graduating class of less than 200 students. Carol's school was suburban and larger, with a graduating class of over 300 students. This supports the conclusion that a

motivated student will do well in a good program in any school regardless of affluence or location.

Both Judy and Carol took a full-year course in their senior year to prepare them for the AP test. Each earned an A the second semester (Judy also did the first semester). Only Judy followed through and took the test, however. She earned a 3 which indicates that her preparation was adequate. Carol had many classmates who she considered to be smarter and better prepared than she was. This affected her confidence when it came to taking the AP course or waiving the basic writing course at University C. She felt she needed a freshman English course to improve her grammar and mechanics and did not take the AP test.

Denise's experiences in her small suburban school did not seem to prepare her as well as she had hoped it would. Her school was only slightly larger than Judy's. The questionnaire supplied by Denise's teacher in high school best indicates that Denise's preparation might have been less intense. When the question was "For what kind of writing would you say your students have the most and/or the best instruction?" the answer was "Basic paragraphs and essay writing." When asked to describe every kind of writing experience offered in the English Department, the list given included "short stories, poetry, research paper, journal, speeches, essay tests, and resumes." When the question was "What kind of writing methods or procedures are taught or encouraged?" the answer was "the basics" and when the question was "Is there a consistent procedure from teacher to teacher?" the answer was "not really." As stated above, this teacher concluded, "It's a good basic program which could be improved." It

could be concluded that Denise is right in her feeling that being an A student at this school does not mean that she is well trained for college writing. It is Denise's hard work and great determination that carried her through her Honors Freshman English course. Her willingness to revise her writing over and over is a sign of maturity (Coles 1986). It is her own personality that allowed Denise to succeed in this class rather than her preparation.

### University C's Classes

For the student who will benefit from a semester of writing process with peer group evaluations and a good amount and variety of writing, University C offers a good program. The teachers in this program are no better trained than the high school teachers their students left behind, and in most cases, less experienced and less qualified. Those who did not gain certification to teach English would not be qualified to teach in the high schools. Nonetheless, the graduate assistants are put through a carefully supervised and structured program to prepare them for teaching the freshman English course. While a teacher's experience and knowledge can be very important in a class where the content is very specific, such as a mathematics or science course, for instance, or in a specific literature course such as the children's literature course Denise took, a classroom where the content is the writing process is more dependent on a structured format and significant assignments. The graduate assistant, with the supervision of the freshman writing instructor, can provide the format which will promote self and peer-evaluation and subsequent improvement in writing. The difference

between a novice and a seasoned instructor will be most evident in one-to-one conferences.

It would be beneficial to those students who do qualify for an honors section of freshman English at University C if the course were not so drastically different than the other sections and if it did not focus so highly on literary criticism and analysis. The Department Chair whom I interviewed at University C indicated that for this to happen, the course should become the responsibility of the English Department, not the Honors College, since the Honors College did not, in her opinion, exert control over the content of the course. She did not feel that there was anyone responsible for the course content who was aware of the latest theory or practice in writing instruction.

### Articulation

While Carol, Judy, and Denise all did very well in the English classes they took, the articulation process could have been smoother for Carol and Denise. Carol should have followed through by taking the AP test. That system was provided for her and would have served her well. Denise would have benefitted from better preparation for college. Also, she might have had a more enjoyable experience if the Honors College course had been handled differently. A student, however, should not expect to take an Honors College course and not work harder than average or not be asked to accomplish more difficult assignments. Despite her frustration, Denise is the student who reported she had improved as a writer. Neither Carol nor Judy felt they had.

University D

## Paula

Paula is the student who transferred from University A to University D. I had asked her to be an interview subject before she transferred. I decided to interview her after she transferred to compare one student's impressions of the programs in the two universities. To my surprise, Paula told me that she had taken no required freshman writing course at either university. Because she received a 3 on the Advanced Placement test, she was able to earn credit for the first term course at University A. When she transferred to University D, she was told that a nursing major does not need to take the first course regardless of placement recommendations (the first course would not have fulfilled the writing requirement anyway) and that the Advanced Placement score was accepted in place of the two classes which she would have had to take to complete her writing requirement.

At University A, Paula did no writing during the term she was a student. In Psychology there were no papers, and the tests were all objective. In her other courses, (math, chemistry, and healthy lifestyles) she had only objective tests as well. The requirements were far different at University D. In Social Problems and in a History of Science and Culture (HSC) course, Paula wrote essay exams. In Social Problems the first essay test was a take-home exam and the second was a timed test. Paula received an A on the first and a B+ on the second. She said she was able to reveal more of her learning in the take-home test. She submitted fifteen typed pages. She felt her

lower grade on the second test was the result of the limited time allowed to write it.

The professor in HSC was very impressed with Paula's writing ability. He asked to keep copies of her essay tests because they were so well written. In addition to the essay exams, a paper was assigned in this class. The students had to choose a topic which fit the material being discussed. Paula chose to do a biographical sketch of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, an English woman noted for gaining opportunities for women in medicine.

Paula said there weren't lessons on writing skills in the HSC class, but there were clear expectations given on organization and content. She used the same routine she had used in high school: research, take notes, outline, write a messy rough draft, write a neater second draft, and have her mother type a final draft on her computer at work. (Paula does not have a computer.) I asked Paula how the paper was graded and what kind of comments were on it. She answered, "I got an A on that, and he was impressed with the writing."

This was the only paper Paula wrote during her freshman year in college, except the take-home exam in Social Problems. She said, "I went through the same process [for the exam]. . . ." She did not have any writing instruction during the year nor did she ever work in peer groups or have any conferences with professors about her writing. On her final questionnaire, when I asked Paula how she had changed as a writer during this year, she wrote, "I don't know because I haven't really written enough to be able to tell."

Even though the HSC class was not a freshman writing course or even an English course, I asked Paula's professor to fill out a questionnaire. He responded. He is a history professor with tenure and a Ph. D. He answered my question about the amount of writing he asked of his students by saying that the course Paula took was writing focused. He indicated that 25% of the course grade is derived from the paper and 75% from essay tests. No part of the grade in this course is derived from objective answers on tests. He indicated that he also teaches a supplemental writing skills course in the History Department. This is a course which fulfills the second level writing requirement at University D. This is a significant point, I believe. This professor has responsibility for a writing skills course which has been incorporated into his department for majors in his field, and, perhaps as a result, he assigns more writing in other courses he teaches.

I asked Paula how she would have responded to the professor's rhetorical question written on her essay test, "Where did this writing ability come from?" Paula would give credit to her high school teachers. She attended a suburban high school from which 65% of the students go on to some kind of higher education. Her high school has a very detailed curriculum when it comes to writing. The amount and kinds of writing are specified for each grade level. There are honors sections and an Advanced Placement course. Paula appears to have had an excellent education in this high school, earning A's in Honors English 9, Honors English 10, American Literature (a semester course), Composition II (a semester course), and Advanced Placement English (a full year course). On her first

questionnaire, Paula wrote, "I had all excellent English teachers throughout high school who worked with each other in order to know what was taught, therefore giving us a continuous flow of new information." Paula also gives credit for her writing ability to her parents, who, she said, always stressed writing as an important life skill.

### Sue

I talked to Sue twice at University D, once in March and once in April. When I first met her she had already completed the first semester of college. After summer placement exams, Sue was told to enroll in the basic freshman writing course at University D, which did not fulfill her writing requirement. I did not get the impression that this placement bothered Sue as much as it bothered some of the other students. She said she expected to be placed in this class, and she knew that most students were taking it. She indicated that she enjoyed this class, discussing the routine and the teacher very positively. She liked the teacher, who, according to Sue talked a lot but was an enjoyable lecturer. The professor talked about the material they were reading and the related topics. Sue said, "She just liked to talk. She could talk about anything."

Papers in the class included a personal experience, a comparison/contrast paper, and a definition paper. Sue said the papers were to be three to five pages in length. The students were able to choose their own topics within these types of papers. Sue liked being able to choose her own topics. When a paper was assigned, the teacher helped the students. She had class discussions



and gave ideas. Sue said, "She was really creative and really excited about, you know, writing, so it was easy to [begin to write]."

Sue said she had trouble in the first couple of papers with detail. The teacher would write, "Show, don't tell" on her papers. As the semester progressed, Sue felt she learned to be better about showing what she was describing. The peer group feedback was helpful to Sue. She said she received mostly positive comments. She did not have a lot of marks on her corrected papers to indicate errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. The teacher focused on content and style. Sue knew the papers needed to be polished, however, and felt she was good at correctness.

Sue's teacher filled out a questionnaire. She was very thorough in answering each question and described a well-defined, well-planned semester of writing. In addition to the 60% of the grade on the papers assigned, a student earned 40% of his or her grade on a required journal, participation in class and workshop (peer groups), and mandatory writing lab attendance. The students are asked to read several autobiographies and essays. She seemed genuinely concerned about the students' writing,

Most students begin this course frightened and insecure about their writing skills. Principally, they are not accustomed to writing in depth or meeting deadlines. They are shocked that writing involves a complex process—from free writing to final draft. In time, however, they appreciate the effort it takes to produce a worthy paper—one not only the instructor appreciates, but they themselves do, too.

The teacher indicated on her questionnaire that she has been told she has standards too high for these basic writing students to meet. She countered that claim: "I do put students through their paces. As they develop new skills and habits, they are rewarded generously." Sue received a B+ in this class. On her final questionnaire she rated the class "Excellent." She was glad the teacher was strict and hard. She said, "She was so much fun, you know, everyone liked her, so they didn't complain too much."

During the second interview, I talked with Sue about her second semester class. During this semester, Sue was enrolled in the freshman writing course which would fulfill her writing requirement. This second course at University D must include research. Sue had no problems using the library and found that the MLA style of documentation which she used in high school was being used in college.

The class requirement was to write four three-to-five-page research papers on topics which she and her classmates selected. The students picked animal rights, euthanasia, freedom of speech, and drugs. Within those broader topics, each student selected a research topic. The students also learned about various kinds of papers to write and were expected to write in a different paper format each time. Sue said three kinds of papers were comparison and contrast, argumentation, and explaining a theory. She could not remember a fourth kind even though she had already done all four papers. She received an A on the animal rights paper and B's on the other two papers which had been graded so far. She felt that she

received the A on the first paper because she spent a lot of time on it. She did not have as much time to give to the other two papers.

Sue preferred the research papers in this class to those she did in high school. She felt well prepared by her high school for research, but the high school papers were longer, and Sue found doing them more tedious. She indicated that her biggest problem when writing the short research papers required in college was deciding what information to include, knowing which quotes were best, and sorting through information she had researched. In high school she felt she usually put in everything she found and did not learn to be selective. The final paper, which she had already submitted at the time of the interview, was actually the final exam. There was also a grade for class discussion.

Sue's professor answered a questionnaire in which he indicated that 80% of the grade is on the papers, 10% is from small tests or quizzes (which Sue did not mention), and 10% on class discussion. Sue felt she would get an A- or B+ in the class. (On her final questionnaire she reported a B- from the class).

Sue enjoyed the class discussions required by the professor. These discussions not only help students formulate ideas for topics, they also helped Sue learn more about the topic on which she would be writing. The other students had angles and opinions which she had not considered, and she felt there was more depth to her writing as a result of the classroom discussions. There were no such discussions in her high school classes on topics for papers.

Sue enjoyed the people she encountered in her two English classes. She liked both professors and enjoyed the interaction with

the students. Sue did not go to either professor outside of class although she knew it was acceptable to seek individual appointments.

Sue attended the smallest high school in this study. She took a uniform four years of English at that school, which has no Honors sections or electives. She earned between A and B+ in high school classes. She felt the instruction was quite adequate. She had written some of the same kinds of papers her professors had assigned and felt knowing these styles helped her. Sue said she has learned that she has to use more detail in her writing. She needs to remember to give examples. That was one thing she doesn't feel was stressed in high school. In the interview, when I asked Sue what she would advise her high school teachers to do differently, she said she would advise them to allow the students to generate their own writing topics. She found topic selection difficult in college. She also thinks shorter, more focused research papers would have helped her learn how to research better. She does not think there is a lot she needed to change from how she wrote in high school, she simply had to work harder and put more time into each paper. Sue now uses a computer and feels she is more willing to revise a paper. She would not have written a paper over in high school just to fix a few sentences or ideas. When she uses a computer, she "cleans up [her] ideas" more readily.

On her questionnaire done immediately after her Senior year of high school, Sue rated her preparation for college writing as "fair." She wrote, "I think I have a lot to learn about writing and am not anxious to see my first graded papers." On her final questionnaire

Sue raised her rating of her high school preparation for writing from "fair" to "good." She wrote, "I was more prepared than I expected to be." When asked how she improved the most as a writer, Sue wrote, "I know a lot more about unfamiliar subjects. As I wrote, I learned." It seemed to me that Sue had overcome a major stumbling block in her writing: generating topics and learning about those topics. I wondered if her high school research was often done "in the dark," accounting for her feeling that those papers were longer and more tedious to write. In reality, when I asked Sue at separate points in the interview, about the length of papers at each level, her answers showed that papers at the two educational levels were similar in length. Sue did not seem to be aware that her answers belied her opinion that the high school papers were longer.

Sue's major is psychology. She has not been asked to write in many other classes. The psychology tests are multiple choice over two or three chapters at a time. She is frustrated by this form of testing because it provides her no feedback to evaluate her learning. She doesn't really know why she answered questions wrong. In her social issues class she wrote in-class essay tests but was assigned no papers. There were take-home midterms and finals in her social problems class. Sue earned a B on the mid-term and was very pleased. It was her understanding of the content of the course which was reflected in the test and earned the B. She thinks the course is hard and is proud to have understood well enough to earn a B. The writing format of the mid-term test provided more feedback about her learning, according to Sue.

## Jane

I interviewed Jane in March and April on the same days I interviewed Sue. Jane had taken the same two courses Sue had taken. She had been placed in University D's first freshman writing course, the one which does not fulfill the writing requirement. Unlike Sue, however, Jane was very upset to have been placed in this course. She blamed her high school for this placement at first. She had earned A's and B's in high school English and felt she should have been prepared well enough to have placed into the second course. In retrospect, she feels it was the placement that was the problem, not her preparation. Most of the people she knew had been placed in the second course. She earned an A in the first semester and found the course much easier than her English class in high school during her senior year.

Despite this frustration, Jane had nothing but praise for her first semester writing instructor. This teacher is well-known to me. He is a retired high school teacher who had been a very popular creative writing teacher at his high school. His students' work was known throughout the state because they often won state contests sponsored by the Michigan Council of Teachers of English. The students at University D are enjoying the same enthusiasm and ability to inspire writing that his high school students did. I did not receive a written questionnaire from him, but in phone conversations, I perceived his enjoyment of the part-time college work and the students he worked with.

Jane said she wrote a lot of papers in his class. They were about significant places, people, and events in her life. Near the end of the

course, she selected material from the entire semesters' writing to write an autobiography.

There was a lot of reading to accompany the writing. Before each part of the autobiographical writing, the professor gave the students writing which could serve as inspiration and models. Included was work of previous students. After the autobiography was completed, the course ended with the students writing short essays in reaction to readings (such as "A Modest Proposal"), or on topics generated by the readings (such as women's liberation or the class system).

Jane found it a coincidence that her professor used "families" just as her high school teacher had done. "Families" was their name for the peer groups which met to discuss their writing-in-progress. In high school the families had worked much the same way they had in college. The groups read each other's papers and gave verbal and written suggestions or reactions. As we discussed Jane's experience with the families at both educational levels, she talked about how her high school class was much more rigorous than her college class, with higher standards for correctness, and more work. She had done a research paper in high school and had used the families for evaluating the work on the research as well.

