



Composition and rhetoric, universities, and the real world : implications and connections
by Linda Dean Adams

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English

Montana State University

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Abstract:

A conversation is currently taking place in the halls of universities across the country. It centers on defining the goals and expectations of the individual universities, students, and their colleges. Interestingly there are several apparent contradictions and/or disconnections in these stated expectations and goals. First, at Montana State University (MSU) the mission statement outlines their desire to produce a “[citizen] - with well-developed skills in oral, written, and interpersonal communications and in critical, analytical, and creative thinking; with multicultural and global awareness; and with character traits such as leadership, responsibility, honesty, objectivity, and collegiality” (LRPC Memo). Yet, a recent Strengths, Weakness, Threats and Opportunities (SWOT) Analysis stressed practical curriculums, and suggested relegating philosophy, history, literature, and composition and rhetoric to a “support” status. Secondly, students want to be viewed as educated and successful, yet their main objective is “economic gain” (Gose A37). Finally, English departments view their role as helping contribute to creating ethical, moral, intellectual citizens, a valid purpose, though practical application may not be as clear.

The professional paper uses interviews and noted sources in composition and rhetoric to support the hypothesis that it may be a matter of disconnections between the discourse communities of universities, students, business, and the humanities not actual cross purposes. The results support this hypothesis by showing that the processes involved in producing the “end product” desired by all are actually similar. It may be a breakdown in communications between the “players” that leads to the confusion regarding the ability to meet each segments’ goals. The paper concludes that all segments must do a better job of explaining, quantifying, and producing a unified front when addressing what obtaining a university education accomplishes towards students’ educational goals.

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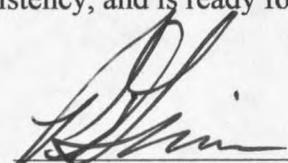
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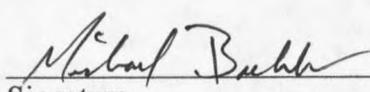
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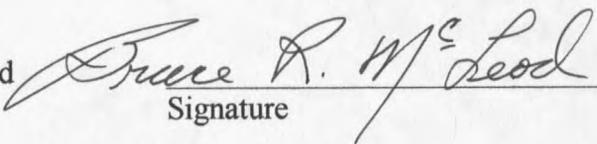
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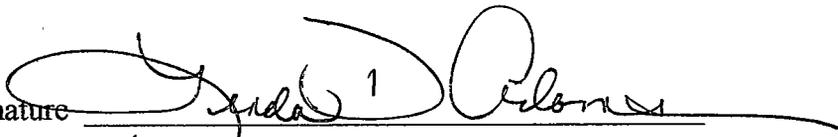
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. D. Adams", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with large loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

4/16/2003

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ABSTRACT

A conversation is currently taking place in the halls of universities across the country. It centers on defining the goals and expectations of the individual universities, students, and their colleges. Interestingly there are several apparent contradictions and/or disconnections in these stated expectations and goals. First, at Montana State University (MSU) the mission statement outlines their desire to produce a "[citizen] - with well-developed skills in oral, written, and interpersonal communications and in critical, analytical, and creative thinking; with multicultural and global awareness; and with character traits such as leadership, responsibility, honesty, objectivity, and collegiality" (LRPC Memo). Yet, a recent Strengths, Weakness, Threats and Opportunities (SWOT) Analysis stressed practical curriculums, and suggested relegating philosophy, history, literature, and composition and rhetoric to a "support" status. Secondly, students want to be viewed as educated and successful, yet their main objective is "economic gain" (Gose A37). Finally, English departments view their role as helping contribute to creating ethical, moral, intellectual citizens, a valid purpose, though practical application may not be as clear.

