

APPENDIX A:**Relationships between High School and College Writing, and Some Thoughts on the Role of College Writing Instruction**

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Faculty in any university can expect that students entering college have varied high school experiences with writing (varied because of the curriculum in the high schools, because of the particular teachers they have had, because of the particular interests of individual students, because of the things that come easily, or not so easily, for individual students). Some students will have done a lot of writing; other students may have done very little. In addition, some students will have done a lot of writing outside of school, and others very little. Wherever and how much writing has been done, it's likely, across the board, to vary in quality.

Every time students change educational levels, there are new expectations and new challenges. Faculty at every level build on those prior levels, but we always have a sense that what worked at a lower level is no longer sufficient. College writing poses new challenges for students, and it is the responsibility of college professors to teach college writing.

High school literacy curricula often concentrate writing instruction in literature courses, which means that students leave high school with more experience writing about literature than any other topic. Depending on their schools, they may have had experience doing persuasive pieces; they may have had experience with personal essays; they may have had structured research experiences in small libraries (or in college libraries in or near their hometowns). Students are admitted to college because of a mix of factors, and faculty across the university meet students where they are, with varied past experiences and past levels of performance in writing, quantitative thinking, social analysis, lab experiences etc.

As college faculty, we must help students see that every course offers new opportunities for writing and thinking; foundational experiences help prepare students for the array of new opportunities they will encounter. College writing requires students to produce longer, careful, close readings of text and data; it requires students to complete more independent research tasks and to juxtapose more sources of information with more conflicting points of view. Foundational writing courses—which, in the national model, may be conceived as first-year composition courses or as first-year seminars located in a department or program—help students with strategies for identifying and developing ideas; researching open-ended questions; presenting their work (in progress and when completed) to different sorts of audiences.

Foundational writing courses can address the challenges of writing from sources and data, as well as the messy nature of writing processes. Both ideas and processes are best engaged in the production of whole texts. There is no evidence that courses or experiences that drill students in the editing or production of correct sentences or isolated vocabulary development increase students' ability to understand and produce texts that use effective formal language in a particular context.

College students will encounter a range of writing expectations across disciplines, and foundational writing courses prepare them to think about writing in flexible ways. Students and faculty must understand that:

- Writing strategies must be fluid and flexible: what works for one writer, or one writing task, or one writing environment, may not work for another. Students may be successful in some places and unsuccessful in others
- Writing development is messy and nonlinear. Writers need practice and supported guidance at a variety of tasks over time. Even though students' texts may not always reflect polished performance, they may be developing new insights about their writing processes and habits that will lead to more polished performance in the future. Writers need the chance to try things, and to address progressively more challenging assignments that are read by encouraging audiences who can give meaningful, timely responses.
- Writing in real life—writing in the community, writing on the job, writing at home— involves many contexts and time frames. Successful writers can produce texts on varied timelines: sometimes using extensive reflection and revision strategies, and sometimes producing appropriate prose more quickly. Successful writers can work with groups or teams, and can work on their own.
- Writing students need to see the ways in which writing is handled in the real world. Formal published writing masks the drafting and research processes that preceded finished drafts; faculty do not often talk with students about the roles of proofreaders, copyeditors, and student assistants' in the production of polished texts.