Jane felt her college family focused too much on mechanical errors. The weaknesses in her papers most often pointed out were commas. Her peers usually didn't comment on her wording, thinking her writing much better than theirs. She had a friend in the class and said their papers were often chosen as the class best, the result of a voting process the professor conducted on peer group days in order to choose papers to read in front of the class.

The professor did not grade with letters. Instead he had a set of comments which indicated a hierarchy. For instance "Great" was close to an A. "Really great" was an A. If the word was underlined twice, it meant that the work was better than if there was only one underline. This method did not bother Jane because her work was usually rated "Really great," and she sensed that she was earning an A in the course. It did, according to Jane, bother some of the other students, however.

As a student in the first writing course, Jane was required to go to the tutoring center once a week and meet with a peer group and a tutor, who was an English major. The tutor then sent a report on the work of the students to their professors.

At the time of the two interviews, Jane was enrolled in the second writing course, the one which would fulfill the writing requirement for her freshman year at University D. The professor had the students work with literary analysis. First they did narrative writing in reaction to readings ("A Modest Proposal," "The Bride Comes to Yellowstone," *Othello*). The professor had introduced themes to tie together their reading and writing. The themes were paradoxical, such as "Innocence and Experience" and "Love and Hate." When they wrote the papers, they did not have to mention the literature. With each paper the students had to follow a certain format (such as comparison/contrast) and make a point. Jane showed me her first paper on the topic of "Innocence." The professor praised her topic selection. Jane wrote about what schools are doing now to teach children about society's problems and how this robs them of their innocence.



During our second interview, Jane described the research paper she had done for the class. It had to be related to literature. While talking to the professor about her career interests, Jane, with her teacher's help, decided to write about the scientific experiments in *Gulliver's Travels*, a book she had read in high school. The professor liked the paper because Jane was able to limit her writing to certain aspects of the novel. Jane showed me the paper. She had received an A. The teacher had been thorough in her evaluation, making comments throughout praising the topic and specific parts, and marking and mentioning errors.

Jane enjoyed coming up with unique topics. She feels her high school teacher limited their topic selection too much, which did not prepare her well for topic selection in college, but her own imagination was her strength in this area.

One aspect of writing emphasized in her second writing course which she had not given much consideration to previously was audience. She has now learned to be much more aware of the intended audience in her writing.

Jane's second semester's work consisted of three papers, two essay exams, and a journal. There were specific journal topics which reflected the reading and themes. In addition, peer critiquing sheets and rough drafts were put into a portfolio with the journal topics. The essay exams were on the readings. The books could be used, there was a choice of questions, and the writing was limited by time. Jane liked the format and earned an A on her first essay exam. As I would have expected after seeing Jane's work, she reported on her final questionnaire that she received an A in this class.

Jane feels her high school experience was more than adequate to prepare her for both courses she took in college. The research papers in high school were longer. She said the final one she did was required to be 12-18 pages typed. There was more time given in college to complete a paper than she was given in high school. Unlike most students in this study, Jane said she worked more in groups in high school than in college. She did have some criticism of her high school teacher, however. When I asked Jane what she had learned in college writing courses, she told me,

I found I wasn't as bad as I thought I was at it. I hated it in high school. It is not as bad as I thought it would be. I heard everyone say, "Oh you have to write so perfect and stuff." I got here and it was like, this is much easier than what Mr. \_\_\_ did because he used to write "awkward" all over our papers. . . . She [college professor] didn't mark us on it at all, she marked us more on our content, what was in the paper, than the mechanics. He [high school teacher] didn't care what was in our papers as long as the mechanics were . . . .

Jane expected college to be very hard and picky based on what she learned in her college-prep class in high school. Nonetheless, Jane feels that high school did her the favor of teaching her grammar and mechanics so that she did not have to worry about them in college. She also feels her broad background in literature helped her in the second course, which was based on literary analysis, because she was able to use literature which she had read in high school for some of her topics.

Jane is a science major. She has not had to do any writing in biology, chemistry, math, or geology. In geology the professor said

there would be one easy essay question on the final exam. Eventually, in order to fulfill her major requirements, she will have to write and present a research paper in both biology and geology. Jane plans to go to college for five years to fulfill these requirements.

Jane's final comment on her final questionnaire was significant, I felt. "I try not to fear writing as much as I did in high school. College has helped me get over that fear."

### Kate

I interviewed Kate once, in April, during her freshman year at University D. Kate had gone to an urban high school, one of several high schools in the largest school district in the study. She had taken four full-year English classes in high school. Her grades were mixed. Kate reported everything from an A to a D for the semester grades she earned during those four years.

I asked Kate to discuss her high school experience. As she talked, I sensed that the environment of the class plays a major role in Kate's success. In classes in which she did poorly, she talked about strict teachers or about sitting in the back of the room and not focusing on the classroom procedure. In classes where she had done well she talked about having special friends in the class, sitting in the front, or teachers who had helped her focus and learn what she should do. Kate ranked her preparation for college writing as "fair" both before and after her freshman year.

Unfortunately for Kate, she reports never having done research in high school. As a result, she did not feel prepared for writing in

college. She found that she was not as prepared as some of her classmates.

Kate did not enjoy high school writing. She didn't like the topics on which she had to write. Her advice to high school teachers is to have "more mature writing. . . things that have to do with your everyday life. . . things that are happening right now, and it's really a lot easier to write on than 'what does this story tell you.' " She did not think there was enough writing in her high school, but she would not have wanted to have done more of the kind of writing which she did do, which, from her description, sounded like it was writing in reaction to or analysis of literature. Kate also thinks that high school writing should be process writing. On her final questionnaire she wrote, "Give students a chance to make corrections on papers and return them before giving a grade. High school is all about learning and a student's first effort shouldn't always be the final effort."

Considering her need for a stable class environment, Kate had a very poor experience her first semester at University D. She had placed in the first writing class, the class which does not fulfill the writing requirement. Her first teacher was not in control of the class. Kate said, "Our class pretty much ran wild. I mean, she didn't have much control. People would talk, people would come in late, leave early. It was just a really hard class to focus on. . . . It was like junior high. There was no challenge whatsoever." Kate earned A's on most of the writing done for this professor. She remembers it as having been mostly descriptive writing. Midway through the semester, this teacher left for surgery. Kate's second professor was much different. She was organized and had rules on behavior and

attendance. She more or less told the students that they would follow these new rules or be eliminated from the class. While she was the teacher, the students wrote the autobiography written by most students in this first course. The students continued a portfolio which they had started for the first professor. By the end of the semester, there was to be 100 pages of writing in the portfolio. There were peer groups throughout the semester. Unfortunately, the groups fell into the habit of social talking during the first part of the course, and the second professor had to work hard to change these bad habits. Kate said she didn't learn much in this course although she said, "I think I ended up with an A." (I was surprised she didn't remember a final grade she had received just four months earlier.)

During the second semester, Kate took the course which fulfills the writing requirement. Her professor for this course was the retired high school instructor who Jane had had for her first course. Just as Jane had, Kate found this professor's style very relaxed and enjoyable. The students wrote regularly, bringing papers-in-progress to class for work with peer groups. They did a rough draft and brought it to class for peer editing, then re-wrote the paper and brought it to class again for peer proofreading. The professor looked at the drafts and final papers to see on what skills the students needed to work. He decided they needed work on transitions, for instance. Kate chose plastic surgery as the topic for her required research paper. The research paper had been submitted but not yet returned at the time of the interview. Kate did an opinion paper on gun control, doing research in the library. She received an A-. As in Jane's class, this professor used comments like "Good" to evaluate the

papers. The last paper, however, had had a grade on it. Kate remembered the main focus of the professor's instruction as being "Stick to your thesis." She felt that she learned more about developing and focusing on a thesis than anything else in college writing. On the final questionnaire, Kate reported receiving a B in this class although she thought she deserved an A-.

The research paper had to be eight typed pages. This is twice the length of papers Kate remembers writing in high school. She said, "I never wrote papers every week like this, as far as typed and researched." Kate does not use a computer to do her papers. She does not type, either. She writes her papers in longhand and has her mother type them at work. If she had a word processor available to her, she is not sure if she would change her habit of writing one rough draft and one final draft.

Kate did not write much in other classes. She had an art class in which she took multiple choice tests. She had a history class which met for three hours a session in which she took 11-15 pages of notes a class. The tests included multiple choice questions, listing, and a lot of essay. She earned a C on the midterm.

### Conclusions From University D Interviews

#### The Teachers

University D does not have graduate students to teach its freshman writing classes. The two classes which are taken by most of the students are taught by tenure-stream faculty or part-time faculty. Most of the part-time faculty are retired high school teachers. Most of the professors have masters degrees. Some have

Ph. D.'s. Judging by the descriptions given by the three students who took these freshman writing courses, the teachers used methods urged by most current philosophy. They employed writing groups, process writing, personal writing in response to literature or current prose, and journals. Except for the teacher who had to have surgery, the students found these teachers competent, helpful, and, to use their own word, fun. These three students felt they had improved in their writing skills due to the instruction of these professors. While University D has clear guidelines for the content of the two courses, there is much leeway and some teachers were stricter in their standards and requirements than others. Based on this limited study, however, it does not appear that these differences are significant. I feel that it is important to note that Paula's history professor, who taught his department's upper level writing requirement, had incorporated much writing into his history courses as well. Turning the fulfillment of the writing requirement over to the major departments at University D has had the effect in at least one department of promoting and giving methods for writing across the curriculum.

### Student Preparation and Attitude

The preparation for college experienced by these four young women was varied. Paula, like others who participated in the Advanced Placement program, was prepared well enough to waive all freshman writing requirements. The evaluation given by the Advanced Placement system was supported by the praise accorded her work by her history professor.

Sue's small high school provided a limited choice of classes in English, one a year for four years. While Sue rated her preparation as "good" and described many important things she had learned which had helped her in college, she also revealed certain limitations to the instruction. Sue had been limited in topic selection and had not been well guided in research techniques in high school. She had a lot to learn about topic generation, research, writing with detail, and revision. Her high school preparation did not introduce her to the process of writing from brainstorming through multiple copies. Sue increased in her ability to write when she became more aware of each step along the way and was allowed to pick topics to which she could relate.

Jane was prepared for college writing by a demanding teacher who conducted error-hunts on students' papers and continually warned the students to achieve perfection in high school writing in order to succeed in college. While his instruction gave Jane confidence in her use of mechanics and grammar, knowledge of the writing process, and an ability to work with peer groups, he did not send Jane to college with a positive attitude about writing. Ironically, his meticulous preparation left Jane nothing to learn in college except to like writing. Her attitude was made worse by her placement in University D's first course, one she viewed as remedial because it did not fulfill the writing requirement. Jane was unaware that most freshmen are placed into this course.

Kate felt she had inadequate preparation for college writing. She had to learn to research since she was not required to do much research in high school. Her high school education was greatly



affected by her need for a comfortable learning environment, which for Kate might mean a class with her best friend. She did not like the writing topics she was required to use in high school. Despite Kate's negative assessment of her preparation and some low high school grades to support this negative opinion, she received adequate grades in the two freshman writing classes at University D.

### University D's Classes

The director of writing instruction at University D is aware that some students feel they have been placed in a remedial course when they are placed in the first of two writing courses for freshmen. She described the class as being a class for students who are not ready for college English, but she insisted that it is not a remedial course. She admitted that placement standards may have to be examined since 70% of the freshmen are placed in the course.

Both this first course and the second course, which actually fulfills the writing requirement, have an established curriculum issued by the department. While there is leeway in exactly how each professor designs the work which fulfills the requirements, the classes taken by the students in this study seemed consistent in expectations. The courses introduce students to the writing process and to many kinds of writing, often inspired by or written in reaction to literature. In addition, there is an attempt by each professor to increase the students' ability to write clearly and correctly.

### Articulation

Each of the four women in this study of the freshmen writing classes at University D made a successful transition to college writing. Paula did not have to take the required freshman writing course, but she received high praise for her abilities from a history professor who provides much opportunity for writing in his classrooms. The Advanced Placement program proved to be an excellent method of articulation for Paula. She did not describe herself as a changed writer, but her experiences depict her as a skilled writer.

Sue earned a B+ and a B- in the freshman writing courses. Her grades probably are a result of a limited experience with writing in high school. Her small high school could not provide her with a variety of experiences or teachers, nor could it expose her to the kind of competition which she would encounter in college writing; nonetheless, Sue was aware of her limitations and was prepared to overcome them in the writing courses in which she enrolled. Her assumption was that she would have to work hard to improve as a writer, so she did. Sue's ability to understand her own limitations and her desire to work hard to improve were her two most important aides to a successful transition.

Jane received an A in each freshman writing course at University D. Her grades reflect her rigorous preparation in high school. Despite having to learn to like writing, Jane did not have to work to write well because of her training. And, to University D's credit, I found myself talking to a young woman who was enjoying her writing assignments a great deal.

Kate received an A and a B. Her background and preparation do not seem to suggest that she would do well in college writing, yet her college grades reflect more than adequate success. These results were achieved despite the less-than-perfect atmosphere she encountered in the first class. Kate appears to have had a successful transition despite a personality and conditions which could have hampered her success at both levels. This can be attributed to the work of her teachers and professors. She describes a high school teacher who took her aside and encouraged and inspired her after Kate had earned a D in her first semester of her senior year. The professor who came to the rescue of her first semester in college had an uphill battle and earned Kate's respect. Luckily for Kate, she had a professor during her second semester whose personality and classroom style fit her learning needs. All three of these writing teachers had to work to inspire and teach Kate, yet all succeeded. Kate's experiences suggest that there is no better tool for successful articulation than a skilled teacher.

### Final Comments on the Interviews

Talking to these thirteen students provided me with a plethora of high school writing experiences and college writing experiences. In a sense, their experiences are so personal and so different that it might be surmised that no solid conclusions can be drawn from them. Nonetheless, I feel that I have developed a sense of the kind of high school classroom and the kind of college classroom which can help students achieve growth in their writing abilities. In Chapter Five I will draw some conclusions from the disparate experiences of the

students in my study and make some recommendations which I feel can improve the articulation of writing programs between high schools and colleges.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study I have attempted to discover what articulation exists between high school writing programs and freshman writing programs at colleges. I chose to observe the experiences of a group of West Michigan students as they left high school and completed a year of college. Their experiences would show me what articulation exists between the high school and college programs in which they were enrolled, and I hoped to draw some conclusions about articulation in general from their specific experiences. My study of these students as they transferred from high school to college writing programs confirmed one significant fact about this transition: It is different for every student. While this may seem a simple statement, the reasons for the differences raise important issues in education, most of which this study did not address. The size, location, and economic backing of a school district have an effect upon the education of the students in that district. The training and ability of teachers have an effect upon the students they teach. The family lives of students impact their education. While these factors have most influence on a student's high school education, they continue to influence the student's education beyond high school as well. A successful transition between high school and college can be

affected by each of these, although not necessarily in the same way for every student.

The factors this study did examine, the curriculum in the high school and the college and the classroom practices of teachers at both levels, also affected individuals differently. Even students from the same high school were not affected equally by a curriculum or teacher. Nonetheless, the information which I have gathered during this study provides a basis for recommendations which may improve writing programs at both levels as well as allow a smoother transition for the students moving between them.

The curriculum at each level will have an impact upon the student making the transition from high school to college. The number of classes or courses offered and the nature of those offerings can be important to a student's development of writing skills. The amount of writing assigned or the purpose of that writing may have an effect on how a student progresses in his or her writing ability. Nonetheless, my study showed that there can be a great variation in quantity and purpose of writing without there being a great effect on the student's development. While all of these factors can be significant, my study showed that the most significant factors in students' successful transition between high school and college writing programs were the attributes of the students themselves and the methods used in the writing classrooms. I found that students responded positively to certain classroom practices in both high school and college, and they found other practices unhelpful.