The professional paper uses interviews and noted sources in composition and rhetoric to support the hypothesis that it may be a matter of disconnections between the discourse communities of universities, students, business, and the humanities not actual cross purposes. The results support this hypothesis by showing that the processes involved in producing the "end product" desired by all are actually similar. It may be a breakdown in communications between the "players" that leads to the confusion regarding the ability to meet each segments' goals. The paper concludes that all segments must do a better job of explaining, quantifying, and producing a unified front when addressing what obtaining a university education accomplishes towards students' educational goals.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A conversation is currently taking place in the halls of universities across the country. It centers on defining the goals and expectations of the individual universities, students, and their colleges. Interestingly, there are several apparent contradictions and/or disconnections in these stated expectations and goals. First, at Montana State University (MSU) the mission statement outlines their desire to produce a “[citizen] - with well-developed skills in oral, written, and interpersonal communications and in critical, analytical, and creative thinking; with multicultural and global awareness; and with character traits such as leadership, responsibility, honesty, objectivity, and collegiality” (LRPC Memo). Yet, a recent Strengths, Weakness, Threats and Opportunities (SWOT) Analysis stressed practical curriculums, and suggested relegating philosophy, history, literature, and composition and rhetoric to a “support” status. Secondly, students want to be view as educated and successful, yet their main objective is “economic gain” (Gose A37). Finally, English departments view their role as helping contribute to creating ethical, moral, intellectual citizens, a valid purpose, though practical application may not be as clear.

Universities have been described as “ivory towers”, isolated and insulated against the stresses that many organizations face in the competitive world. Scholars are seen as “thinkers” and builders of new knowledge. However, that contribution may no longer be enough. Increasingly the question is being asked, “Should universities be held accountable for producing a product like corporate America?” Is

learning/knowledge for learning/knowledge's sake acceptable any longer or should they have to quantify their output? How does one quantify that output and what is it? Terms like Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis that were heretofore only associated with business or commercial institutions are increasingly finding their way into the vocabularies of university presidents and department chairs.

Many believe that given the rising costs of tuition and increased length of time devoted to a higher education, universities should be held accountable for producing a "product". In this case the product would presumably be a student who, upon graduation, could make a contribution to the world. Unfortunately, that contribution is often computed in terms of what the student contributes to the Gross National Product (GNP) or the bottom line of a corporation. Consequently, nowhere is the conversation more important than in English departments. This discipline is much more difficult to assign value to in terms of a recognized professional title, other than professor – business departments produce accountants, architecture departments produce architects, engineering departments produce engineers – English and the humanities contribute to producing well-rounded citizens. As Jeffery Hart, Professor Emeritus at Dartmouth College, explains in "How to Get a College Education",

"Thus do take American and European history, an introduction to philosophy, American and European literature, the Old and New Testaments, and at least one modern language. It would be absurd not to take a course in Shakespeare, the best poet in our language. There is art and music history. The list can be expanded, but these areas every educated person should have a decent knowledge of – with specialization coming later [...]"

What is such an education supposed to produce? [...] ‘The goal of education is to produce the citizen’” (129).

In light of the recent business scandals involving the CEOs of Enron, MCI, and Montana Power, producing a responsible citizen is an admirable goal but it is still difficult to quantify. Additionally, the humanities cover such a wide array of disciplines and departments that it makes the conversation all the more problematic. For the purposes of this paper, henceforth, we will be addressing only one of the humanities, English, more specifically, composition and rhetoric studies rather than literature studies.

The goal of this professional paper is to research, discuss, and present observations in three areas of this conversation and to make connections where there are possible gaps: 1) How are shifting student expectations effecting the role of the university and English departments? 2) Why is it difficult to establish a meaningful connection between business skills and what English can bring to them? and 3) How does Composition and Rhetoric establish the connections between students’ and universities’ expectations?

CHAPTER 2

SHIFTING STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Ben Gose in The Chronicle of Higher Education outlines results of a UCLA survey that underlines the decline in learning for learning's sake. Gose quotes Linda J. Sax, the survey's director and a visiting assistant professor of education, who argues, "Students do what they have to do to get into college and graduate school, but their intrinsic interest in what they're learning seems to be down" (A37).

Additionally, the research shows that,

"Current students' reasons for attending college appear to center primarily on the development of marketable skills and the potential for economic gain, not on specific academic interest. These motivations perhaps help explain why many students often seem less than fully engaged with the subject matter of their courses, particularly when that coursework is outside their area of specialization" (A37). When asked to consider the most important objective of an education, 75% of the students responded, "being very well-off financially" versus 41% who answered, "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" (A37).

However, the study's results differ significantly with the mission statements of many universities that emphasize a different perspective on the part of professors and administrators alike on the value and objectives of higher education. One such university's mission statement (and it is noted that it is typical to those found at similar institutions) is that of The University of Cincinnati. "The university has as its primary mission to make the world a better place through excellence in research, teaching and public service" (A37). The study shows, on the other hand, that not only are students focusing on monetary payoffs, but also just 23% said it was important to

“participate in a community action program” (A37). Consequently, there appears to be a “disconnect” between students’ expectations and universities’ stated mission. Not only does it appear that learning for learning’s sake is no longer as important as it once was, but it appears that universities may have not addressed the issue or the gap between their own stated objectives and students’ objectives.

