

Comment

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I find it useful to have Toby Fulwiler's detailed description of the Michigan Tech program's aims and procedures. I find Elaine P. Maimon's article helpful, also, because it addresses some of the knotty problems that any WPA will face in trying to establish writing across the curriculum in an undergraduate program.

Maimon makes the excellent point, for example, that the first step is to work with one's own composition staff, not only to develop a philosophy of teaching composition, necessary in any case, but especially to develop a philosophy consistent with an interdisciplinary endeavor. That's vital. No writing-across-the-curriculum program can exist without it. Teachers of writing have to articulate why they are teaching writing, how writing is linked to learning, how people learn to improve writing, and what classroom methods are effective. Only then can they spread the word to others and develop a coherent approach college wide so that students will not be forced to jump from one philosophy to another—from free writing in one course to the *Harbrace College Handbook* in another. In addition, the very discussion of the issues elicits practical procedures for teaching composition and for training faculty. Maimon's article alerts us to problems that may arise in this effort and contains many practical suggestions for solving them.

Fulwiler's suggestions are equally practical but with a different emphasis. It is especially comforting to read about a well-thought-out program that engages faculty in a school substantially larger than Beaver College, where Maimon has established her program. In reading Fulwiler's essay, however, I did find myself asking a number of questions that I would ask of any program of this sort. For example, if an institution does not *require* upper-division, specialized writing courses, how many students actually take them? Is remediation encompassed within the one-year composition course, accomplished through tutoring, or offered in some other, lower-level course? More important, what sanctions does the institution apply to make writing across the curriculum succeed? This last question is one every WPA who is developing such a program should ask. Fulwiler says that humanities courses at Michigan Tech are limited to 35 to "permit" instructors to assign writing. This is admirable. But *do* instructors assign writing? *All* of them? Is giving writing assignments enforced in any way, or just recommended?

I raise these questions because they lead to what I think is the crucial issue in developing writing-across-the-curriculum programs, and in the whole attempt to place writing at the core of undergraduate education in every field. In establishing a program of this sort, how committed is the institution as a whole to the writing needs of the students? How much is the institution willing to risk to ensure that those needs are met?

This is clearly a political issue, one that every WPA must consider carefully, and

that inevitably, therefore, the Council of Writing Program Administrators must consider too. Where power resides in faculty decisions at the department level, as it does at most institutions, are there any rewards for faculty who participate fully in a college-wide program at the expense—inevitably—of fuller participation in professional work within their own discipline? Does service to the cause of writing—as we all know, a time-consuming and energy-consuming service—count in the battle for tenure and promotion?

I am aware that the issue I am raising here goes beyond the immediate concerns of these articles, and my point is not to criticize them for not dealing with it. My point is that once we have decided what we want to do in this area and how to go about doing it, our job is far from finished. The success of every practical suggestion for college-wide writing programs depends absolutely on how the question of rewards for good work in such curriculum-wide programs is faced and resolved.