### An Evaluation of High School Course Offerings

I designed the questionnaire I sent to the high school teachers to provide information about curriculum and teaching practices in each high school. There was a great variety in the curricular offerings among the twelve schools. The number of courses offered was affected both by funds available to the school district and the number of students enrolled in the high school. In every high school, however, students were able to take at least four years of English. All students received instruction in reading and writing, usually through required courses in their ninth and tenth grade years. In addition, all students received a third year of English instruction whether through a required year-long course, two required semester courses, or electives of the student's choice. Most of the students also had a fourth year of English, usually in an elective or electives chosen by the student.

The twelve schools required writing of each student on a regular basis. Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1984) reported a national trend, which began in the 70s, of increased writing instruction, and they predicted a continued emphasis on writing in decades to come (3). These twelve schools seem to support that finding. While I did not study the schools' histories of writing instruction to ascertain whether they had increased their writing instruction, I can conclude from the teachers' responses that each of the twelve schools places a major emphasis on writing instruction. Applebee et al. suggest that such a finding would not have surfaced in a similar study in the 60s. The twelve schools also reported that writing was a component of almost every offering in their English departments, whether in a

course designed specifically to teach composition, in one focused on literature, or in a general English course.

Two schools offered only four English courses, the traditional year-long courses for each of the four grade levels, while other schools reported a plethora of courses, some providing 15-18 course titles. The amount of writing a student did in four years was not dependent on the number of offerings available at his or her school, however. I concluded that a school with limited resources could offer as rich a program as a school with a great variety of offerings. A greater variety of offerings seemed actually to be a detriment to the transition of one of the students in the study. While this student did fulfill the three credits of English required by his school, he limited himself to only writing courses in his junior and senior years; moreover, those courses he took did not prepare him to be flexible in his writing style. He took creative writing, journalism, and composition. At the college level he encountered a frustrating experience in a freshman writing course in which the writing he did was consistently unacceptable. He was unable to alter his writing style for the kind of writing being asked by his professor. Another student who received a very traditional four years of instruction in high school earned only A's in college. It appears from this study that a student with a four-year program of English, even when there is no choice other than those classes, can be provided a solid basis for the transition to college writing; whereas, a student with great choice in the high school courses and teachers he has can limit both his writing experience and his writing ability by a narrow choice of either subject matter or teachers.



Despite the number of semesters in which he or she was enrolled in an English course, the amount of writing a student might do in four years varied greatly. In some schools, the student wrote prolifically over a four-year period, including writing in subjects other than English. While some students remembered as many as 150 to 200 separate pieces of writing in their four years of high school, other students reported less than fifty assignments. The students who remembered the fewest assignments were from the same five high schools. The effectiveness of those assignments, however, seems to have varied. Three from one of those five high schools had lower grades in college than the average student in this study while students from another of the five high schools reported above-average grades. While the study appears to suggest that a student does better who has been exposed to a lot of writing, there was not a significant correlation between the amount of writing done in high school and grades in college.

While a school does well to offer students a variety of courses from which to select four years of English, there are factors which might influence the effectiveness of the curriculum. One factor may be the amount of writing done in each course, another factor might be the kinds of writing assigned, while a third factor might be the kinds of classes selected for the four credits earned.

### An Evaluation of High School Teaching Methods

There is no consistency from high school to high school as to how the teaching of writing is done. In fact, there is no consistency in many schools from teacher to teacher. This lack of harmony in

methods of instruction clearly seems to be an attribute of high school English departments subject to criticism. There is no question that there are many good teachers in all of these schools. Students are receiving writing instruction and most are able to transfer to a college writing program and write adequately. Nonetheless, it is apparent from the questionnaires that not every teacher in each school is providing good instruction.

At the time of this study, the Kent Intermediate School District, which serves eight of the twelve schools, launched a project to write Language Arts outcomes for students K-12. With the writing outcomes would come specific suggestions for lessons and methods of instruction. Many of the schools in this study are involved in developing the KISD project. If a school decides to adopt the curriculum, it would be assumed that all teachers in a building would begin to use similar methods to teach writing. For some of the schools in the study, adopting the KISD outcomes and methods would be the first time they would make any decision for consistency among their faculties in the teaching of writing.

According to some of the teachers in my study, demanding such conformity will not be easy even if their schools would adopt the countywide outcomes. Some of the schools in the study have strict guidelines, and there seems to be a management hierarchy which can oversee and prescribe teaching methods. Others do not have such strong management. While tight control is not seen as the ideal by many teachers, it is apparent from the comments on the teacher questionnaires that many schools are in need of some management from the top. In these schools, some teachers are a doing a good job

of teaching writing, using current methods and theories; others are assigning writing with few guidelines and focusing on grammar and errors as they evaluate the finished writing; still others are concentrating on teaching grammar and literature and have little instruction or practice in writing as part of their instruction. Among the English teachers on one faculty, there may be those who teach only expressive writing; those who ask only for writing which is analytical and impersonal in nature; and those who focus so strongly on grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, vocabulary, and other aspects of correctness, that the students rarely have time to write at all. If my study is any indication, there is a need for more consistency and cooperation among high school English faculties. Some departments do not communicate, do not work well together, and allow such looseness in delivering the curriculum that two sections of the same course have little similarity. The least successful schools do not have an established curriculum, depending upon the common textbook to provide any consistency which exists. The teachers' answers on the twelve questionnaires which characterized the English Departments in this study indicate that some schools in the study operate in this loose manner. Other schools appeared very well organized.

Needless to say, it would be better if effective teaching practices were the result of a faculty working together to better their own department. A strong administration is not always ideal if the administration does not have a sense of what practices and theories to promote. Since administrators at the high school level are rarely experts on every subject being taught in their schools, it would be

preferable if teaching faculties provided their own evaluations and supervision. Personalities clashes and an unwillingness to cause conflict often stop teachers from putting pressure on their colleagues, however. A better approach to working together to formulate an effective program and seeing that it is implemented might be an outside influence which affects each teacher. The work of the National Writing Program (which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter) promotes this kind of cooperation. If high school English faculties could work together in a summer or after-school workshop to design a strong curriculum and learn how to deliver it, they would be more likely to achieve an effective department than if they were dictated to by an administration outside of their department.

A student who graduates from a high school with a very loosely organized department may make a successful transition because he or she has the personality to reap benefits from any instruction received. In addition, even in such a loosely organized school, there are talented faculty members. A good teacher, even within a disorganized department, can provide a very rich learning environment. Other students are not as well prepared when graduating from such departments. One student in the study felt she had been short-changed by her high school. She described one course which focused only on grammar, and she criticized her high school for not offering enough experience in writing papers. Another student wished her high school had not been so focused on a final product. She wished she had been given the chance to work on several drafts of a paper with input into each draft so that she could

have had more help before she was graded on a final product. One student felt that teachers gave writing assignments without teaching writing. As I read these comments from students who had finished a year of college, I realized that all of them were saying that their high school writing could have benefitted from instruction in the writing process, something each had encountered in college. From brainstorming through multiple drafts, these students had learned skills in college to which they wished they had been introduced in high school.

As I looked at the questionnaires filled out by the teachers who taught in the schools whose students made the above three comments, I saw a basis for what the student is saying in each case. When asked if there was consistency from teacher to teacher in the procedure used to teach writing, one answered, "Not really." Another answered, "... the most 'consistent' procedure appears to be the 'error hunt.' " The third teacher responded, "The writing process is used by all of us most." The students who attended these high schools recognized the missing aspects of their high school writing instruction as they went through a year of college. I feel their experiences in college could have been better if their high school teachers had worked together to develop a curriculum, whether it be over three years or four years, which provided college prep students with a consistent exposure to the writing process.

The primary reason such harmony does not exist in high schools has been the many changes in the teaching of writing which have happened in recent decades. Teachers who received their training to teach English during the 50s and 60s focused on literature. During

their four years of instruction in preparation to teach English, it is possible that these teachers wrote nothing but literary analysis and critique. They were not trained in the teaching of writing. It is possible that these teachers have never taught writing in their classrooms, although many have assigned papers. They themselves may write well but are not aware of how to help someone else write well. The consistent "method," as one teacher verified, is to correct a final product by marking errors and making marginal notes, hoping that the student will do better on the next finished product. Some students do improve over time with such a process, but they develop their own writing process by trial and error.

Teachers who have graduated in the past twenty years have been introduced to writing as a subject matter to be taught. The methods they have been taught have not necessarily been consistent, however. Many learned to teach the five-paragraph essay and to focus on the modes, dividing writing among exposition, narrative, and persuasion.

Recent graduates have arrived in high schools having learned and practiced the process approach to writing. The National Writing Project has influenced the teaching of writing so that student-centered classrooms which stress writing as a process and incorporate more personal writing have become commonplace. Luckily the NWP has provided workshops so that in-service teachers can also be trained. Many teachers, however, have never been exposed to a method for teaching writing. Their schools do not offer them the opportunity to seek additional training during the school year. A lack of time or opportunity for such training is a great

impediment to preparing today's high school faculty to teach writing well.

Textbook companies, which profit by change, were happy to provide new editions as each new method came along. The kind of textbook most popular for decades was a grammar text which introduced writing as a fragmented approach which stressed mastering parts of speech, then sentence structure, then paragraphs, and finally short essays. Many companies published similar texts. In response to changes in writing theory, companies added the modes of discourse as a handbook section in their grammar texts. Recently, changes in the writing handbook reflect the popularity of process writing. As long as a school district could afford to keep up with each new edition of a textbook, the teachers had a guide for their writing instruction which could at least help them move forward and develop some consistency from teacher to teacher. As these changes happened over a relatively short period of time, the result, apparent today, is English faculties consisting of individuals with very different training and approaches to writing.

The questionnaires show that few of the twelve high schools in this study have agreement among their faculties when it comes to methods of teaching writing, how much writing to teach, or the kinds of writing to assign. Nonetheless, each school reported successful teachers who were preparing some very able writers. The problem for each school is how to promote this effective teaching among all of the members of the department.

### Recommendations for High School English Departments

The students in this study had many suggestions for their high schools after having had a year of college. Not all of them wished for the same background because they had not had similar backgrounds in the first place. Many of them, however, suggested more writing. Some, having been assigned long involved research papers in high school, suggested they would have been better served if they had written shorter papers more often. Based on the students' feedback on questionnaires, I recommend that high school students be asked to write often over a four-year period. The integrated language arts approach, which advocates reading, writing, speaking, and listening as elements of every unit, is an approach which should be promoted for high school English departments. Students should not have an entire course of study which does not involve writing whether the focus be literature, speech, reading, grammar, or any other aspect of the language arts.

An evaluation of the students who took a one-semester composition course compared to those who did not does not suggest that these courses are the only way to learn writing. These students were not consistent in feeling that they had been well prepared any more than the students who had taken a more traditional four year program of high school study (such as English 9, 10, 11, and 12). Schools which offer the semester course must be careful to ensure that this course does not offer the only writing instruction. Writing can become a component of literature courses, as well. Teachers also have to make sure that a variety of kinds of writing is assigned. Too often those teachers who use writing in the literature classes only



assign literary response writing. All other kinds of writing can be done in a literature class as the readings suggest personal or social issues to grapple with.

Some students felt their schools had focused too narrowly on just one kind of writing. Several complained that all of the writing they had done in high school was focused on literature. These students suggested more writing of either a personal nature or issue oriented writing where they learned to express their own opinions. Quite a few students indicated that they had not been able to select their own topics for writing while in high school or had been so limited in such experiences that they felt handicapped when asked to select topics in college. As recommended by several students in this study, students should be given a chance to select their own topics. It is common in both high school and college to ask students to select topics related to a broad theme or issue; however, opportunities should exist for students to generate their own topics without prompts.

Students who had done writing based on literature as well as expository writing on topics of their own choices or assigned by the teacher felt more comfortable with college assignments than students who were limited in their writing exposure to certain types of writing, such as creative writing. I feel that a high school that offers the students a wide variety of electives in their last two years of high school would do well to develop guidelines for those choices. I would advise high school English departments to require that students' select classes which will give them experience with a variety of writing styles and purposes, including writing about or in

reaction to literature and writing on topics of interest to themselves. Classes such as journalism or creative writing can be valuable additions to a student's high school experience, but care should be taken that a student has multiple writing experiences throughout the high school years. Creative writing or journalism should not be used to fulfill a writing requirement in a school in which writing is not a component of every course.

It can be difficult to ask a faculty varying in training and ability to teach a consistent method of writing, but it would be beneficial to the students if a more consistent approach to teaching writing were instituted within English departments. Departments should agree upon writing outcomes, should develop a theory supporting their writing instruction, and should be able to expect cooperation from all faculty members in implementing a course of writing instruction for their students which develops specific skills over a three or four-year period. It is critical that high schools develop writing guidelines. Administrators can assist by providing the time for teachers to have training in order to teach any writing program decided upon. If the school district decides to implement the countywide writing program, the administration should, again, provide support, time, and training to see that each teacher effectively teaches the outcomes.

It was evident from the students' comments on questionnaires and during interviews that college freshmen respond well to a classroom which uses a workshop approach. High school English departments can adopt this strategy when doing writing. If the class is not devoted solely to writing, then the time need not be devoted

solely to writing workshop; nonetheless, when the students are working on writing papers, the use of peer groups, one-to-one conferencing, journals, portfolios, and a multiple-draft format appears to be a classroom approach that will have positive results. Students can be trained to work well within peer groups, and if most teachers in an English department begin to use peer groups for brainstorming, feedback, editing, and proofreading, the students will soon become comfortable within these groups and use them well. Encouraging students to make use of multiple drafts is best done with the peer groups. Requiring at least one re-write of a paper is also a good practice, as Bill pointed out, rather than leaving it as an option. These methods were the ones most often singled out by the students in this study as effective in helping them improve as writers.

English faculties could do a better job with some changes in the conditions under which they work. A major problem for most high school teachers of English is the class load. Teaching 130-180 students each day, it is difficult, even with a process approach, for teachers to adequately provide the kind of help and attention students need to develop into good writers. There is not an effective method of having personal conferences with students when there are 25-35 students in a classroom. The teacher usually must use time before or after the school day for such conferencing, which is not a plausible option for many students and teachers. Using the time in the classroom for conferencing can work only if the rest of the students are self-motivated and disciplined and if the process does not stretch over too many class periods. The latter is sure to happen

if the class size exceeds 20 students, more typical than not in most high schools. Class sizes must be small if any course can be effective, especially a writing course.

It appears that consistency over the four-year period is the most important factor in a student being well prepared to move on to college writing. No matter what size the high school or how many offerings, writing can be taught well if the students are exposed to consistent writing practices and instruction over a four year-period and if that instruction involves some methods, such as the process approach, which allow the students to explore the various steps necessary to generate a finished product. If a student is asked to write often and consistently and is taught a method for generating various kinds of writing, he or she can be prepared well for college. For such requirements and consistency to exist, it is crucial that a high school English faculty work together and communicate regularly about their curriculum, their requirements, and their methods. There must be a departmental loyalty and commitment which ensures that faculty members are following the established requirements and methods. This is best produced by a faculty which works together and perhaps studies and trains together to develop their program. While it is not absolutely necessary that each faculty member employ the same methods of teaching for teaching to be effective, a student who gains a familiarity with a writing process will most likely show more improvement than one who is consistently asked to change his or her approach. Students need to learn to be flexible, but more consistency from classroom to classroom can be an added advantage to learning. The school's

administration should cooperate in determining a class size which can be most effectively taught the curriculum and guaranteeing that this number is the limit for enrollment. School district administrators who are pledged to a good writing program will see that the class sizes are small enough to make these classrooms effective places of learning. The administration must also provide opportunity for training or re-training when needed for faculty members to be effective teachers of writing.