Assuming that these theories approximate what is happening in many US universities, and English departments have a difficult time quantifying how they can answer the students’ expectations of “being very well-off financially”, what impact has that had on English studies as a whole? A specific example of what may be a trend across the country is the SWOT Analysis conducted for Montana State University. The Bozeman Daily Chronicle sums up one recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee as, “MSU should build its reputation as an excellent university for engineering, agriculture, sciences and similar professions, while English, history and other liberal arts should play a supporting role” (Schontzler A3). Additionally, the recent reversal of financial markets has meant increased budget deficits and has forced universities to look at reallocating resources based on their shifting focus. “Revelations of budget problems at Duke follow the release this month of an internal report that calls for cutting up to 50 positions... over three years” (Pulley 1). In the face of decreased emphasis in English studies and budgetary constraints, how do English departments make the connection between what they provide for each student and for the university as a whole? As importantly, how do they address students’ changing expectations?

Furthermore, the issue may not just be the fact that universities are not addressing the gap between their stated mission and students' expectations. As many universities move toward being able to prove that they are producing students that are educated in specific career areas (i.e. accounting, architecture, photography), the universities' inconsistency (good citizens vs. good accountants, etc) with their documented mission appears to be growing. In Chapter 5 we will investigate whether the recent SWOT Analysis recommendations mentioned above coincide with MSU's mission statement and what actions, if any, need to be considered.

CHAPTER 3

CONNECTING ENGLISH AND COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC WITH
STUDENTS' AND UNIVERSITIES' EXPECTATIONS

“The poet was led to believe that *they*, the business people, were a faceless conformist hierarchy busily destroying the world while doomed to a life of ineffable blandness. *We* poets, so business people told themselves, were all either starving in garrets or living comfortably in academic ivory towers, dreaming away our lives, contributing nothing to practical matters of the world.” – David Whyte, The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America (9).

David Whyte’s description of how the business community sees both the creative world of poets and often the entire discipline of English, stresses the gulf that exists between the two communities. Is this a case of approaches to a life’s work so divergent that mutual understanding can never be attained? Or, is it that both communities have inherently similar but outwardly divergent aspects? To further problematize the discussion, psychologists use the distinction of “right-brain” and “left-brain” functions to delineate the differences in how the two communities develop their approach to thinking, writing, and creating. Educators often classify disciplines as result-oriented (business courses) or creative-oriented (English/poetry courses). The exploration of the connections between business and literature and writing, can provide a meaningful explanation of English and composition and rhetoric’s place in the increasingly “corporate” emphasis of universities and students.

Thomas C. Grey, Professor of Law at Stanford University, investigates the connection between the poetry of Wallace Stevens, an insurance actuary executive,

and the world of business in his book The Wallace Stevens Case: Law and the Practice of Poetry. One of Grey's primary arguments is that the difference between the business world and the world of poetry may not be as great as many, businessmen and scholars alike, would have us believe

By looking at the processes needed to "produce" a "product" in both communities, we may be able to begin to construct a useful discourse and to make a connection between English and composition and rhetoric, the business world, and the students' expectations for success after their university experience. The following table (Table 1) looks at the functions and results of writing for poetry and business documents; it could also be applied to other disciplines' writing.

Table 1: Comparison of the Creative Processes in the Humanities and Business.

Function	Poetry: Creating a Poem	Business: Creating a Strategic Planning Document
Observation	Observe environment of poem's subject (nature, relationships, politics etc.)	Observe environment of the business marketplace (target market, demographics, competition factors.)
Inspiration	An object, event or commentary inspires the idea for the poem (i.e. Picasso's Old Guitarist for Stevens's "Man with a Blue Guitar.")	An object (new product release), event (savings and loan industry failure), or commentary (the pursuit of "baby boomers" for a healthy lifestyle spurs development of "natural" health products.)
Format	Rhyme scheme, stylistic issues	Document layout (i.e. charts, presentation style, written task layout.)
Timeline	Write consistently until completion	Work, on a daily basis, until completion
Product	Poem	Strategic Plan

By looking at the functions of creation side by side, the differences don't seem as glaringly apparent. How is it that English seems to be failing to make the connections necessary to continue to be a valued, contributing discipline instead of a "support" area for a changing world and university system?

