

Pedagogical Memory: Writing, Mapping, Translating

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ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes retrospective accounts of writing instruction gleaned from interviews with almost a hundred juniors and seniors at a large research university. Given the difficulties with tracking the “transfer” of knowledge in writing studies, the authors propose “pedagogical memory” as an alternative interpretive framework for making sense of students’ experiences with college writing across the undergraduate years. Drawing on memory theory, the authors take note of “narration” or disconnection in student accounts, the student-interviewee’s construction of a relationship to the writing teacher as an addressee, and the tenor of students’ emotional dispositions as significant features of memory-talk in the interviews. Gaps between program expectations for continuity and student accounts lead the authors to recommend helping students prepare to translate discourses about writing as they move from one academic site to another. Further, the study suggests the value of ongoing interview projects conducted by WPAs outside the strictures of institutionally mandated assessment. Such a practice would cultivate the habit of retrospection in students and generate more detailed understanding of the ways students make maps of their own learning.

The explosion of studies about transfer—the movement (or not) of writing knowledge and ability across settings and time—is at once exhilarating and sobering.¹ The exhilaration comes from the intensity and seriousness with which writing scholars are pursuing answers to the most difficult question for the profession—how and when does writing instruction matter to students in the long run? The results are for the most part sobering.² David Smit’s 2004 *The End of Composition Studies* presents the most pessimistic view: very little can be carried forward from first-year writing, he argues. Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle confirm this view even more starkly

in 2007: “We are not arguing that transfer of writing knowledge cannot happen; rather . . . that ‘far transfer’ is difficult and that most current incarnations of FYC do not teach for it as explicitly as is necessary” (557).³ The results of a four-year study at one the nation’s most competitive colleges lead Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz to acknowledge that “even with the best pedagogy, some students make few gains with their writing” (145).

The cloudy picture painted by these studies has not gone uncontested. Libby Miles and her colleagues at the University of Rhode Island rapidly took issue with Downs and Wardle, questioning the over-emphasis on first-year composition as the research unit of analysis. A carefully conceived writing major provides these URI scholars with a “vertical” model of student writing in the university years. The fortunate students who matriculate there will without doubt step up through these courses under expert guidance. Students at other kinds of institutions and in other circumstances, however, take more wandering paths, as Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis, Lee Ann Carroll, Lucille McCarthy, Marilyn Sternglass, and most recently, Anne Beaufort (*College Writing*) with her single subject, Tim, have shown. Particularly at large institutions without writing-studies-based control of writing courses in content areas, students certainly take circuitous writing journeys, some even falling off the map.

In many, perhaps most, scenes of higher education, students have to chart their own ways with writing. As Kathleen Blake Yancey has suggested, they must produce mental maps of writing knowledge. The range of research emphases in recent transfer scholarship gives an indication of the bridges, or barriers, students face in charting their courses: from high school to college composition (Bawarshi and Reiff), from humanities-oriented composition to other disciplines (Bergmann and Zepernick; Carter), from school to community (Flower), and on to the workplace (Beaufort, *Real World*). The bright spots in transfer research capture the ways some students respond to these writing challenges, creatively or at least productively reinventing their writerly personae (Fishman et al.; Sommers and Saltz).

That others are less successful is no wonder, given the complexity of twenty-first century communications and the lack of agreement among writing scholars about how best to frame, study, and teach them.⁴ In her impressive effort to bring current research findings together, Beaufort admits, finally, that “there are too many puzzle pieces on the table” (*College Writing* 26). Indeed. Pondering the range of problems taken up by this research quickly transmogrifies a two-dimensional puzzle into a multi-dimensional maze. In a body of research with emphases ranging from epistemological development and fine-grained discursive analysis (Haswell, “Documenting Improvement”) to identity-formation (Sommers and Saltz)

to genre studies (Bawarshi and Reiff) and performativity (Fishman et al.), it is no surprise that generalized guides to practice are far less common than the narrative richness of case studies.⁵ If the field of writing is a puzzle for its professionals, how much more likely is it to appear so from the student perspective?⁶ The complexity itself becomes the shared insight: almost all scholars in this area acknowledge the difficulty of showing definitively that writing knowledge and ability transfer across the years and the curriculum in terms recognizable from within the discipline of writing studies. Some have even been led to agree with David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon that “Whether transfer occurs is too bald a question” (“Transfer of Learning” 5).