Each high school must establish an English curriculum which meets the needs of its students. The college-bound students must have a solid four-year program which lays a basis for good writing skills and which builds upon those skills each year. There must be consistency as much as possible in standards for evaluating the students' writing. The faculty must determine these standards and convey them clearly to the students. There also needs to be an established minimum number of assignments agreed upon by the faculty and a determination of what kinds of writing a student should be exposed to and/or master. These considerations should drive a re-evaluation of the existing curriculum so that a four-year program of continued skill acquisition is designed. The best curricula will combine the reading of literature and non-fiction with writing within specific courses.

### An Evaluation of Freshman Writing Programs at the Colleges

I gathered information about the freshman writing programs at the four colleges by three methods: the students' questionnaires, questionnaires from several of the college teachers, and personal

interviews with the directors of freshman writing at each of the four colleges. What I found were programs which differed in many ways including how many courses were necessary to fulfill the requirement, the assignments in the courses, the variety of selections offered a student within a required course, the methods used to teach the writing, the methods used to evaluate the writing, and the qualifications of the teachers.

University A required a full year of freshman English at the time the students in the study were freshmen. Since that year, this college has changed to requiring one semester in the freshman year and a semester later, usually in the sophomore year. This new practice is similar to that of both University B and University C, which each require one semester in the freshman year and one semester in a later year to fulfill the writing requirement.

University D has a placement system which currently selects approximately 70% of its freshman students to take a course which could be described as a readiness course before they can enroll in the semester course which fulfills the writing requirement; thus, approximately 70% of the freshman at University D must take a full year of freshman writing to fulfill the requirement.

The kinds of writing done at the four universities varied. Some of the courses focused on personal writing in which the students related past experiences and personal philosophies. While these courses might use literature or non-fiction writing as models, the writing was not in response to the literature. Other courses focused heavily on reader response, using a thematic approach with literature selected to inspire or promote certain writing topics. Another approach was

to focus on kinds of papers (persuasive, comparison/contrast, analysis, narrative, descriptive, research, summary/response, etc.). Courses in which these kinds of papers were important assignments often allowed more freedom of choice as to the topic or content of the writing. University A used literature more than the other three colleges. While the requirements of the classes varied from teacher to teacher at University A, in general the professors followed a syllabus which indicated certain goals for each course and gave a suggested guideline for the number of teacher-evaluated pages a student should produce. These guidelines allowed a great amount of variety to exist. Since it was a larger university, University A was able to have a diversity of offerings within the same course title, designed around themes which might attract students with varying interests.

Sections of University B's course were more similar in content when they were taught by the supervised graduate students; when tenure-stream faculty taught the classes, there was not as much control over the content. The course syllabus suggests a course outline based upon kinds of papers but allows enough flexibility with the material to please diverse faculty. Also, there seemed to be a consistent classroom format when the supervised graduate students taught. Student in these classes were more apt to work in peer groups. It was only in the classrooms of tenure-stream faculty that any University B students wrote of one-draft assignments and evaluations.

University C classes were more similar because all of them were taught by graduate students who were supervised and required to

follow the same format. Only a few students (those in Honors College and those who were able to fulfill the writing requirement with an alternative course) had a different experience.

University D also has a syllabus which specifies the content of its two freshman writing courses. Professors could introduce literature of their own choice but were required to assign certain kinds of writing.

The adherence to similar methods and assignments in each university depended greatly on the organization exerted by the Department. University A had a department separate from the English Department which designed and supervised the teaching of freshman English. There appeared to be stronger management and greater participation in decision-making at University A. Thus, while the sections of the course might differ greatly, there seemed to be more awareness of the need for a student-focused writing experience. The greatest variety was due, in fact, to the personalities of the professors. Some classrooms were loosely run with a greater tolerance of idiosyncrasies in the students' writings. Other classrooms were more formal and had a narrower range of expectations as to style and format of a paper.

University B appeared, on the other hand, to have a weaker management of the course if it was taught by one of the English Department members rather than by a graduate student. Departmental collegiality and a less powerful chairman of freshman writing combined to allow several department members to teach freshman writing courses which consisted of lectures, reading, assignments, and teacher evaluation of one-draft writing



assignments. Other department members were more attuned to the writing process and current practices in the teaching of writing. The graduate students were expected to urge multiple drafts, peer group work, and portfolio assessment.

The graduate students teaching at University C were required to promote an atmosphere in the classroom which was student-centered, with peer groups for each step of the writing process, and portfolio assessment. These classrooms and instructors were strictly supervised by the director of freshman writing.

University D also had a weaker management system. Other than the mandatory meeting at the beginning of the semester (which many temporary faculty missed), there was not a consistent communication among the freshman writing faculty. The course syllabus was intended to guide each teacher. If a teacher did not follow the syllabus, there was not a good system of supervision or evaluation which could remedy the situation. Since most teachers were not tenure-stream faculty, however, it was easier to eliminate unsatisfactory teaching simply by not re-hiring the responsible faculty member. The course syllabus lists recommendations and indicates the required pages of writing. The director of freshman writing says that in general people do what they want loosely based on the course description. The full-time members of the English department who teach freshman writing and who meet regularly are more apt to follow the departmental guidelines, but even they differ in their opinions on what should be taught or how.

While I did not delve into the methods for arriving at a grade which were employed by each professor, it appeared that most

evaluated final drafts using a rubric, whether personal or mandated, which indicated certain characteristics for a certain grade.

University A was the only one of the four universities which included such a rubric in the syllabus for Freshman Writing. The graduate students at University C were required to evaluate a portfolio in which the student was to place six specific final products at the end of the semester, and they were given group instruction in how to go about that evaluation and the standards they should use.

### An Evaluation of Teaching Methods in Freshman Writing Courses

Almost every student in the study who participated in a classroom which used a workshop approach enjoyed the experience and felt it was a valuable method of learning writing. What I mean by a workshop approach is a classroom in which the students meet with peer groups on a regular basis. It is a classroom in which a paper is developed over a given period of time with due dates for various drafts and activities assigned within peer groups for working with and evaluating one another's draft. It is a classroom in which the student views each assignment as an on-going process. Usually the process involves conferencing with the instructor either within the class time or outside of class. Ultimately, of course, the students were required to submit a polished version of all or some of the papers. The only student who was critical of such a classroom was the student at University C who was advanced in her writing because of a high school Advanced Placement course, and who wished, too late, that she had taken the Advanced Placement test so that Freshman English would not have been required of her. She was not

critical of the approach; however, she simply was not having her needs met. In her final questionnaire she said she thought the classroom provided a good learning atmosphere for the students who needed writing help.

The workshop approach worked well with each kind of paper assigned at the four universities, including research papers. Students were, in most cases, involved in other activities, too. Sometimes there were class discussions about assigned readings; sometimes there were lectures about literature, writing, or writers; sometimes the students spent class time researching (University D students routinely met in the library as a class during the research component of the required course). Some professors assigned group projects which brought guest speakers to the classroom. There were, then, a variety of alternatives to peer group meetings. Nonetheless, the classrooms which regularly had peer groups working on papers in process were those most often cited as classrooms in which the students learned the most about themselves as writers and how to improve their writing. Of the eight students whose final questionnaires indicate classrooms which were strongly teacher centered, only two made positive comments about teacher help or classroom style. Four students wrote clearly negative comments about the classroom atmosphere and/or the professor. Of the eleven students whose questionnaires could be determined to describe a student-centered classroom, seven were very positive about classroom style, ranking it as the first or second most important aspect of the class or describing it with adjectives such as "excellent" or "very good." The other five of this group ranked classroom style

average (3 or 4) or used adjectives such as "good" or commented in other places, "I enjoyed the class," or made no ranking or comments at all. There were no decidedly negative comments about classroom style from these students. The other eight questionnaires were those of the four students who attended other colleges and four students whose questionnaires did not give a clear indication of classroom style. I feel these results show a clear preference for a student-centered classroom or the workshop approach. Nonetheless, of the four students among the eighteen mentioned above who said that they did not change as writers, two were students who had been in teacher-centered classrooms and two were students who had been in student-centered classrooms.

Students did not show a preference for experience-based writing as opposed to literature-based writing, although more negative comments about assignments were given by the few students who had been asked to do literary critique papers. Students expected to do research papers. They did not complain about such an assignment being given.

Several students found it frustrating to receive a grade which they did not understand. This was true at both the high school and college level. There were comments on these papers which confused the students and a grade which they had not anticipated. These students did not always seek out the professor for additional information, however. Sometimes the students were not allowed to re-write papers, but usually they were.

### Recommendations for Freshman Writing Programs

I would make one recommendation for college freshman writing programs which is similar to one I made for high school programs. The members of the department must work together to devise a strong program which meets the needs of the students and is based on sound theory and methods which have been proven effective by research in the field. If all the members of a faculty were involved in developing a curriculum, there might be more ownership and loyalty to that curriculum. Such cooperation might be more difficult for larger faculties or for departments in which most of the members are temporary, but an attempt to provide a consistent program which is proven to be effective would greatly benefit the students and faculty alike. While a strong administration could help promote a strong program, this is not always the case when administrators have a heavy hand. The ideal strength comes from a faculty working together, dedicated to a program which each member has had a voice in formulating.

The faculty at University A were, in actuality, probably the most diverse in the content of each class, but a faculty which works together to establish a curriculum is less apt to stray from the standards, concepts, content, skills, and methods which they together have deemed important. Most of the teachers at University A held a doctorate in English or another field. They were knowledgeable, professional practitioners who wanted a say in their department and had a sense of purpose. I cannot say this is untrue of those teachers at the other three universities, but in many cases there was neither the devotion to the department or even a sense of loyalty to the

university. If I can base my observations on what the students described in their interviews, some of the temporary faculty at University D were very devoted to the students, had been excellent high school teachers, and were enjoying and doing a good job teaching at the university level; while others seemed to have no sense of purpose nor a good ability to work with the students. There was not consistency in attitude, methods, content, nor ability. While this is true anywhere, it seemed more pronounced at University D, where many of the faculty were temporary faculty.

The contrast between the freshman writing program presented at University A and those presented by University B and University D are great. I found some of the comments disturbing. Each director of Freshman English at University B and University D described situations in which the manner in which the course was being taught by some people was not acceptable, yet they seemed to have no remedy. It is not because Freshman English is under the auspices of the English Department that this is a problem. One reason could be the lack of power at the management level. This situation could possibly exist because the director of Freshman English is not the English Department Chair nor as powerful as the chair. It was suggested by the two directors that when tenured English faculty teach Freshman English, they can teach it any way they wish without interference. If this is indeed the truth, a remedy should be considered for changing the methods used by those professors in whose classrooms the practices are not in keeping with current theory or proven positive practice.

Another reason, however, as suggested above, might be that while the graduate instructors at University B and University C are working together to learn a curriculum and delivery which derives from current theory in the field of composition, some of the other faculty at all of the universities have not been involved in the process of developing a curriculum or studying newer methods and theories. Instead they are teaching much as they have for years with the result, in some cases, that their classes are not as effective as their colleagues'. An understanding of what methods best help student writers has developed over the years and, as has been stated in previous chapters, some of the methods used in previous decades have been found to be, if not ineffective, certainly less effective than current practices. Those faculty who are not teaching freshman English effectively might benefit from working on a departmental curriculum with those faculty who are using current and successful methods of instruction.

The management at University C is strong, but the reason is that all of the instructors of Freshman English at University C are graduate students seeking Masters degrees who are, of course, easily managed. One has to question the practice of using Freshman English as a training ground for graduate students, especially ones whose education is not, in most cases, equal to the students' high school teachers. Graduate students can be talented teachers, and well-supervised graduate students can provide an excellent classroom for student writers. Nonetheless, none of these instructors will have the experience to be practiced evaluators. They are learning themselves as they teach. An ideal, but costly, situation for freshman English

courses would be to have a faculty of tenure-stream teachers who are well-trained in the field and who are dedicated to the department and its long-term practices. The positive aspect of the graduate instructors, however, is that they are being taught effective teaching methods and are being supervised as they deliver a carefully developed curriculum.

The status of Freshman English or Freshman Writing has long been discussed as a political issue in colleges. Susan Miller did an extensive study of the issue (1991). She describes two scenarios in her book which I observed in my study: "An autonomous department, with internal hierarchies that produce the same sorts of relative levels of status reported . . . for fields within English departments" and a "new ghetto, . . . guided by a few people in secure positions" (194). Despite the harshness of her description for the latter scenario, Miller's two contrasting programs could describe the programs (respectively) at University A and at University C. Miller urges a re-definition of the discipline of composition which places it within the logical department, the English Department, but provides an autonomy of features, mechanism, and practices which gains for it a respect as an area of study valued for itself (195). If such a view were taken, the status of Freshman Composition within the English Department would preclude the assigning of graduate students, temporary non-tenured faculty, and faculty without the qualifications of the discipline to teach the course. I do not see a movement towards such a re-defining, but there is no question that it would be ideal. Students entering college should expect to be taught each course by experts in the field who can carry on the work



that their high school teachers began. Students, rightfully, could question paying full college tuition to be taught in college by Masters degree candidates with less training than some of the student teachers who have floated in and out of their lives through their previous thirteen years of education.

A final recommendation that I would make is based on my conversations with the students I interviewed and the answers on the second questionnaire. I feel that the writing workshop approach is an excellent method with which to further the writing abilities of students in their freshman year in college. They are ready to work well with their peers and mature enough to provide good feedback to one another. An important aspect of writing in college is audience. This should be an important aspect of all writing courses, but it is my observation that students are less successful in developing a sense of audience at the high school level, perhaps because of their ages and their lack of exposure to various issues and opinions or an inability to express beliefs other than those held by their parents. Several of the students in the study mentioned having found a new sense of audience. Having a peer group as audience was essential to that discovery. The students also need to learn the value of re-writing. Again this is more successful at the college level where students have more time outside of the classroom and are more apt to work without supervision than at the high school level, where class time is limited and homework is anathema. The writing workshop approach with peer groups and process writing are valuable at any level, of course, and high school teachers should use this method whenever possible, but it seems ideally suited to the college

classroom: the students learn well from the method, they are eager to interact with one another, they are open to new ideas, and they are mature enough to handle the freedom and responsibility required. Ultimately, however, one benefit of the writing workshop approach is that there is more time for teacher-student conferencing. In this one-to-one situation, a teacher's training becomes vital. All teachers should avoid situations which result in some of the comments I received on the student questionnaires or in interviews: "[my weakness was] trying to conform to what the teacher wanted, instead of focusing on what I wanted," and "I was writing for him . . . trying to please him, and I did not find that good at all." Instead, comments to elicit would be these from the final questionnaires: "I put myself in the reader's position and tried to liven it up so that they wouldn't fall asleep reading it. Moreover, I read other people's papers and observed how they used words and style together," and "The professors actually taught the students how to write. Most of this was done by peer evaluation. By showing my writing to my peers, they are able to pick up the flaws in the writing that I didn't. I could then work to improve the areas where I had made mistakes. This method also gave a little boost to my self-confidence level." To elicit these final comments, I feel that college writing courses should make extensive use of peer groups and process writing.

### The Impact on Transition of A Student's Personality and Background

Working with these twenty-nine (and finally twenty-seven) students has been educational, fun, encouraging, frustrating, and rewarding. I was pleased with the comfort with which the thirteen

interviewees settled into their interviews. While the process of retrieving the questionnaires matched the proverbial task of pulling teeth, when I did finally receive them, they were full of helpful and insightful comments, sometimes even biting. I have learned, however, that a study like mine is the farthest from quantitative that a study can be. The students' comments don't fit nicely into charts and tables. There is no finding which fits all of the students. There is little consistency in the data. The reason for that is simple; every one of these students is an individual with a long history of experiences to affect his or her education. Some of this history directly affects the students' writing, some of it affects the students' ability to work with teachers, and some of it affects the students' ability to gain from their educational experiences. Sadly, perhaps some of my best data would have been collected from the two students with whom I lost contact during their freshman year in college. They may have been students who had good writing experiences but found other aspects of college unmanageable; however, it could have been that the writing was the problem. I will never know.