The answer may be found in the discourse of each community. In my former career as an Advertising and Marketing Vice President, the functions listed in the table were an integral part of creating a campaign or approach to accomplishing the marketing goals for the client or corporation. While the strategies and goals were often the work of a "team" of professionals, the actual creative strategies were usually developed by a single individual, a business "poet" if you will. The process of the creative effort parallels the most stereotypical concepts of creating poetry. Late at night, in a quiet room, an art director is bent over her computer. Snatches of words run through her mind as she seeks to find the exact phrase to convey her meaning. The sounds of the words, the rhyme scheme, and the message it conveys are all important to her.

The results of this "poetry", albeit commercial and to many intellectuals trite, resonates with today's popular culture as much as the words from the greatest poets. "You deserve a break today; Just do it; A piece of the rock," are all tag lines used in everyday conversation. McDonalds's, Nike's, and Prudential's advertising efforts have become part of our conversation just as quoting from great poetry has. English and composition and rhetoric can make a valid connection to the recently defined

goals of students and universities. We need to forego our intellectual snobbery and begin to learn the discourse that will make the connection a real one.

In a recent article in *Forbes Magazine*, a well-respected business publication, Susan Adams addresses the connection between business and the humanities by looking at the business success of men also known for their creative abilities. In a sidebar to that article, Adams looks at three “business poets” who are blending business and poetry. Robert Crawford, Dana Gioia, and William Louis-Dreyfus all lend credibility to the premise that business and the humanities do not exist in two mutually exclusive worlds. Robert Crawford is a former defense analyst; Dana Gioia, a former General Foods’ product manager; and William Louis-Dreyfus, the patriarch of a family-owned company, Louis Dreyfus & Cie. In addition to being recognized as successful businessmen, all are acknowledged poets in their own right. Dana Gioia’s poem “Money” may poke fun at money and making money, but it draws a connection between commerce and literature. Building on a quote by Wallace Stevens, the aforementioned poet and insurance executive, Gioia uses a sardonic tone to show the connections between business writing and using poetry to discuss our preoccupation with economic gain.

MONEY

“Money is a kind of poetry.” WALLACE STEVENS

Money, the long green,
cash, stash, rhino, jack

or just plain dough.
Chock it up, fork it over,
shell it out. Watch it
burn holes through pockets.
To be made of it! To have it
to burn! Greenbacks, double eagles,
megabucks and Ginnie Maes.
It greases the palm, feathers a nest,
holds heads above water,
makes both ends meet.
Money breeds money.
Gathering interest, compounding daily.
Always in circulation.
Money. You don't know where it's been,
but you put it where your mouth is.
And it talks (Adams 345).

We need to make that same connection between commerce, money, and English studies for our students if their current goal is to get a highly paid job and be “successful”. We also need to make that mission and our ability to fill it evident to a university system that may have begun to focus on business and government partnerships instead of creating knowledge for knowledge’s sake. As Jeffery Hart believes, we have the opportunity to help create the citizens of the world. We can

share with our students the philosophies, literature, and writing skills that will create a socially conscientious and contributing member of an increasingly global world.

The perceived chasm may have been created by our stereotypical definitions of each discipline as David Whyte defines it. In stereotyping the two, are we disappointed when one or the other pursuit does not fit into our classifications? “Likewise, admirers attending a Stevens reading were disappointed, so John Malcolm Brinnin reported, because they ‘had come to see Wallace Stevens the romantic poet and found themselves looking at a business executive’” (Grey 13). Can we show that our students can be both successful business professionals and have a strong, and needed, grounding in English and composition and rhetoric? Can we translate what we bring to the table in quantifiable terms?

CHAPTER 4

CONNECTING THE STUDENTS' AND UNIVERSITIES' EXPECTATIONS
WITH COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

As a Professor of English at Ball State University, Dr. Joseph Trimmer, in his essay "Real World Writing Assignments" addressed the need for accomplished writing skills regardless of the career path chosen by students. He conducted a panel discussion with three professionals in Public Relations, Law, and Medicine to determine the writing requirements of their careers. His questions dealt with what the participants' expectations were coming out of college for using their writing skills. Regardless of their chosen profession each respondent stated that they had not realized the depth and type of writing they would be required to do (Trimmer 36). It was only after working in their chosen professions that they understood how important and comprehensive their writing would need to be.