This conclusion in fact informs what follows here: an analysis of retrospective accounts of almost a hundred student writers in their junior and senior years at a large research university. Over a period of three years, the authors (a faculty member serving as cross-campus writing consultant, a full-time assistant writing coordinator, and two graduate students) conducted interviews with students from a wide range of majors as they were finishing a general education upper-division writing requirement. Located in a free-standing consultation unit, we are all writing teachers and scholars but had the advantage in this situation of a point of inquiry outside a specific program with pressing assessment demands, or a classroom context, where the interview is conducted between a teacher and her own student. Our aim was to discover what students remembered of their early college writing instruction and to learn more about how they chart their own paths from first-year to discipline-based writing and beyond.

We began in 2003 with hour-long interviews of thirty-five students.⁷ Our initial findings confirmed that many students across the disciplines had internalized the idea of writing as a process and a mode of learning.⁸ Even the most successful, however, lacked fluency in basic writing terminology, failing to identify genres beyond the most basic (“research paper”) or to distinguish modes of development, such as summary and analysis.⁹ Students’ inability to produce what seemed to us rudimentary terms within domains of writing knowledge led us to conduct a second round of fifty-seven interviews in 2006.¹⁰ The idiosyncratic paths students narrated through high school, university, and in some cases workplace writing, and the significance of emotional dispositions in these accounts, stood out vividly, as did the gaps between our knowledge of the curricula under which they studied and their stories. Regardless of sound curricular plans and expert teaching, the sense made of writing by any one student, we conclude, takes shape in pedagogical memory.

PEDAGOGICAL MEMORY

The interview is well respected in writing studies as a means of retrieving information as an extractable content, and the debates about its reliability are well documented.¹¹ Attempts to pin down “transfer,” however, with its long duration, have given a renewed impetus to the conception of the interview as a memory-stimulating activity (Wardle 772). We can see this trajectory prefigured in Barbara Tomlinson’s fascinating early study of retrospective accounts of professional writers: “Talking About the Composing Process.” Grounded in the criterion of “veracity,” Tomlinson’s comparison of writing memories of professional and student writers emphasizes their “limitations” (429). Warning that researchers can trust the truthfulness of neither professionals’ nor student writers’ accounts of their practice, she notes flaws, inaccuracies, exaggeration, forgetting, and even deception. But near the end, Tomlinson speculates that such accounts may be “telling us more than they can know” (436–37) and suggests that, through interpretation, “researchers take advantage of the rich, intriguing body of information provided by writers’ reports” of their experiences (442). Both she and Chris Anson, in “Talk About Writing,” draw our attention to the importance of writers’ representations of the writing process (Tomlinson 442; Anson 63).

The turn taken here, from information to representation, resonates with contemporary memory theory of interest to scholars in rhetoric and public memory studies. Ethnographers, psychoanalysts, historians, and cultural critics have shifted the metaphor of memory as a container of static content (i.e., something that can be “tapped”) to memory as a narrative constantly under construction within changing contexts (Alcorn; Bal; Nora; Phillips). These scholars emphasize the way the emotional charge around an event profoundly shapes (or impedes) its reconstruction. Remembering is an act of participation, a placing of oneself in a story in a particular way, or, as we will see, it gives evidence of the failure to create a narrative. This scholarly orientation makes particular sense applied to interviews in our field when the student is being asked to remember years of writing instruction rather than the more concrete and recent experience of creating a writing product. In the former case, it becomes apparent that, in large measure, the interview generates as much as retrieves knowledge. To designate this phenomenon, we have coined the term “pedagogical memory.”

Drawing on Mieke Bal’s phrase “cultural memory,” we describe a process of remembering writing not tied to a single writing class or written product and shaped, but not wholly determined by, the discourses and strictures of institutional assessment. Pedagogical memory comes from individual students, but like cultural memory in Bal’s sense it is produced from a broadly

shared, collective experience: in our case, college writing instruction. The student writer does not merely bear a pedagogical memory available for recall but creates it in the presence of an addressee—in this case, interviewers with whom the student has less entanglement than a classroom teacher or portfolio assessor. We and the students saw our relationship as low-stakes; we took the students at their words and learned a good deal from them about the gap between our assumptions about writing across the years and their experiences. This outcome gives the term “pedagogical” a dual sense: they are memories of learning in school but also memories that should teach writing teachers and administrators who elicit them.