Several of the students in the study seemed to be natural writers, as if born with the ability, according to them. They said they always enjoyed writing, always did well at writing, and always did a lot of writing. Other students described themselves as students who never wrote well and didn't like writing. While I do not believe these students were born with these characteristics, I do believe that their attitudes towards writing were instilled starting at the beginning of their lives by family members and other important

people in their lives. Denny Taylor's significant study of family literacy (1983) verifies this: "The conservation of literacy styles and values occurs almost automatically, and only when the parent is intent on change is a conscious effort involved" (11). After schooling begins, Taylor concludes, the children begin a lifelong process of developing their own literacy styles, but the early family "conditioning" will almost always remain as a basis (77).

Problems that some of the students in my study were having occurred because of wording patterns and vocabulary use which were so ingrained a part of their literacy style that their writing teachers could neither change these patterns nor, in some cases, explain why they were wrong. Perhaps this is the writing problem that has led teachers everywhere to use the ubiquitous "AWK" on students' papers to identify those awkwardly worded sentences that defy other descriptions. Many students, like Joan, see it as a permanent problem: "It's kind of set in me." As teachers of students with differing literacy backgrounds, both high school and college teachers need to learn ways to work with students like Joan. Are they being treated honestly when they have their sentences marked "AWK" with little else to help them understand or change? Is a writing teacher able to change literacy patterns? Are there classes in the English Department or in other departments on college campuses that can effect a change in the speech and writing patterns of students like Joan? These are questions which have to be addressed before someone like Joan can have a good experience with writing. These aren't questions within the scope of this study, however. Joan has now finished her formal writing training, but she will always

have writing problems unless she begins to hear and wants to change to different wording patterns.

The students also are often uncomfortable with the style required in academic discourse. Many students have a difficult time writing differently from their everyday language of discourse, regardless of how close their language adheres to the standard vernacular. In my interview with Mary, for instance, we discussed a paper she was to write in which she was not supposed to give her own opinion. Mary felt that was a challenge even though she felt she could do it. Mary is used to writing what she thinks and feels. To step back and be more objective makes writing more difficult for her. Jane wrote that one of her greatest weaknesses was that she had "a hard time writing down what [she] wanted to say." She found it was easier to "just say it, instead of getting it down on paper." Kate had trouble with papers in which she could not show "personal opinion or input." Students need more help writing because academic discourse is not a familiar discourse. They cannot interpret what is wrong with a sentence just because it is pointed out to them that the sentence is "AWK." Too often they feel they are not receiving enough feedback to understand how to make the transition from how they would "just say it" to the wording their professors are encouraging. The use of peer groups as audience and one-to-one conferencing can be methods which address these discourse problems.

Denise is an example of a student whose personality has a lot to do with what she learns and the grades she earns. Denise had the most demanding of any professor described by the students I interviewed. He was the Honors College professor at University C

who assigned many literary critique papers and was very narrow in his expectations. Denise, however, was determined to get an A in this course. She visited him during office hours constantly and questioned her papers at many stages in the process of writing them. She asked to re-write some papers on which he had put what he considered to be the final grade. It was Denise's determination almost more than her ability which earned her an A. Another student with equal ability but less perseverance might not have succeeded in reaching such a goal. I feel Denise truly did earn her A, however, because she said she learned much about her own writing from the grueling task of re-writing her papers sometimes three or four times.

Bill and Jane are other students whose personalities aided their work. Both were very amiable. They went to college to be taught, and they were open to all that was presented. They liked each teacher they had. They did the work to the best of their abilities. These two students did some of the most creative assignments of those described to me in the interviews. At University A Bill described the interview for a careers writing project. Jane wrote a paper on scientific experiments in *Gulliver's Travels* at University D. Nothing in their backgrounds would single Bill and Jane out as outstanding students, yet I felt they were two of the most successful in the study. The reason was their openness to try new things, to learn about themselves, to want to learn, to trust their professors and enjoy working with them—in general they were very open-minded students.

Joe was a student who had a bad experience in one class. The reason for his great dissatisfaction was that he could not adjust his writing style. He had one method of writing: in a more creative mode. It had been acceptable to the few high school English teachers he liked, and he took only the classes those teachers taught for his last two years of high school. He found one professor at University A who liked his style and one who preferred that he adjust for a different audience and purpose. Joe was unable to adjust. He chalked the second class up as a bad experience and sought out the teacher he had found first term for his third term of writing. Joe could not and would not change.

While these stories are anecdotal, typical of the stories which appear in any study in which the research was done using the experiences of human beings, it is important for writing teachers at all levels to remember that students are individuals with unique personalities and backgrounds. No method or assignment will work for every student. This is reason alone for those who handle the assignments and hiring to assure that each writing class is as small as possible. Students of writing must be worked with one-on-one for the instruction to be most effective. Until we know the student, we cannot as easily teach him or her. The experiences Kate had, both in high school and in college, show how a teacher can reach out and save a student from herself, from her own bad habits.

### The Personality of the Teacher

There is a corollary to the previous suggestion. Teachers are also unique personalities with unique backgrounds. It would be

wonderful if all those who train and apply to teach writing were good at teaching writing, but sometimes the teacher's personality does not lend itself to a good classroom atmosphere. Students described teachers who were unorganized, unhelpful, or incapable of managing a classroom. There are teachers in the classroom who should not be there. Self-monitoring should take care of this problem, but it does not. This is another reason why strong management is crucial in an English Department. Poor teachers should not continue to receive a paycheck at the expense of their students.

#### Faculty At Both Levels Can Improve Articulation

A knowledge of the practices at both levels will help teachers better serve their students whether in high school or college. If high school teachers knew what their students would encounter at the college level, they could prepare them better to be effective college writers. When I undertook a study of the writing programs at the colleges my students most often attend, it was with the purpose of revising the college preparatory class that seniors take in my own high school. Several years of feedback has told me that my knowledge has helped me be a valuable resource for college-bound seniors in my high school. Guidance department records of interviews and questionnaires from graduates of our high school confirm that writing experiences have improved significantly. In fact, an increasing number of our students are entering journalism careers.



Joining professional organizations, such as the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, and attending the many conferences offered to English teachers by the MCTE and various Michigan colleges will provide opportunities for teachers at the two levels to come together, work together, and learn about one another.

As stated several times in this study, there is not just one method of teaching writing. Nonetheless, there are practices suggested by current theory which I have promoted because the students in my study have found them to be most helpful. If more teachers at both the high school and the college levels used these practices (peer groups, conferencing, journals, portfolios, multiple-draft writing processes, required re-writes), students would be moving between similar programs. Being familiar with the writing process they encounter in college is one of the greatest aides to a good transition for students of writing. Teachers at both levels could become aware of what current theory and practice are by subscribing to professional journals, by taking courses through nearby universities, or by joining a workshop such as those of the National Writing Project. Many of these workshops are additional opportunities to interact with teachers of different educational levels.

An important aide to articulation of writing programs between high schools and colleges is the development of a mutual respect between the faculties at the two levels. High school teachers should not be instilling fear of college writing in their students. College professors should not show an attitude of contempt for what the high school student has learned. Knowledge can help erase these attitudes. Coming together and talking together can help erase these

attitudes. Better yet, working together in programs which promote articulation can help erase these attitudes.

### Programs Which Can Promote Articulation

#### The Advanced Placement Program

The program of articulation most often used by high schools is the Advanced Placement Program. This program, administered by the College Board, has been in operation for over thirty years. There were two reasons behind the decision by some of the nation's elite prep schools and colleges to begin a program of testing of high school students for college credit or waiver of requirements: the first was to provide an opportunity for advanced high school students to study more challenging material, the second was to draw some of the best students into their own schools. The colleges subscribing to the program would draw the best students, the prep schools would draw students by offering them the best AP preparation (Foster 3). In this way the colleges also gained a way to have a say about high school curricula. Despite many questions about the premises for the development of the test and who it is that really benefits from the process, there have been many positive results from what is now a widespread program. Students find new motivation to take challenging courses in their senior year of high school. Colleges have help in preparing students for the level of work which they hope students will be able to achieve upon arrival. Students themselves have been benefitted by being able to gain credit for courses which would cost them much more than the AP test cost. In exchange, colleges hope there will be lower enrollments in the introductory

courses and, perhaps, greater enrollment in the upper-level courses. At this time there is no test being prepared by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) which has a higher level of acceptance than the AP exams (Foster 5). There have been questions raised as to the appropriateness of the courses which are designed to prepare students for the AP exam. Many criticize them for treating literature too objectively, putting "faith in textual autonomy" (Foster 6). Others criticize the writing objective as being product-oriented rather than process oriented. These criticisms are valid. A high school selecting to offer an AP English Course should review some of the literature which evaluates the AP program. Nonetheless, the AP program, because it is accepted by most colleges, has become the major program of articulation between high schools and colleges.

Six of the high schools in the study offered an Advanced Placement English class for seniors. There was no clear reason why some schools offered the course and some did not. (I did not ask on the questionnaire.) Often the schools which did offer AP courses were larger schools with a higher percentage of college-bound students, but this does not describe all of the six schools which did offer an AP class, while it does describe some of the six schools which did not offer an AP class.

Of the twenty-nine students who answered the first questionnaire, there were six who had taken an AP English course in their senior year. Three of those six reported not having to take part or all of the freshman writing requirement because of having taken the AP exam. The other three either did not take the exam or did not score high enough to waive any requirements. One student

who did take an AP course but did not take the exam earned an A easily in the freshman course and reported feeling bored and wishing she had taken the exam. Another earned an A- and a B+ in freshman English courses. She was somewhat critical of her high school preparation for writing, however, calling it only "fair." In addition, however, two other students who had intensive courses of study in their senior years, but did not take an AP course, took the AP exam and waived requirements.

There are workshops offered on a regular basis around the U.S. for high school teachers who wish to set up an AP course and for those who have AP courses established already. These workshops are another way to bring together practitioners at both the high school and college levels to talk about what are the valuable language arts skills and what are the best methods of conveying them. These workshops are valuable even for those who are not teaching AP courses.

### Project Advance

There are other programs which have been developed to attempt to go beyond what the AP Program has done. One such program is Project Advance, a program started in 1973 between Syracuse University and area high schools. The high school personnel first came to the university with an idea for teaching courses within the high school which students could take for college credit. The school administrators felt that the AP Program was too test driven and, therefore, was not fair to all students. The Syracuse University Project Advance, in which six high schools participated in the pilot

year, uses high school faculty coordinated by college faculty, to teach courses for college credit within the high schools and now has some eighty schools cooperating with approximately 3,600 students enrolled (Gaines, Grassi 172). The teachers must have the same credentials as the instructors who teach the courses on campus. Some additional training is sometimes required. University faculty train the teachers in summer workshops and serve as liaisons. Freshman English is the most popular of the courses offered.

Dr. Franklin Wilbur, Director of Project Advance, cited it as the "largest program in the United States offering accredited college courses taught in high schools by high school faculty" (29). Dr. Wilbur included his program in his National Directory of School-College Partnerships (1987) along with eighteen other similar programs. The teachers who are trained for Project Advance not only provide students an opportunity to gain college credit early, but they are good examples of the kinds of teachers who best promote articulation: teachers who are knowledgeable about what happens in freshman English, teachers who have worked well with and gained a respect for college faculty, and teachers who have helped college faculty learn about high school practices and gain respect for secondary teachers.

### The National Writing Project

The National Writing Project is probably the program which has had the most impact on the articulation of writing programs between high schools and colleges. The unique attribute of the NWP and the attribute which probably makes it more significant in its impact on

articulation is that all levels of teachers from elementary through college take part on an equal basis. The NWP seeks to train teachers to be better writing teachers. The methods include the workshop classroom style with peer groups and process writing. As teachers from both schools and colleges in a given geographic area work together, they are doing what will probably best help their students make a smooth transition between the two levels, they are learning to value one another, to value one another's work, and to develop teaching strategies which not only improve students' skills with writing but also help them make a smooth transition from high school to college because there is a similar method being used at both levels. The more comfortable the students in my study felt with the classroom methods and the assignments they encountered at college, the more motivated they were to work and the more learning that took place. Certainly, if a program like the NWP were able to saturate an area, it might help eliminate comments from college professors like one student reported, "Forget everything you learned in high school."

#### Pre-College Placement Tests and Evaluations of Freshmen

Most colleges have summer orientation for incoming freshmen. All of the universities in my study do. At these sessions, students are asked to write in order to be placed in the appropriate Freshman Writing course (i.e. non-credit remedial, Honors, waiver of credit). Placement using a one-draft sample has been questioned. Two instructors at a summer placement program for Carelton College evaluated their program. While they undertook the evaluation to

draw conclusions about student writers, their major conclusion was about themselves and their methods for generating the essays they used for placement as opposed to their actual evaluation of the students' writing. They found that they talked about writing being a process but focused too much on the product when evaluating the students for placement (Appleman, Green 197). There are most likely many summer placement programs whose processes, if studied, would yield the same misplaced focus. Several students in my study were dissatisfied with their placement in college level writing courses. Those entering University D were especially concerned if they were placed in the freshman writing course in which approximately 70% of entering freshmen are placed. Since this course does not fulfill the writing requirement at University D, it is perceived as remedial by the students. Jane was one student particularly frustrated by being placed in what she perceived as being a remedial course. Some colleges allow a waiver of freshman English using the summer writing sample. University C uses the writing sample as a CLEP. Mary, who entered University C, was disappointed with what she wrote in the summer. She wished she had been able to turn in writing which she had worked on, re-written, and polished. In other words, Mary would have liked to have been judged on a piece of writing done in the way all of the writing was done in the course which she had to take at University C. The universities in this study need to do what the Carelton instructors did and examine their perceptions, their theories about writing, and the realities behind their evaluation and placement of students. One state university in Michigan which was not a focus of

my study is now asking students for a portfolio of writing along with an essay about themselves as a writer. This method of evaluating freshmen for placement in writing courses may be cumbersome but may also be more realistic, especially if the university adheres to the theory that writing is a process and not a product. By using the portfolio method of evaluating incoming freshmen, universities will develop another tool of articulation since it will require the schools to focus on specific preparation of their students as they develop their portfolios.

### Professional Organizations

Forums for establishing communication and improving articulation are local, state, and national professional organizations. The most prominent organization which reaches out to the schools and universities in this study is the Michigan Council of Teachers of English. MCTE sponsors a yearly conference for teachers of all levels. In addition, two of the universities in the study sponsor conferences for English teachers. At all of these conferences, presentations are made by teachers of all levels which are open to the others. These conferences can provide valuable interaction between faculties which can promote understanding and collaboration to improve articulation. In addition, many of the teachers and professors in the study belong to national organizations like The National Council of Teachers of English and affiliates such as the Conference for College Communication and Composition. Publications from these organizations could provide a sense of collegiality. National Conferences provide another forum for



interaction, although in most cases high school teachers are hampered by lack of funds for such conferences. High school administrations rarely see it a necessity for teachers to attend national conferences and might support such a trip only if the teacher paid her or his own expenses. Colleges more often see the need to meet on a national level. If more teachers were involved in these academic organizations and had the means to attend the conferences, a greater interaction between the levels would exist. Both high school and college administrations need to promote such involvement, providing funding when necessary.