Robert Otterbourg, Public Relations: "Most people have seen an annual report from a corporation. The numbers in that report are compiled by accountants, but I would write the front part where the corporation explains its achievements. I would work like a reporter – gathering background information, interviewing people – and then I would write a clear, concise report" (Trimmer 37).

Diane Ciccone, Law: "When I left Colgate and law school, I wasn't sure I knew how to write...I realized I had to persuade someone. I had to state my premise and convince you... that my premise is correct...particularly when I suspected I had the losing position... If the law said XYZ and I had to convince you of ABC, then I had to be really creative" (Trimmer 37).

Patricia Batchelor Chess, *Medicine*: "... coming out of college. I thought of myself as a hard core scientist and so shied away from writing. But then I realized that writing was essential to my career. I had to communicate with patients, other physicians, insurance firms, and even the federal government. So I needed to be good at getting my point across" (Trimmer 37).

Trimmer's panel and subsequent essay underscore the need for well-developed writing instruction in college. Regardless of the field students enter, they will need to make the transition between college writing and the communications responsibilities of their career. An opportunity to make a connection between the students' and universities' expectations presents itself through teaching composition and rhetoric and more specifically, freshman composition. Both universities and students place increasing emphasis on their performance in their chosen career after graduation. As noted in Trimmer's panel discussion, written communications is a critical component to success.

Composition is the cornerstone of a freshman's ability to learn to write across curriculums and can be a building block for collaborative learning. It also instructs students in how to begin to think critically about texts. Finally, it facilitates academia's ability to demonstrate concrete results in "real" world applications. By looking at each area we can make the connection between the universities' objectives, students' expectations', and the English Department's composition programs.

Preparing Freshmen for Writing Across the Curriculum

Freshmen composition classrooms are comprised of students from all university disciplines. One of the big challenges in teaching freshmen is to make the

class valid whether they are majoring in animal science, graphic arts, or English. The connection between the required freshman writing course is not readily apparent to incoming freshmen. Many consider it just another "English" course and fail to understand its impact on their specific course of study. The academic community currently uses the term "Writing Across the Curriculum" to describe two different approaches to encourage student writing. The first applies to university programs that have an English professional assigned to work with professors in other curriculums. At Montana State University (MSU), Edis Kittrell, Adjunct Instructor and a coordinator of the Writing Across the Curriculum program, is an English Department liaison. She coordinates and develops assignments that incorporate writing into classes not traditionally considered writing courses. For example, she may work with a professor from the animal science program to develop a writing project that will not only show students' knowledge about the course but it will also strengthen students' skills with regards to written analysis and critical thinking. In an interview Kittrell stated, "I see the frustration of other faculty members [in other departments] of the lack of writing skills in their students. They see the importance of writing classes and, I think, they are trying to implement writing in their classes" (Kittrell).

The second way the term is used is as it relates to freshman composition classes that prepare the students to take the skills learned in composition and apply them to their writing requirements in other classes. It is the second definition of Writing Across the Curriculum that is addressed here.

In preparing students to succeed in not only their composition class but also their other courses, understanding how they approach writing is necessary. Students often think of writing as a gift not a skill and have reservations about being able to learn to write well. Furthermore, students often experience a different kind of frustration when it comes to writing. When upper-level students are asked what is important for freshmen to learn about writing for college courses, they often respond by saying, "Students believe that the most important aspect of the class is to understand what the instructor wants and give it to them. They do not often think about the skill or its application" (McCarthy 125). Additionally, many view composition as a core requirement that has to be taken, not as a class that will enable them to communicate effectively in all areas of their coursework. The students' answers evoke different responses in different instructors. When first faced with this information, an instructor may think, "I want them to see the value of the class. It is also about critical thinking. It is not just about what I want back from them" (McCarthy 125). The key objective is for the instructor to make the connection between learning to write regardless of the student's career path and course of study. By showing how good writing skills can help them succeed, not just academically, but later in life in terms of their earning expectations, the instructor can engage the students in the process.

Unfortunately, many students see writing in terms of grades instead of being a valuable life skill. Good writing skills will serve them throughout their life, regardless of what career area they enter. Writing is also an identifiable skill that

addresses the universities' objectives in producing engineers, business majors, and architects. In composition classes, the English department teaches a student how to successfully address not only English assignments and classes but also the communications requirements of their other classes. If the students cannot communicate on all levels to their CEOs, Board of Directors, or other professionals, their career – and hence the reputation of the university that they graduated from – is at risk.

