



Writing Across the Curriculum Program

Writing Across the Curriculum Community of Practice (WAC-CoP)

November 10, 2015

How to Motivate Students To Get Help With Their Writing

Guest Speaker: Meghan Aubé, Writing Services Program Leader, Writing Centre

Objectives of the WAC-CoP: -to connect people across the university that are involved in teaching writing in the sciences; -to facilitate sharing of experiences, challenges, ideas and best practices in the teaching and learning of writing in the sciences in an informal, risk-free environment.

- WAC-CoP participants are encouraged to share their ideas for future sessions (e.g. peer review of writing assignment design, techniques for peer review, etc.)

This month's CoP:

Meghan presented the on-campus services offered to help students with their writing. These include: the Writing Centre (online appointments www.ubcca.mywconline.com), process and often academic support through referrals; and Academic English Support, which is available to students that self-identify as having English as an additional language. Most services are housed in the Chapman Learning Commons (3rd floor of the I.K. Barber Learning Centre), free, peer-based and also provide support to graduate students. See her presentation slides at:

http://sciencewritingresources.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/11/Aube_WAC_CoP_Using_Writing-Support.pdf

A main theme of Meghan's presentation was to make asking for help a positive experience. She suggested that including information on writing support in the syllabus removes the stigma from asking for help. Students that are advised to seek help to clarify the presentation of their good ideas, feel encouraged rather than forced to seek help. Having students share their experiences with the writing process and getting help can encourage their peers to seek assistance.

- WAC Note: The literature supports a link between a student's feelings about their capability to complete specific tasks (self-efficacy) and their motivation to seek help.
 - Linnenbrink, E. A., & Pintrich, P. R. (2003). The role of self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement and learning in the classroom. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 19, 119-137.

Questions posed to Meghan:

How do you select tutors for the Writing Centre?



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- Tutors have to be good writers, but some of the best tutors are those that have struggled to get their grades up and have developed empathy for those struggling with writing.

How do you help students with grammatical errors when they come with something due tomorrow or next week?

- Tutors help students with grammatical errors by coaching them through the process of finding and correcting their own errors. The tutor will read a few paragraphs and show the patterns of error to the student, modelling how to correct the errors. They will then have the student work through the next paragraph to find the errors and correct them. If a student is struggling with specific grammar issues, they will sometimes do grammar lessons for the student (e.g. article use or tenses).

Techniques/resources from CoP attendees

- Provide students with a handout on the characteristics of good **scientific** writing (Example: *10 characteristics of scientific writing*, The University Library, University of Leeds. It can be downloaded at https://library.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/341/writing_skills.)
- Engage students in individual work where they are accountable to each other for completing the work, instead of group projects. (Example: Students have an assignment checklist, which is shared with a peer. Students discuss their experiences with the process together.)
- Include repetition in the assignment or course, so students have the opportunity to revise and are motivated to seek assistance.
- Contact Meghan to see if the Writing Centre could set up group tutoring in a facilitated space (i.e., multiple tutors in a room working with a group of students from the same course).
- Provide examples of high quality work, so that students are aware of the level of writing expected for the course.

Contact Information

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