### Writing Across the Curriculum

While my study focuses on what teachers of high school English and freshman writing at colleges can do to promote articulation, some of my questions on the questionnaires and in the interviews focused on writing done in other high school and college courses. Some of the students in my study did considerable writing while in high school in classes other than English. Needless to say, such practice can only promote better writing. In addition, some of the students had many writing experiences in college. The students at University B most often mentioned writing papers in other classes. As noted when I wrote about my interview with Laurie, even though she did not take a freshman English course because of her score on the AP exam, she did more writing at University B than some of the students did at other universities even when one of their courses was freshman English. That is because of the number of classes at University B which use essay exams and assign papers. Mary had a

similar amount of writing at University B. University D was the other college at which students reported writing in other courses. Paula was a student, who like Laurie, waived English requirements with an AP test. Nonetheless, at University D, Paula had many writing experiences. One of Paula's professors responded to my request for a questionnaire. On the questionnaire he said that he also taught a supplemental writing skills course in his department. It could possibly be deduced that because he is responsible for the writing skills course in his department, that he has begun to ask for more writing in the other courses he teaches, such as the one in which Paula enrolled. The practice of these four universities to require a writing course to be taught by the other departments to sophomores or upper classmen can be an inducement to professors to add more writing across the curriculum. Writing across the curriculum, to repeat, is not a focus of my study; nonetheless, some of the statements I gathered from the students in this study suggest that writing in other classes was beneficial to them. The recruitment of colleagues in other departments to share the task of promoting writing by assigning papers, using essay tests, and promoting good writing skills in all of the students' work can only aide the student in a faster attainment of writing skills.

#### Questions For Future Research

Future research should examine some of the issues which arose as a result of this study. The high schools in this study incorporate writing into their curricula in different manners. Some high schools require a certain number of writing assignments as part of the

students' regular English curriculum. Other high schools offer courses devoted solely to the teaching of writing, although these courses often aim at specific modes such as research writing, journalism, or creative writing. Some schools merely assume that writing is a task that should happen in the regular routine of English classes and do not prescribe a certain number of pages or assignments to be done. It seems obvious to me that not all of these methods of presenting writing are effective. The amount of training students received, even within the same high school, differed greatly.

The students I was working with were all college bound. As I examined the curricula in their high schools I wondered what kind of training in writing was being received by students who were not heading for college.

These observations suggest that further study is needed to answer some important questions. First, how much writing should high school students do? Second, what kinds of writing should be introduced in high school? Third, should all students have the same kind of writing training? If not, what kinds of writing are best for students entering college upon graduation from high school and what kinds of writing are best for students entering the job market? If the writing instruction is sequential in a high school, how can the curriculum be developed so that students receive the entire sequence. What kind of management is needed to ensure that the writing program is being presented as developed? What kind of training is necessary to guarantee that a teacher can deliver the curriculum effectively?

Questions also arose from my study of freshman English. The question I saw most often in the literature on this basic writing course was should it exist. Beyond that basic issue are others. Who should teach writing to freshmen? Should the English Department oversee such instruction or would a separate, autonomous department be preferable? Should all freshmen be enrolled in such a course? If students are exempted from freshman writing, what are the best methods to determine who should be required to take the course and who has earned a waiver?

Despite all of the questions and concerns I can raise about the articulation of writing programs between high schools and colleges, it is clear that students will cope whether the two programs differ greatly or are very similar. Of the twenty-seven students who returned the final questionnaires, only a few would say that they did not have a satisfactory writing experience in their freshman year at college. It may be that writing instruction as it exists is adequate at both the high school and college level and that the articulation is great enough that students can make a successful transition. Nonetheless, the recommendations I have made could enhance the articulation between these two levels, perhaps providing an even more effective education in writing skills for student at either level.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRES AND**  
**COVER LETTERS**

## Appendix A

### Original Letter of Inquiry to High Schools

March 26, 1991

Dear Colleague,

I am a fellow English teacher, employed at Lowell High School, and am a doctoral student at Michigan State University. I am working on a dissertation in which I will examine the relationship between area high school writing programs and the writing programs offered to freshmen by four state universities (there followed a list of the colleges). My queries to the university instructors will not only seek to ascertain the content of their programs, but also the level of skill they expect freshmen to have attained before college. I am seeking your help in gathering a group of students and teachers to complete questionnaires which will provide me with information about the programs in area high schools. In my dissertation, I will be using this material to make general observations. While I will seek permission to quote from the questionnaires, I will use no names nor will I identify specific high schools.

I am seeking your help to provide me with the names and addresses of individuals who would help with the survey. I am seeking one teacher from each high school to fill out a questionnaire designed to give me information about the English curriculum of college-bound students. I will ask how much and what kind of writing experience the average college-bound graduate from your high school will have had. I am also seeking three students from your senior class who will be attending any one of the four colleges I have listed. I will ask the students to give their impressions of their high school writing experiences on a questionnaire I will mail in May. In addition, I will ask the same three students to provide me with home addresses and agree to fill out a second questionnaire during June of 1992 so that I might gather impressions of their writing experiences during their freshman year of college.

If there are individuals in your school who will help me gather this information, I would appreciate your time in filling in their names and addresses and other information I have requested on the enclosed sheet and mailing it in the envelope I have provided. I would like to receive these names by April 26th.

Sincerely,

**Form from High Schools Naming Volunteer Participants**

Please return this list of addresses by April 26th to:  
Jill VanAntwerp, Lowell HS, 750 Foreman Rd., Lowell, MI 49331

NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF TEACHER WHO WILL FILL OUT A QUESTIONNAIRE:

\_\_\_\_\_

POSITION \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENTS WHO WILL FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRES:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

COLLEGE THIS STUDENT WILL ENTER IN 1991: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

COLLEGE THIS STUDENT WILL ENTER IN 1991: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

COLLEGE THIS STUDENT WILL ENTER IN 1991: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have all of these students agreed to be mailed a questionnaire in care of the above high school to fill out during May of 1991? \_\_\_\_\_

Have all of these students agreed to be mailed a questionnaire in care of their home addresses to fill out during June of 1992? \_\_\_\_\_



## Cover Letter for All Groups' First Questionnaires

June 20, 1991

Dear Research Participant,

Thank-you for agreeing to take part in the research I will be doing for a dissertation entitled: Articulation Between Schools and Colleges in the Field of Composition. I will be providing you questionnaires and, in some cases, conducting personal interviews with you as your involvement in this research.

If you are a student, I will be interested in your answers to questions about your high school writing experiences and your concept of yourself as a writer. All students will be asked to fill out questionnaires at the ends of their senior year in high school and freshman year in college. I will ask for your comparison of your high school writing program and your college freshman writing program. I will ask you to describe the changes in your concept of yourself as a writer. Some of you will be asked to communicate with me during your freshman year in college. I will contact you later in the summer about this aspect of the research. These communications will be in the form of telephone or face-to-face conversations. Your name will never be used in the dissertation or any material seen by any other person. The name of your school will also not be used.

If your are a teacher or instructor, I will be interested in your answers to questions about the program your school or college provides in the area of writing. I will communicate with you personally and with questionnaires. This communication will cover the time period between May 1991 and August 1992 and will involve at the least one contact and at the most four. With your permission, if necessary, further contacts may be requested. Your name and the name of your school or college will not be used in this dissertation and will be identifiable to no one but me when information is written. While members of my review committee are aware of what schools and colleges I will be investigating, they will not know which information refers to which schools. They will not know the names of high school teachers I have contacted, although they may be aware of college instructors being approached.

While I foresee no risk or discomfort to you, you are free to choose not to answer any question on a questionnaire or which I ask

**Cover Letter for All Groups' First Questionnaires  
(continued)**

you personally. You may ask to be dropped as a participant at any time. Your consent to participate is voluntary, and the extent to which you participate is your choice. Results of my project will be provided upon request with all participants remaining anonymous as stated above.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. Those students who will be contacted during their freshman year in college will be asked specifically if they wish to participate in that aspect of the study. Filling out the questionnaire does not obligate a student to participate in that phase.

Sincerely,

**High School Teacher Questionnaire****A Profile of Writing Instruction**

School \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students enrolled in grades 9-12 \_\_\_\_\_

Per Cent of graduating seniors who attend two-year or four-year colleges \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you taught at the high school listed above? \_\_\_\_

List all of the courses offered in your high school which are part of the curriculum of the English Department: (indicate \* which you teach)

Course Title	Grades	College Prep, AP or Honors	Required or Elective
--------------	--------	-------------------------------	-------------------------

**High School Teacher Questionnaire (continued)**

**Which of the classes listed on page 1 incorporate writing on a regular basis?**

**Are any of the classes devoted entirely to writing?**

**How does your department recognize differing levels of student ability in the design of your curriculum?**

**How much writing would the average college-bound student have been required to do by the time he or she had completed four years at your high school?**

**Do you feel the college-bound students graduating from your high school are prepared to succeed in the writing which they will have to do in their college courses during their freshman year?  
Why or why not?**

**High School Teacher Questionnaire (continued)**

**Describe every kind of writing experience offered by your English Department.**

**Does your English Department curriculum focus on one type of writing to the exclusion of others? Explain this trend.**

**For what kind of writing would you say your students have the most and/or the best instruction?**

**High School Teacher Questionnaire (continued)**

**What kind of writing methods or procedures are taught or encouraged in courses where writing is assigned in your English Department? Is there a consistent procedure from teacher to teacher?**

**What kind of writing assignments are given by other departments in your school?**

**Please give an overview of the writing instruction provided by your English Department, including any aspects not yet mentioned and your personal evaluation.**

**First Student Questionnaire****A Survey of High School Writing Experience**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ College \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Final Grade Point Average \_\_\_\_\_

Did you attend this high school while in grades 9 through 12 \_\_\_\_\_

If "no," explain:

List the courses you took in grades 9-12 which were considered  
part of the curriculum of the English Department:

Course	Full Year or Sem.	Grade Earned	Required or Elective	Honors, AP, or Col. Prep?
_____				

In which of the courses listed above would you say you were  
required to write pieces of one or more pages on a regular basis?

## First Student Questionnaire (continued)

As closely as you can remember, put a number after each of the following kinds of writing to tell approximately how many of each kind you were assigned in total during your four years of high school:

Essay _____	Literary Analysis _____
Essay Test _____	Literary Reaction _____
Research Paper (Term Paper) _____	Short Story _____
Persuasive Paper _____	Poetry _____
Expository Paper _____	Personal Narrative _____
Written Book Review or Report _____	Autobiography _____
Other Reviews (movie, music, etc. ) _____	
Character Sketch _____	Other: _____

Explain any of the numbers or categories which you feel need additional comment.

Which of the papers listed above were written in departments other than English?

How much choice did you have in the type of writing assignments you did in high school?

Explain any use made of portfolios or journals in your high school years. Comment on how often and for what purposes they were assigned.



**First Student Questionnaire (continued)**

Which word listed below describes your evaluation of your preparation in the area of writing for the college which you plan to attend?

Excellent \_\_\_\_\_

Very Good \_\_\_\_\_

Fair \_\_\_\_\_

Poor \_\_\_\_\_

Very Poor \_\_\_\_\_

I have no way of evaluating my preparation \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your answer:

What predictions would you make, based on your writing experiences and abilities as you and your teachers perceive them, as to your potential for being able to do well with writing during your freshman year in college?

Describe the process you use to prepare a writing assignment step by step. Is your method considered acceptable by your teachers or have you been encouraged to adapt to other procedures?

Attach a page on which you describe yourself as a writer, your feelings about writing both in and out of school, and your sense of the importance of writing skill in your life.

## Cover Letter to Students With Second Questionnaire

PO Box 35  
Lowell, MI 49331  
May 11, 1992

Dear Research Respondent,

Congratulations! You have finished your first year of college. I am eager to hear how the year went and how you coped with writing assignments at college. I have prepared a questionnaire which I hope will not take too much of your time. I appreciate your helping with this study. Your questionnaires from last spring have already been helpful. This final questionnaire will provide the information I need to finish my study.

As you may remember, I am looking at the transition students make from their English instruction in high school, specifically writing instruction, to their writing classes in their freshman year at college. The questionnaire is designed not only to give information on the transition, but to give me some idea about how you personally felt about what you encountered while in college. Please use the backs of these three sheets to add any additional comments. The envelope I have provided has enough postage to mail the three sheets.

As I have promised, you will not be identified in any way in the writing that I do for my dissertation (I am working on a Ph. D. in English from MSU). I may quote you, but when I do you will be identified with a pseudonym (Kelly or Jake or some other name). Your high school and college also will not be identified by name.

I have asked for your phone number in case something you write sparks an interest that requires more answers. I would call and ask such questions over the phone. You may also call me with questions or clarifications at any time. My phone number is 616-897-5242. I hope that your freshman year was satisfactory, but if for some reason it was not, if you are quitting college or if you are switching colleges, I would appreciate a note to that effect on the back of page one with as much of an explanation as you care to give me. Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated. I wish you success in the rest of your time in college.

## Second Student Questionnaire

### Spring 1992 Questionnaire--Students

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_

College \_\_\_\_\_

List the courses you took to satisfy the general education requirement in English (composition, literature, ATL, Freshman Thought, English, etc.). Please indicate the professor/teacher/instructor; the grade received; and the semester/term. (Also, indicate any method used to waive the requirement).

Course	Grade	Instructor	Term
--------	-------	------------	------

In your questionnaire one year ago you were asked to rate the instruction you received in high school English, giving your impression of your preparation for college. Here is how you marked that question:

Excellent ____	Would you give the same rating now, one year later, after your freshman year of college? Why or why not? What rating would you choose, if not?
Very Good ____	
Good ____	
Fair ____	
Poor ____	
Very Poor ____	

## Second Student Questionnaire (continued)

How would you rate the classes you took in college which taught literature, composition, etc. (English class), using the ratings above, as far as the effectiveness and/or usefulness of the content and instruction? Why this rating?

Rank the following attributes of a classroom as to the importance of each in the effectiveness of the class for you personally. Add your own if an important attribute is not listed.

Professor/Teacher/Instructor\_\_\_\_\_

Content: lecture, books, film, readings, etc.\_\_\_\_\_

Students in the class \_\_\_\_\_

Assignments \_\_\_\_\_

Style of classroom\_\_\_\_\_

student centered w/groups, etc. or teacher centered w/lecture, etc.

Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Were you satisfied with the grades you received in the English classes you took in college? Explain:

What factors contributed to your success or failure in these classes?

**Second Student Questionnaire (continued)**

**What could your high school have done to better prepare you for the writing that you had to do in college?**

**As you wrote papers in college, what did you discover to be your strengths? From where did these strengths come?**

**As you wrote papers in college, what did you discover to be your weaknesses?**

**Describe how you have changed as a writer in the past year.**

**Add any additional comments which you think might contribute to my understanding of the experience you had as you made the transition from a high school writer to a college writer. Use the reverse side.**

**Questionnaire Sent to Students' Professors****Questionnaire for Course Instructors**

Dr. \_\_\_\_ Mr. \_\_\_\_ Ms. \_\_\_\_ Mrs. \_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

College at which you teach \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of the students in this class are freshmen?

Is this a required course?

What options are available to waive this course?

Would you say that this course is writing focused? If not, what percentage of the course focuses on writing?

What percentage of the grade in this course is derived from the students' written work done outside of class (reviews, essays, reports, etc.)?

What percentage of the student's grade in this course is derived from essay answers on exams or tests?

What percentage of the student's grade in this course is derived from objective questions such as those on multiple choice tests?

**Questionnaire Sent to Students' Professors (continued)**

What other content is included? (literature, non-fiction, movies, etc.)

Are there prerequisite courses to this course? What are they?

Which of the following are used when the student is working with writing in this course?

Journals \_\_\_\_\_

Peer Group Evaluations\_\_\_\_\_

Group Critiques\_\_\_\_\_

Draft Submissions\_\_\_\_\_

Conferencing as part of class upon teacher's request\_\_\_\_\_

Optional conferencing at student's request\_\_\_\_\_

Research\_\_\_\_\_

What expectations do you have as to the experience or ability of the students who take this course?