Although we’ve just claimed to be disinterested listeners, that would of course be impossible. Working from a unit dedicated to the support of campus-wide writing, especially beyond the first year, we questioned the students against a background hope that there is a meaningful relationship, if not an airtight fit, between earlier and later experiences in writing classes at our university. At the level of individual learning, we work (loosely) within the discourse of development as it has been elaborated for writing studies, most recently and persuasively by Christopher Thaiss and Terry Zawacki. In the next section we lay out those assumptions and the interpretive framework we draw from them before proceeding to the students’ retrospective accounts.

FROM FYC TO WID

At UCI, all students are required to take one of several dozen approved upper-division writing courses. All such courses must meet minimal requirements of a process orientation and a minimum number of pages, but beyond these minimums, the courses vary widely. Most students take the course in their major, but approaches vary from content with writing added, to technical writing, to research methods. In biology, for example, writing is combined with laboratory methods; in history, upper-division writing serves as a capstone course with an independent research paper. Students from across the disciplines (including substantial numbers of economics and computer science majors) opt for a generic humanities-oriented writing course. Given such variation, perhaps it is not surprising that many students in our study felt that their lower- and upper-level writing classes did not seem very meaningfully related to one another. One way students described this gap relates to those upper-division courses in which content drives the course. In these cases, students’ memories of discontinuity had less to do with disciplinary knowledge than with absence of writing instruction. When asked about this, one student replied without hesitation, “[The

“W” course] didn’t feel like a writing class at all. No, it was a history class” (Connor). Others reported that their upper-division course seemed like any other class in the major but with writing tacked on to it. “It just seems like a writing attachment,” another history major explained. “It just amazes me that so many points [for our final grade are on the paper], but we really don’t talk about [writing] in the class” (Steve).

A recent study by Linda Bergmann and Janet Zepernick shows student writers impeded by their perception of the disciplinary gap between humanities and the other disciplines.¹² We found such perceptions in our student accounts as well. One social science student explained the difference in terms of ethos: “The kind of writing we do in psychology is very detached . . . you have to leave out all of your feelings [and] opinions . . . Writing in the social sciences is much more dry, but there is less subjectivity in it. . . . With the writing I’m doing now [in my major classes], the upper-division writing class has helped me more. . . . [FYC] did not really transfer to my major” (Shawna). Other students echoed this view: “Definitely the format [in my major] is odd when you first come across it. That is really weird, but now I’ve got it down . . . [the] language that you use is very ‘dry’ and straight to the point and it is not like descriptive writing. It is very different from Humanities, and that was hard to learn” (Leah). An engineering student summarized the disconnect more succinctly in his assessment that first-year writing was “basically more of an English class” (Juan). But the distance between FYC and discipline-based writing—an evidentiary fact of our university’s writing scene—was not described as an unbridgeable gap or an inevitable disadvantage by all the interviewees. An Asian American studies major narrated her experience in terms of changing values in the movement across disciplines: “I used to think good writing is very descriptive and has these metaphors and is very beautiful, but . . . now I’m reading social critiques and critical writing . . . political writing. I think making a good argument is good writing now” (Samantha). This student articulated disciplinary difference for herself in terms we may not have predicted but in a language we recognize and value.

In the groupings below, we attend to students’ fluency—the production of *a* language, if not *our* language, to describe writing instruction over the years—and on their ability (or willingness) to construct a narrative. Some students could speak the language of genres, modes of development, rhetorical stances, and styles of argument. They mentioned research (the most common category), ad analyses, experience-based writing, journals, essays, lab reports, music reviews, synopses, and a whole range of business related forms. Others insisted on their own terms. But still others seemed stalled, hardly able to find a language at all for their years of writing classes. If a

practice has become habitual, the ability enabling it dwells in the realm of the tacit (Polanyi), but what we observed here in the “stalled” students is a different phenomenon. It is the inability to construct a model of learning to write (Anson). In some cases, it may be that the emotional aura surrounding the experience is negative enough that the memory cannot become narratized; the story comes out in dissociated, fragmented, or disconnected parts—not really as a story at all. Like “traumatic (non)memory” of which Bal and other memory theorists write, the object of memory becomes “a solitary event . . . inflexible and invariable” (Bal x) for students who struggle to make sense of past writing classes in the present.