Collaborative Learning: Working in Groups

The lessons of community, respect, and camaraderie (teamwork) are important skills highly-valued in the business community and other professional fields as well. Freshman composition can be a vehicle to model that team-oriented process.

Admittedly, there are many different ways to teach composition. The class can be teacher-centered with a lecture format, it can be student centered with the students choosing their topics and method of discourse (i.e. argumentative, narrative, expository, etc.) or it can be a combination of the two involving the teacher as a guide and the students as participants in developing their skills as writers. The latter method has taken the forefront in today's classroom structure of composition courses (Ede 112). The teacher facilitates the reading and writing and directs pertinent questions to further enhance the understanding of the material and the project. The students work as a group to respond. The prevailing view is that if instructors are

dealing with students who, given their perception of writing, have a built-in distrust of the writing process and all that it entails, the course should be designed to foster confidence in their ability to learn composition. Kenneth Bruffee states, in his essay on collaborative learning, "What they [students] needed, it seemed, was help that was not an extension of but an alternative to traditional classroom teaching" (Bruffee 637). One of the most successful ways is the use of workshops, in group settings, to reduce the students' exposure to ridicule. The strongest attribute of working in groups is the trust and camaraderie that is built between group members.

Additionally, workgroup discussions create a community in which the students feel safe in exploring their critical thinking skills and reading competence. This establishment of a community within a freshman composition course is an effective way to approach the social construction of the class. Joseph Harris further explains this phenomenon in A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966. He quotes Raymond Williams as saying, "Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships..." (99). This sense of community is the foundation for students understanding of teamwork. Furthermore, workgroups are the second area that can demonstrate the practical application of English studies.

Teaching Composition as a Tool to Develop Critical Thinking

Another factor that is crucial in a wide range of professional contexts is critical thinking. Critical thinking is a central component in a freshman composition class.

“Writing serves learning uniquely because writing as process-and-product possesses a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies. Although the notion is clearly debatable, it is scarcely a private belief. Some of the most distinguished contemporary psychologists have at least implied such a role for writing as heuristic” (Emig 331).

In “Writing as a Mode of Learning”, Janet Emig states that it can be debatable whether the processes of writing facilitates learning as a whole. Almost any composition instructor, however, would answer the question yes. Dr. Philip Gaines, Director of Composition and Rhetoric for Montana State University, responds to this question by saying, “[In freshmen comp classes] I talk about the importance of writing to the class, not in just instrumental terms. ‘There are certain things you will learn about when you learn writing that you won’t learn in any other way. You’ll learn how to think, you’ll learn how to analyze, you’ll learn to persuade. Your cognition will change; your way of dealing with text will change’” (Gaines). If, indeed, freshman composition is the beginning of students’ exposure to critical thinking, what are the critical components that will enhance this skill and how do instructors teach it? Beginning students are often overwhelmed by the assignment of writing a paper. They are concerned not only with what and how they will write but with meeting the instructor’s expectations as well. In teaching the tools of critical thinking, instructors need to break down the processes involved and present them in a manageable way.

At Montana State University the approach to teaching these critical thinking skills is to structure the class around four major papers. The instructor chooses the

texts, topics, and timeline for completing the assignments. The objective is for the students to build on their collective knowledge as the semester progresses. With the use of the workgroup models previously discussed, students learn to make the critical thinking process manageable. Critical thinking and analysis is an important component not only in composition courses. Whether putting together a soil analysis for civil engineering, analyzing demographic and pschyographic data for the business department, or analyzing the required nutrients and crop rotation for agriculture, critical thinking is imperative to many fields. Critical thinking is the third way to make the connection between English studies and university objectives.

Composition and Real World Results

I have often heard undergraduates say, "When I tell my friends that I am majoring in English, they say 'Oh, you're majoring in unemployment.'" In my former life, as a Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Planning, I often *looked* for majors in English, not marketing or communications. I knew they could analyze texts and projects; they could write and they could proofread. These were skills that, for many others, took years to develop. I could teach the requirements for the job, but there was a "quality" of thought process with English majors that I could not teach. Those who had majored in English could work well with others; they possessed strong critical thinking skills; and, perhaps more importantly, they were "independent" thinkers. If there was something that didn't make sense or if they saw a different way to approach the project, they spoke up and presented an alternative

solution. Due to the increased respect for the theoretical aspects of writing, composition is gaining more standing in the academic world. Instead of being considered a "skill", there are valid arguments and specific instances and applications for support of the discipline as an intellectual pursuit. I asked both Dr. Gaines and Ms. Kittrell what they thought the position of the discipline was in the academe and they had some interesting things to say.