How would you characterize the ability of the students who take this course? Are you generally satisfied with the ability level of the students you teach in this course?

**Questionnaire Sent to Students' Professors (continued)**

**What attribute or ability is the greatest determiner of success for a student in this course?**

**What is the most useful writing habit that students have brought to your course?**

**What is the most detrimental writing habit that students have brought to your course?**

**What writing habit(s) do you find lacking in the students which you teach which you wish they had acquired before they arrived in your classroom?**

**How similar or different are your student expectations, your standards, and your course requirements compared to those of your colleagues who teach the same course?**

**Would students describe your class as one in which it is easy to earn a high grade, hard to earn a high grade, or typical of classes in this course?**



**APPENDIX B**  
**A SAMPLE OF TYPICAL STUDENT**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **A Sample of Typical Student Interview Questions**

1. Did you take the AP test, a CLEP test, or any other option in order to waive the freshman writing requirement? How did you do? How do you feel about the class you have been placed in? Does it seem appropriate for your ability?
2. What is the typical routine of your freshman writing course? What methods of teaching writing or helping students does the teacher use which are especially effective for you? What methods do not seem to help you?
3. How many papers are required? How long do they have to be? What kind of papers are they?
4. What routine do you follow when you write your papers? How long does it take you? Do you use a computer?
5. Has there been any use of journals? portfolios? peer groups?
6. What kinds of literature or other writing was used in your class? How was it used? What part of your grade was based on a knowledge of or a response to literature?
7. How much research did you do? Were research skills taught or were you expected to have them? Did you use the library extensively, some, little, or not at all?
8. Is your teacher a full professor, a part-time teacher, or a graduate student?
9. Do you like the approach of the teacher you have? Has he or she questioned anything you learned in high school?
10. Was the teacher accessible to the students? Did you make use of the teacher's office hours to get help?

11. What do you like best about your college writing course? What aspects haven't you liked about your college writing course?
12. What strengths or weaknesses in writing have you perceived in yourself as you have worked on writing in college? Do you think you have improved in your writing ability since being in this class? What do you see as being the biggest difference between college writing and high school writing?
13. Have you felt that you wished you had been better trained for writing in high school? How was high school different than college? What could your high school teachers have done to prepare you better for your college writing experience? Were there specific teachers or classes in high school which prepared you better for college? What aspects of those experiences were significant in your preparation?
14. How do you feel about the work you have been doing? Are you satisfied with your grades? How are you evaluated? What goes into the final grade you will receive for the class?
15. How would you compare yourself to other students in your class or other students you have met as far as writing ability? Do you feel better prepared or worse?
16. What kind of writing are you doing in other classes? Do your teachers use any form of writing or essay on tests?

**APPENDIX C**  
**A SAMPLE STUDENT**  
**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

## APPENDIX C

### Transcript of Second Interview with Mary

The following is a transcript of my interview with a student who I have called "Mary" in my dissertation. Mary attended University B. She comes from a rural community and attended a consolidated high school which serves several rural communities and the surrounding countryside. This interview took place in the campus library of University B on April 9, 1992. I had already had one interview with Mary previous to this interview during her spring break.

Jill: OK, so you have been taking English \_\_ from Mrs. or Ms. . . . Does she say Ms.? What do you call her?

Mary: We call her (by her first name).

Jill: OK. I noticed her name was \_\_\_\_\_. I want to send her a questionnaire. Now when I send her a questionnaire, I don't identify you, I just say, "One of your students in English \_\_\_\_." And when I write this, remember, I don't use your name or your school's name; it's just more descriptive without naming names. I don't even mention (University B). OK, in English \_\_\_\_ tell me what you've been doing in there, especially in the way of writing.

Mary: Since spring break?

Jill: Yes.

Mary: OK. Well I finished up a paper during spring break which was on one of the books from the nine stories from J.D. Salinger, so we just re-worked that. When we got back from spring break we watched the movie "Rumblefish," and we did what was like a preparation for our final paper. It was a critical evaluation although we didn't know we were actually doing that. We just had to get into

our peer groups and for our mid-term, we got in our peer groups, and we came up with questions, and we had her other class answer the questions, and then we graded them.

Jill: Did they do that to you?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: On "Rumblefish" right? So you got a set from them?

Mary: Yes. And that was our mid-term, and then we had another paper that was--we could pick one of those questions and ourselves we would have to analyze one of those questions. It could be a question that we used or it could be from another group also on the movie. Now the paper that we are working on we just started yesterday. It is a critical evaluation. We can choose a story, a movie, or anything and express in a formal voice something to our reader or something that we want to make sure that they understand.

Jill: So, any movie, any book, one in class or not in class, so you could just go see a movie?

Mary: Yes. I am doing it on "Beaches." It could be anything you want.

Jill: OK. Can you do research on that or is it all supposed to be more your personal impression?

Mary: Yes, it's supposed to be your personal impression although you are not supposed to give opinions in the paper.

Jill: So, if you can't give opinions, then you have to say what is happening?

Mary: Right, like she might ask us to pick three to five categories like theme, plot, dialogue, characters, actors....

Jill: Did she suggest in any way that really it's all opinion?

Mary: No.

Jill: She isn't acknowledging at all that what you write obviously is going to be your opinion?

Mary: No

Jill: Do you feel that way?

Mary: Well, I mean I kind of think that it is your opinion because you're picking something you want to write about. It is, because she wants specific scenes that back up your statements, and if you are getting ideas from the scenes, that is your opinion.

Jill: That is your perception anyway that even though you are backing it up with what you saw, someone else could easily have seen it differently. It is interesting that she said "No opinions." OK -- no opinions--critical review. To me this seems impossible, how could you do one without the other. Obviously, it is like seeing a review from Siskel and Ebert, like that isn't all opinion. But I understand that what she is trying to say is don't just write opinions, she wants everything you say about it for you to have something specific, that she is trying to teach you to write specifically whether you write about movies or books. Do you think that's easy or hard?

Mary: It's not too bad. There are times where I can say, "I feel this...." or "I feel that...." but we seem to have been able to use our opinions in all the other papers, so it is not very hard to write it in a formal voice.

Jill: She wants it in third person, no first person, but you were able to use first person in other things you've done?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: Have you had things graded, like was this paper, the Salinger paper, graded yet?

Mary: No. What she is going to do is next week we don't have classes at all and we have conferences with her, and we bring three papers out of the four that we have written. One of them has to be the critical evaluation, and we meet with her, and she gives us ideas to re-work our papers for all of them, and then we work on them and if we need to meet with her again, we can, and then we turn our portfolio in and that is our grade.

Jill: How many papers have to be in your portfolio?

Mary: Three.

Jill: Three papers in your portfolio. So it can be anything you have worked on over the whole semester?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: But one of the three has to be the "Beaches" one that you are doing?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: OK. What do anticipate you are going to get, an A? You are going to get an A for this class?

Mary: Yes, I think so.

Jill: Have you met with her already at different times?

Mary: We did once.

Jill: And that was another thing where she required it, right?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: Have you gone to her on your own?

Mary: During class sessions . . . like, well, she will say get into your peer groups and have somebody proofread your paper, or she will have a list of questions where she wants us to go through and see if we've met certain criteria for the papers, and I've gone up to her and gotten different ideas for my papers. This last paper, the one that we turned in for last week, she gave me a whole bunch of stuff, and I could even call her at home, so she's been giving me the help.

Jill: Does she have mostly a workshop approach in the class, you working with your peer groups, or asking her questions, or just writing on your own?

Mary: Yes.



Jill: Did she ever run a session, though, about the literature or anything?

Mary: No

Jill: No lecture type, always discussion group or workshop?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: OK. Since this critical review is only on one thing and in your case a movie, you aren't going to be making references to page numbers or anything. There isn't going to be anything like you would have in a research paper?

Mary: No.

Jill: In this whole semester was there any research?

Mary: No.

Jill: No research?

Mary: None at all.

Jill: OK. Now you will be taking (sophomore English class) next fall or spring or whatever.

Mary: Right.

Jill: Now, how about your speech (requirement)?

Mary: My speech--I'm waiting at this point to hear from one of the advisors because I've taken the Dale Carnegie course so I'm supposed to get some compensation for that.

Jill: OK. What about the other classes you are taking this marking period. You're a business major. Any writing in any of them?

Mary: My accounting class right now. We are having to do research. It's a very extensive paper on a company, its financial annual reports--financial statements and annual reports. We had to write to a company and have them send us their annual reports for the last three years. And we have to do all of these ratios and find out what

the company has been doing for the last three years and just tons of information. And he does look for grammar and everything like that.

Jill: And he's given you any guidelines as far as paper writing?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: Now on that one when you make citations they'll be out of the reports, right?

Mary: Right.

Jill: You aren't supposed to go into any other kind of research or not?

Mary: Well, we had to use a whole section of the library like standard and (inaudible) report and different business indexes and the computer disclosure that prints out all of the different information, so. . . .

Jill: And then are you going to refer to them in your paper?

Mary: Actually we don't have to because it would be pages.

Jill: So you are just going to write about those three in your report?

Mary: Right.

Jill: And he said that he does want it to be really polished and checks for grammar, punctuation . . . . you're not worried about that?

Mary: No.

Jill: How long did you say that had to be?

Mary: It doesn't really have to be any certain length; it's just that we meet all of the criteria. He had certain guidelines like a page for this and a page for that when he wants us to talk about their company and what they've done for the last year, he recommends three-fourths of a page and so on.

Jill: OK, that's accounting, anything else where you're writing?

Mary: Let's see. I don't think so. I think we talked last time about my library class, didn't we?

Jill: I think so.

Mary: I ended up getting an A on that paper. He was really impressed, so that's good.

Jill: That's good to hear. (Looking through previous notes.) What course was it did you say?

Mary: It was Library\_\_\_\_.

Jill: (Still searching through notes from last interview. ) I don't think I have that mentioned. Let's talk about that for a little while.

Mary: OK. That was a class that we were taught how to use everything in the library. CENTRA, where all of the books are. That was an eight-week session. We were required to do a bibliography, so we had to get all of the information as if it was a term paper, and then do a paragraph about the book, and we had to do magazines and get on the microfiche and use reference books and government documents.

Jill: And then you wrote a paper?

Mary: No, we just had to do ten different paragraphs and then just like a final summarization.

Jill: And you got an A on that, huh?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: What have your tests been like in all of your classes? lots of multiple choice, essay, short answer, what have they been like?

Mary: I would say last semester they were more essay, this semester they seem to be more multiple choice.

Jill: Which do you prefer?

Mary: I prefer the essay.

Jill: Can you get equally good grades on either one?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: So if it were multiple choice you could still get a good grade. Now you said that your mid-term was picking a question from "Rumblefish" and writing a paper on that, so there wasn't a test in there because that is comp.

Mary: Right.

Jill: And what will the final be like in there, the portfolio is really the final?

Mary: Ok, no, the midterm is like a take-home thing. Over the weekend we got the assignment and then it was due like on Monday, but she allowed us to turn it in up until last Friday. She said our final is also going to be a take-home final, but I think it is going to be given to us like the last week of classes so that we just bring it in with our portfolio.

Jill: So, you'll have a take-home essay and your portfolio to turn in during finals week?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: You're going to get your portfolio back, do you think, in the summer?

Mary: Actually she said she thought that if we turn them in like the week before exams then she would be able to have them for us the day of exams.

Jill: Mm-mm, good. Ok, I think that covers about all I wanted to cover. There was one question I was going to ask you. Do you think that this English \_\_\_\_, you know it is required, everybody has to show writing competency, do you think that they're fair about all of the things they offer, they've got their own CLEP test, or you could have taken AP English in high school, I mean you could have taken the test, or take this class. Do you think it is needed or do you think this is a waste of time?

Mary: I don't think it is a waste of time. I just think that some classes tend to be harder than others and some tend to be easier than others.

Jill: And you're talking about (freshman English)?

Mary: I know people in classes that they have to write a paper every week, it's the same routine. We never even did anything like that in high school. It's just like some expect a lot, and some, like with writing the paper every week, it's basically they're just analyzing a story every week, and for some, I mean that might be good after a couple of papers, but like some classes, I don't see where it is that they're helping people.

Jill: Did you like the process writing that you did, though, the group work?

Mary: Yes, because a lot of times when she had us do stuff we didn't really know what we were doing it for, or she wouldn't make it like stressful and tell us that we have to do a paper here, she would just say, I want you to work on this. We did a lot of different things that you don't normally do in class.

Jill: So you think it is a good idea as long as it is used well. Did you feel that you improved as a writer?

Mary: Oh yes.

Jill: You like peer groups?

Mary: They're OK. I like the girls in my group. We get along. It seems to be helpful, but like I mentioned the last time, I seem to be giving them more input than what they're giving me, so I have my roommate, who is a really good writer, she usually helps me proofread my papers.

Jill: You're a pretty good writer. Did you consider taking their CLEP test?

Mary: Yes, I did take it, but I didn't make it.

Jill: Oh, you didn't make it. They're pretty tough on their standards?

Mary: Yes, they're really tough, but I think I did well on all the grammar. It was the essay. I didn't really know what to write about.

Jill: And you didn't take AP?

Mary: No, they didn't have it. I think they're getting it at my high school this year.

Jill: So are you looking forward to (the sophomore class) or do you wish you didn't have to take that?

Mary: Well, I'm going to be taking it providing that I can-- scheduling, that I can get English \_\_\_\_ Honors, so I'll be doing a little bit . . . .

Jill: You might like that better, huh?

Mary: Yeh.

Jill: Do you see as you look--from what you've seen around, people in your peer group or your class or in the dorm that there's a real need for freshman writing programs, do you see a lot of kids that come that can't write?

Mary: There's a few in my class that I'd say that it's really good for. I think that I probably could have gone into (sophomore English) without a problem. You know that test, I just felt like that test didn't really, you know, I didn't get to express my ability to write. But if I could just have turned in papers, shown them something else. . . .

Jill: Done a paper that you could give them?

Mary: Right.

Jill: I suppose they have a hard time controlling that because who knows who did the paper.

Mary: Yeh, right.

Jill: Are you going to take, like for some of your university program requirements, any literature?

Mary: I might. I was looking at that. I'll probably be in Detroit this summer, so I'll be taking classes at Schoolcraft.

Jill: Oh, really?

Mary: So I looked at some of the UP's that transfer there.

Jill: You're going here, though, next year, right?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: Do any of your professors, especially the ones like in...., now it doesn't sound like something Ms. \_\_\_ would say, but do they ever suggest that . . . say out loud in class, "Well you guys don't know anything," or "You didn't learn to write," or "You don't have good skills"? Do you ever get that impression from any of your teachers that they think that about the class in general?

Mary: None of my professors, well. . . . Not about writing. Maybe in some of my other classes, like my math class.

Jill: OK, that the math skills are down. More concern about lack of math skills than you've seen writing skills as far as verbalizing some frustration.

Mary: Right.

Jill: How about study skills? any of them ever suggest that you all don't study well?

Mary: Mmmm, then again I'd probably say my math class.

Jill: OK, anything else you want to add that you think I haven't asked, but you think is important as you think about what you've done in writing here?

Mary: I guess I thought it was going to be a lot harder going from high school to college, but it doesn't seem to me that hard, we're just doing different things. Through these things I feel like I've become a better writer.

Jill: OK. Are they things that could have been done in high school?

Mary: Yes, but I think there's like a maturity level that has to be there, so it's different. I don't know. It has to be taken more seriously. I guess I think it's taken more seriously in college because either their parents are paying for it or they're paying for it themselves, so it's a little different.

Jill: When you were (in high school) were there kids in all your classes that weren't going to college?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: Yes, so in that case, they wouldn't have taken it quite as seriously.

Mary: Right.

Jill: So, if you had a group like this where everybody was all college bound and pretty much comparable, maybe it could have been done better, huh?

Mary: Yes.

Jill: OK, so you do think that the maturity level is a factor in learning to write, especially if you are working with peers or workshopping. It's not going to work as well where people aren't motivated?

Mary: Right, and we worked totally with the peer group this time because I worked with them my senior year. You can know that you can count on people to be there. I think maybe not only have I just had good luck, but I think the people just tend to be a little bit more responsible, so that like everybody gets the work done so that they're not holding someone else up. I know that when we worked in the peer groups in the high school, it seemed like two people did all the work. Work seems to be divided.

Jill: Ok, so you predicted you would do well from what you had in high school, and you have done well, but you've actually thought it was easier than you anticipated?

Mary: Right!

Jill: OK, good.



**APPENDIX D**  
**A SAMPLE OF TYPICAL FRESHMAN**  
**WRITING DIRECTOR**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **A Sample of Typical Freshman Writing Director Interview Questions**

1. Describe the required writing course(s) for freshmen. What other courses are required to fulfill the total writing requirement at your university?
2. How are students evaluated for placement into the courses offered to meet the requirement or courses which are required to make up deficiencies before the required courses can be taken?
3. What methods are available to waive the requirements or earn credit without taking the required course(s)?
4. Are there courses in other departments which can be substituted for the freshman writing requirements?
5. What are the qualifications of the teachers of these courses? What percentage of the teachers are tenure-stream faculty, part-time faculty, or graduate students? What training or in-service is required of the teachers?
6. Is there a syllabus which teachers must follow? Do you have a copy which I can keep?
7. What flexibility does the syllabus allow teachers as to assignments or supplementary readings? Are there required texts?
8. How much writing is required in each course and what kinds of writing are assigned?
9. How are students evaluated?
10. Are specific methods of instruction or classroom styles required?
11. Why do some of the students in my study describe greatly disparate experiences in classes of the same title?

12. What control does the department exert over tenure-stream professors, part-time teachers, or graduate students as far as the content of their classes or their methods of instruction?
13. What are the strengths of your program?
14. What are the weaknesses of your program?
15. Have any changes been considered in the present program?

**APPENDIX E**

**APPROVAL FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH**

## APPENDIX E

### APPROVAL FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH  
AND DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1046

April 30, 1992

Jill R. VanAntwerp  
P.O. Box 35  
Lowell, MI 49331

RE: ARTICULATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES IN THE FIELD OF COMPOSITION, IRB  
#91-240

Dear Ms. VanAntwerp:

UCRIHS' review of the above referenced project has now been completed. I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and the Committee, therefore, has approved this project.

You are reminded that UCRHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRHS approval one month prior to April 23, 1993. There will be a maximum of four renewals possible. If you wish to continue a project beyond that time, it must again be submitted for complete review.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair  
University Committee on Research  
Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS)

DEW/pja

cc: Dr. Marilyn Wilson

## **LIST OF REFERENCES**

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Ambach, Gordon. "The High School/College Connection: A State Perspective." *Change* (Jan./Feb. 1982): 22-25+.
- Applebee, Arthur N. *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1974.
- Applebee, Arthur N., Judith A. Langer, and Ina V. S. Mullis. *Writing: Trends Across the Decade, 1974-84*. Princeton, NJ: NAEP, 1984.
- Appleman, Deborah, and Douglas E. Green. "Mapping the Elusive Boundary Between High School and College Writing." *CCC* 44 (May 1993): 191-199.
- Bartholomae, David, and Anthony Petrosky, eds. *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986.
- Berlin, James A. *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale: So. Ill. UP, 1987.
- . "Writing Instruction In School and College English 1890-1985." *Murphy* 183-220.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "I Want A Writing Director." *CCC* 43 (May 1992): 176-178.
- Boyer, Ernest L. *High School: A Report On Secondary Education In America*. NY: Harper and Row, 1983.
- Britton, James, T. Burgess, N. Martin, A. McLeod, and H. Rosen. *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*. London: Macmillan Education, 1975.

Brooke, Robert. "Robert Brooke Responds." *College English* 50 (Nov. 1988): 820-822.

The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. *Continuity and Discontinuity*. NY: McGraw Hill, 1973.

Coles, Nicholas. "Empowering Revision." Bartholomae and Petrosky 167-198.

Daniels, Harvey. *Famous Last Words: The American Language Crisis Reconsidered*. Carbondale: So. Il. UP, 1983.

Daniels, Harvey, and Steven Zemelman. *A Writing Project: Training Teachers of Composition from Kindergarten to College*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1985.

Davis, James E. and Hazel K., eds. *FOCUS: Teaching English Language Arts-Collaboration Between College English Departments and Secondary Schools*. 14.1, Winter 1988.

De Bevoise, Wynn. "Collaboration: Some Principles of Bridgework." *Education Leadership* 43 (Feb. 1986): 9-12.

Emig, Janet. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1971.

Flynn, Thomas. "A Model for High School-College Writing Instruction In-Service Programs." Davis 26-28.

Foster, David. "The Theory of AP English: A Critique." Olsen et al. 3-24.

"Freshman Composition: Is It A Waste of Time?" *The Council Chronicle: NCTE* 1.4 (April 1992): 9.

Gaines, Bette, and Rosanna Grassi. "Project Advance: An Alternative to AP." Olsen et al. 171-179.

Gross, Theodore L. *Partners In Education: How Colleges Can Work With Schools to Improve Teaching and Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988.



Guthrie, Warren. "The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America, 1635-1850." *Speech Monographs*. Part I, 13.1 (1946): 14-22. Part II, 14.1 (1947): 38-54. Part III, 15.1 (1948): 61-71. Part IV, 16.1 (1949): 98-113.

Halloran, S. Michael. "From Rhetoric to Composition: The Teaching of Writing In America to 1900." *Murphy* 151-182.

Hiller, Janet, and Barbara Osburg. "A Comment on 'Lacan, Transferences, and Writing Instruction.'" *College English* 50 (Nov. 1988): 819-820.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Horner, Winifred Bryan, ed. *The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric*. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1983.

Judy (Tchudi), Stephen. "Composition and Rhetoric In American Secondary Schools, 1840-1900." *The English Journal* 68.4 (April 1979): 34-45.

Kitzhaber, Albert R. "Teaching English Composition In College." *Teaching Freshman Composition*. Eds. Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett. New York: Oxford UP, 1967.

Lawton, David L. "Composition Courses for College Freshmen Are Ineffective; They Should Be Abolished." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (21 Sept.1988) : B11-12.

*Literature: The British Tradition-Annotated Teacher's Edition*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994.

Maeroff, Gene I. *School and College: Partnerships In Education*. Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1983.

Marius, Richard. "The Precarious Opportunity: The University Writing Program." *Phi Kappa Phi Journal* (Fall 1985): 16-21.

Martin, Wanda. "Tenure, Status, and the Teaching of Writing." *Ronald and Roskelly* 122-136.

- Mayher, John S. *Uncommon Sense: Theoretical Practice In Language Education*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/ Cook Publishers, 1990.
- McAndrew, Donald A. "The Co-Teaching Project." *CSSEDC Quarterly* 11.2 (May 1989): 2-3.
- McQuade, Donald. "Who Do You Think You're Talking To?: Trading Ideas for Insults in the English Profession." *English Journal* 65.7 (Nov. 1976): 8-10.
- Menacker, Julius. *From School to College: Articulation and Transfer*. Wash. D.C.: Am. Council on Ed., 1975.
- . "Subject Articulation Between High School and College." *The Clearing House* 44 (Dec. 1969): 220-223.
- Miller, Susan. *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Carbondale: So. Il. UP, 1991.
- Moffett, James. *Coming On Center: Essays In English Education*. 2nd Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publisher, 1988.
- . *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968.
- Murphy, James J., ed. *A Short History of Writing Instruction From Ancient Greece to Twentieth-Century America*. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1990.
- Myers, Miles, and James Gray, eds. *Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Composition: Processing, Distancing, and Modeling*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1983.
- "National Writing Project Wins Funding Fight." *The Council Chronicle: NCTE* 1.4 (April 1992): 1-2.
- Oliver, Eileen. "Promoting Cooperation Between H.S. and College Writing Programs." *CSSEDC Quarterly* 11.2 (May 1989): 4-5.
- Olson, Gary A., Elizabeth Metzger, and Evelyn Ashton-Jones, eds. *Advanced Placement English: Theory, Politics, and Pedagogy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1989.

Reid, Ronald F. "The Bolyston Professorship of Rhetoric and Oratory, 1806-1904: A Case Study in Changing Concepts of Rhetoric and Pedagogy." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45 (1959): 239-252.

Ritchie, Joy. "Between the Trenches and Ivory Towers: Divisions Between University Professors and High School Teachers." Ronald and Roskelly 101-121.

Ronald, Kate, and Hephzebiah Roskelly, eds. *Farther Along: Transforming Dichotomies in Rhetoric and Composition*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990.

Rose, Mike. *Lives On the Boundary: The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. NY: The Free Press, 1989.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The Reader, The Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale: So. Il. UP, 1978.

Schultz, Lucille M., Chester H. Laine, and Mary C. Savage. "Interaction Among School and College Writing Teachers: Toward Recognizing and Remaking Old Patterns." *CCC* 39 (May 1988): 139-153.

Scott, Fred Newton. "What the West Wants in Preparatory English." *The School Review* 17 (Jan. 1909): 10-20.

Scott, Fred Newton, and Joseph Villiers Denney. *Elementary English Composition*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1908.

Shaughnessy, Mina. *Errors and Expectations*. New York: Oxford, 1977.

Taylor, Denny. *Family Literacy: Young Children Learning to Read and Write*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983.

Wilbur, Franklin P. "School-College Partnerships; Building Effective Models for Collaboration." *The Journal of College Admissions*. Summer 1985: 20-28.

Wilbur, Franklin P., Leo Lambert, and M. Jean Young. *National Directory of School-College Partnerships: Current Models and Practices*. Syracuse: American Association for Higher Education, 1987.

## GENERAL REFERENCES

- Aiken, Wilford M. *The Story of the Eight-Year Study: Adventures In American Education, Vol. I.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.
- Applebee, Arthur N., Judith Langer, Ina V.S. Mullis, and Lynn B. Jenkins. *The Writing Report Card, 1984-88: Findings From the Nation's Report Card.* Washington D. C.: ETS, 1990.
- Berlin, James A. *Writing Instruction In 19th Century American Colleges.* Carbondale: So Ill UP, 1984.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?" *CCC* 37 (1986): 294-301.
- Botts, Roderic. "Writing and Rhetoric in American Secondary Schools, 1918-1935." *English Journal* 68.4 (April 1979): 54-59.
- College Board. *Measures In the College Admissions Process.* NY: College Entrance Examination Board, 1986.
- Conant, James Bryant. *The American High School Today.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959.
- Corbett, Edward P. J. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student.* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1971.
- Delia, Mary Alice. "High School vs. College English: Radical New Theory Widens the Gap." *The Clearing House* 62 (April 1988): 333-336.
- Dennis, Becky. "Writing Teachers At All Levels Really Do Have Commonalities. " *FOCUS: Teaching English Language Arts-- Collaboration Between College English Departments and Secondary Schools.* Eds. James E. and Hazel K. Davis. 14.1 (1988): 28-29.

- Dixon, John. *Growth Through English*. Oxford: NATE, Oxford UP, 1969.
- Eagleson, Robert D., ed. *English In the Eighties*. Sydney, Aus.: AATE, 1982.
- Ehninger, Douglas. "Campbell, Blair, and Whately: Old Friends In A New Light." *Western Speech* 19 (1955): 263-269.
- . "Campbell, Blair, and Whately Revisited." *Southern Speech Journal* 28 (1963): 169-182.
- Elbow, Peter. "Reflections on Academic Discourse: How It Relates to Freshman and Colleagues." *College English* 53 (Feb. 1991): 135-155.
- Fay, Robert S. "The Reorganization Movement in Secondary English Teaching." *English Journal* 68.4 (April 1979): 46-53.
- General Education In School and College*. A Committee Report by Members of the Faculties of Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1952.
- Hartzog, Carol P. *Composition and the Academy: A Study of Writing Program Administration*. New York: MLA, 1986.
- Hook, J. N., Paul H. Jacobs, and Raymond D. Crisp. *What Every English Teacher Should Know*. Champaign, IL: NCTE, 1970.
- Jacobs, Mary-Ellen, and Jessie A. Roderick. "Diary of a Singular Season: Reflecting On Dilemmas In Teaching Writing." *Language Arts* 65 (Nov. 1988): 642-51.
- Judy (Tchudi), Stephen, ed. *Teaching English: Reflections on the State of the Art*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1979.
- Kirby, Dan, and Tom Liner. *Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988.
- Kitzhaber, Albert R. *Rhetoric In American Colleges, 1850-1990*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990.
- Klitgaard, Robert. *Choosing Elites*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

- Knoblauch, C. H., and Lil Brannon. *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publ., Inc., 1984.
- Lloyd-Jones, Richard. "Division and Synthesis: Implications of the Aspen Coalition Conference." *Focus: Teaching English Language Arts--Collaboration Between College English Departments and Secondary Schools*. Eds. James E. and Hazel K. Davis. 14.1 (1988): 4-7.
- Lloyd-Jones, Richard, and Andrea A. Lunsford, eds. *The English Coalition Conference: Democracy through Language*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989.
- Mandel, Barrett J., ed. *Three Language-Arts Curriculum Models*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1980.
- McCarthy, Lucille Parkinson. "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum." *Research In the Teaching of English* 21 (Oct. 1987): 233-265.
- Moffett, James. *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968.
- National Council of Teachers of English. "Statement on Teacher Load: Secondary English." *English Journal* 68 (1979): 15.
- O'Hearn, Carolyn. "Recognizing the Learning Disabled College Writer." *College English* 51 (March 1989): 294-304.
- Pinkston, Joan W. "Thoreau and Current Trends in the Teaching of Writing." *English Journal* 78 (Nov. 1989): 50-52.
- Purdy, Dwight. "A Polemical History of Freshman Composition in Our Time." *College English* 48 (Dec. 1989): 791-796.
- Preer, Jean L. *Competence, Admissions, and Articulation: Returning to the Basics In Higher Education*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Ed. Research Report No. 6, 1983.

Saranson, Seymour B. *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971.

Scott, Fred Newton. "College Entrance Requirements In English." *School Review* 9 (1901): 365+.

---. "The Report on College Entrance Requirements in English." *Education Review* 20 (1900): 289-294.

Scott, Fred Newton, Franklin T. Baker, and George R. Carpenter. *The Teaching of English in the Elementary and the Secondary School*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913.

Sirotnik, Kenneth A., and John I. Goodlad, eds. *School-University Partnerships In Action: Concepts, Cases, and Concerns*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1988.

Stewart, Donald. "The Barnyard Goose, History, and Fred Newton Scott." *English Journal* 67.11 (1979): 14-17.

---. "Fred Newton Scott." *Traditions of Inquiry*. Ed. John Brereton. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. 26-49.

---. "Rediscovering Fred Newton Scott." *College English* 40 (1979): 539-547.

---. "Two Model Teachers and the Harvardization of English Departments." *The Rhetorical Tradition and Modern Writing*. Ed. James J. Murphy. New York: MLA, 1982. 118-129.

Tate, Gary, and Edward P. J. Corbett, eds. *Teaching Freshman Composition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1967.

---. *Teaching High School Composition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1970.

Thompson, Edgar H. "H.S./College Collaboration: All You Have To Do Is Ask." *CSSEDC Quarterly* 11.2 (May 1989): 3-4.

Wendell, Barrett. "English at Harvard." *The Dial* 16 (1894): 131-133.

Wilbur, Franklin P. "High School-College Partnerships Can Work!" *Educational Record* Spring 1981: 38-44.