Dr. Gaines: "It is fairly predictable that in your average English department that combines English Literature and Composition and Rhetoric, composition, rhetoric and language studies is perceived, by the literature area as being less important. One of the reasons being that it is perceived as focusing on a skill or activity as opposed to a body of knowledge, so this traditional hierarchical view comes from the notion that English literature is where the richness of the content is, and what comp and rhetoric instructors do is teach students to write. Part of that tradition goes back to the early 1900s when literature professors had to teach composition whether they wanted to or not. It is only since the 1970s that there has been a PhD program in Composition and Rhetoric."

Edis Kittrell: "Writing intensive classes are beginning to be valued to a much greater extent... I do think it is becoming more and more respected, as a discipline."

Composition and rhetoric's ability to connect with other curriculums through the "Writing Across Curriculums" program, its ability to prepare students for writing and communications responsibilities after their education, and business executives increasing understanding of students' overall skills, make studies in composition and

rhetoric the fourth way to comprehend the practical application of English. Through a firm background in freshman composition and the ability it teaches students to read and analyze text and then respond to that text in a well-written manner, the department will be able to communicate “quantifiable” results to the university. Instead of being viewed as a “support” discipline, English will continue to be at the center of a student’s educational journey. Additionally, as our pedagogical approach to writing continues to evolve and “Writing teachers are no longer expected to be at the center of the writing classroom [but] are learning instead to stand supportively to the side and offer their students opportunities to grow and learn” (Bishop 144), we will communicate to the students the importance of writing and English studies. Furthermore, as the students grow and expand their ability to think, communicate, and be successful, regardless of their degree path, the university, English departments and students will all connect with and fulfill their own expectations.

CHAPTER 5

COMMUNICATING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COMPOSITION AND
RHETORIC, UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS

English departments may continue to be asked to validate the results of their program to their universities, and, as a result, composition courses will grow in significance. If we can clearly state results and meet expectations, what are the implications on the current shift in emphasis away from English towards more corporate-based disciplines? Is Jeffery Hart old-fashioned and outdated when he talks about a "world citizen"? Perhaps it is a matter of communication between English departments and their respective universities. We should be doing a better job of conveying the importance of English studies in meeting the goals of students and the university alike. English can contribute to creating the student outlined in MSU's mission statement. We can also be an integral part of a student's success in his/her career. Perhaps it is a matter of different discourses not different objectives. If we look at the clearly stated mission of Montana State University can we show how English meets all of its parameters and helps the university meet its objectives and produce its "product"?

The following is a memo regarding revision of MSU's mission statement. The Long-Range Planning Committee writes it to then President Mike Malone. Titled "Revisiting the Mission Statement" it was released on May 13, 1997.

The memo outlines MSU's mission as follows:

" The 1994 document defines the mission of Montana State University as "...education, broadly defined to encompass teaching, research, and creative activities, and outreach."
The following are the italicized statements defining the mission:

Teaching: "to develop and graduate a student population with a sound knowledge base in their chosen disciplines; with well-developed skills in oral, written, and interpersonal communications and in critical, analytical, and creative thinking; with multicultural and global awareness; and with character traits such as leadership, responsibility, honesty, objectivity, and collegiality."

Basic and applied research and creative activities: "To produce a body of basic and applied research and creative works that advances knowledge in the sciences, liberal and creative arts, and professions; that complements the University's educational mandates; and that meets the social, cultural, and economic needs of Montana, the region, and the nation."

Outreach: "To provide outreach to citizens throughout Montana that draws upon the University's teaching and research strengths and support program areas; and to form effective and creative partnerships with business, government, educational and service organization to enhance the development and utilization of the state's human, economic, and natural resources."

How can these written goals be successfully met without English studies and composition and rhetoric? Indeed how can they be met without the humanities? Perhaps the humanities need to be more proactive in explaining their contribution more thoroughly. To accomplish this, the humanities may need to research and

quantify what areas of commerce, agriculture, or engineering we contribute to. Perhaps we need to learn a “new” language that allows us to not only speak the language of Stevens and Shakespeare or write the most persuasive argument, but also the language of other departments as well. The discourse should become inclusive instead of exclusive and we should also learn to better explain to students how English applies in terms of employment.

The debate on the value of English studies and the humanities within the university system will continue. Consequently, it will be incumbent on professionals in those disciplines to make a case that identifies the value in terms that the public and university administrators can understand and believe. Making the connections between the universities’ mission statement and objectives, the students’ expectations, and the role that English studies and composition and rhetoric play in meeting those objectives – composition is the cornerstone of a freshman’s ability to learn to write across curriculums, it can facilitate collaborative learning, and it instructs students in how to begin to think critically – will continue to be vital to the humanities. No longer can the humanities exist in an “ivory tower” creating “knowledge for knowledge’s sake” without making the connection to the university, students, and their goals.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS

Interview Questions with Dr. Phil Gaines

1. What is the function or value of oral reading in class? What extent do you use it and why? What unique thing does it accomplish?

There are several reasons to use reading out loud. A good reader can make the material come alive. It can foreground the discussion, to impact the text, to spotlight and empower the text, or when I think a piece will be more effective. Students' benefit from reading their work out loud for several reasons too; to see where the prose isn't working and to find typos.
2. What do you consider your strength of personality as it relates to teaching?

Being articulate, having a sense of humor, being able to connect and engage with the students and keep them interested.
3. What is your most effective skill / tool in teaching?

Talking with them one on one, helping students to see the issues of real importance and getting to the heart of something. Same thing in the classroom. Helping students "get it", finding powerful learning moments.
4. How did you develop you unique strengths? How do you use them?

Comes from personality, natural abilities. I apply the kind of Socratic method I use for myself. I transfer my way of thinking [about a text or subject] to the students. [Use your natural talents] when people try to use techniques that they are not good at, in the classroom, the manual may say this is what to do or tradition may say this is the thing to do, but if you aren't good at it then it weakens your teaching. The teaching is the strongest when you use your natural talents. You need to have a variety of approaches but you need to weight the areas where you are most effective.
5. What is the position of your discipline (immediate importance) in academia?

It is fairly predictable that in your average English Department, that combines English Lit and Comp and Rhet, that composition, rhetoric and language studies is perceived, by the literature area as being less important. One of the reasons being that it is perceived as focusing on a skill or activity as opposed to a body of knowledge, so this traditional hierarchical view comes from the notion that English literature is where the richness of the content is and what comp and rhet people do is teach students to write. Part of that tradition goes back to the early 1900s when literature professors had to teach composition whether they wanted to or not. It is only since the 1970s that there has been a PhD program in Composition and Rhetoric.

6. How do you communicate its importance (sense of relevancy) to your class?
 [In freshmen comp classes] talk about the importance of writing to the class, not in just instrumental terms. There are certain things you will learn about when you learn writing that you won't learn in any other way. You'll learn how to think, you'll learn how to analyze, you'll learn to persuade. Your cognition will change; your way of dealing with text will change.
7. Are there particular / specific strategies or approaches that are suggested by content?
 Yes, certainly. The extreme case ... graduate Syntax courses, 95% lecture because they are very detailed and theoretical; freshman comp demands discussion, exploration, investigation by students.
8. What have you discovered that doesn't work and why?
 For me, what do I avoid doing ... lecturing in a course that it isn't called for. Going from a fruitful discussion to a mini-lecture ... "okay, we've had this successful discussion now let's recap it." Students often withdraw from discussion. Also, unstructured group work for first year students ... "all right, get into groups and discuss."
9. What is your favorite class structure and why?
 Varies. Teacher in front with overhead and class as audience. Other classes, pairs present to group (U-shape); groups do the presenting.
10. How much of a role do students play in shaping the curriculum?
 Not much, design of course and direction of course is not applicable. Lower division students don't have the experience and ability and it is unfair to expect them to. Upper division has more input but even in graduate classes, I hear students say, "You give structure to the class ... don't leave that up to us. Within that structure allow us to pursue our interests."
11. How tentative is your syllabus?
 Always short ... I don't make very many commitments. Even in grammar and linguistics classes the pace can vary greatly. I give test dates and can generally stick to them. In writing courses I don't commitment too much.
12. How do you choose your curriculum? How do you modify curriculum and style to fit your audience?
 Curriculum is department wide...lesson plan is more applicable. Curriculum is typically designed by professors and departments ... How do I choose my course work? For language classes I go through core areas and make sure I cover them. In a writing class, generally, I want them to do a lot of reading of interesting and challenging texts, analyze those texts and then to respond in a meaningful way. Essential things for writing courses are reading, discussion