DEVELOPMENT: DISPOSITIONS AND AUTHORITY

Christopher Thaiss and Terry Zawacki’s *Engaged Writers, Dynamic Disciplines* helps us to make sense of a range of student attitudes, abilities, and sometimes dramatically different constructions of what constitutes writing in university settings. From their study of faculty and undergraduates across disciplines at George Mason, Thaiss and Zawacki posit a flexible and non-teleological taxonomy of stances toward writing with a somewhat stronger emphasis on student dispositions than on the epistemological models from which they draw. They identified students who, early in their college years, grasped an authority-based knowledge of “generic academic” rules and confirmed that a segment of these students never changed their attitude. Others in their sample did go on to more advanced stages: radical relativism (every writing situation is different) and, the most advanced, an ability to adapt previous practices to the diverse contexts required by discipline specific writing demands—a facility parallel to what Wardle might envision as a maximized capacity to generalize.

Thaiss and Zawacki’s approach intersects with the insights of cultural memory theory in two significant ways: it addresses (1) interpersonal and (2) emotional contexts for learning and memory. Regarding the first point of intersection: a student’s reliance on generalized rules is based in a submissive relation to authority. The teacher is construed as the writing authority, rather than as an interlocutor in a pedagogical relationship, whereas students in other stances—relativist and adaptive—work intellectually in relation to others. Similarly, cultural memory develops most fruitfully in the presence of an addressee: it comes out as a story of relationship, a story told to a responsive auditor as in the interview. Concerning the second point of intersection, emotional dispositions track in parallel fashion: fear, detachment, or indifference mark traumatized memories and authority-based learning, whereas passion—including passionate resistance—high and low color, and warmth come through in integrated narratives (Bal x).

We bring together these terms to construct a framework for making sense of the rich variety of memory-talk in student interviews, attending to three elements: fluency, continuity or the emergence of a narrative of learning; a relation to a writing teacher as an addressee; and, the tenor of emotional dispositions. These features don't sort out in neatly parallel bundles. In the analysis below, we group students intuitively into loosely related sets with emphasis at times on one or another of these elements and their combinations. We attempt not to discredit or judge students based on the stories told in these brief encounters but seek to uncover points of departure: gaps between our own sometimes implicit narratives and expectations, and the students' understanding of their experiences. We are listening here for the accommodations students have made to the complex demands of university writing, expressed through acts of remembering or forgetting.

For the students in the first group we describe below, memory was difficult to bring forward, and writing instruction was remembered in the absence of a teaching relationship. Articulate in their generation of metaphors for writing as pre-acquired or natural, these students declined to narrate, tending to remember learning to write as fixed in an indefinite past. Second, we group together students with active memories of writing as a process and more: their enthusiasm vividly colored accounts highlighting an independence and creativity that serves them well across contexts but sometimes has little to do with the teaching scene. A third group, with dispositions toward instrumentality and the safety of recognizable rules, remembered writing as grammar, a lowest common denominator of connection across the university years with an orientation toward teachers as authority figures. Finally, we present a few provocative examples of memory-in-the-making: students thinking through writing relationships during the interview itself.

WRITING MEMORIES WITHOUT TEACHERS

"Obviously, something has to connect, but I can't think of what.... I know something important went on...but I don't know" (Cindy). For this social sciences and international studies major, pedagogical memory did not come easily to mind. A substantial group of students in our study had difficulty explaining what, when, how, or why cognitive and practical connections existed among different writing courses despite their claims that their writing improved. A typical example of this phenomenon is the student who, when asked how she knew to do some writing task in her upper-division class, replied: "I don't know. I just do it" (Sandra). When asked about connections between courses, she replied, "I can't really think of them"; for

her, writing was mostly “re-learning some of the basic structural parts.” Or consider another student who explained, “I can’t recall specific concepts or specific things that I learned in the lower-division course except that I know it improved my writing somehow” (Miguel). The effect seemed clear enough to them—they learned at some moment in their schooling how to write competently across the curriculum—but how they got there remains mysterious.

When a junior biology major told us that first-year composition “just didn’t interest [him]” and was in fact “painful,” a memory studies approach would suggest that it is not surprising that he cannot track the pedagogical path from FYC to writing in biology. It becomes an article of faith (or a willingness to placate the writing teacher-interviewer) that “even though it’s a different genre, [lower-division] writing will still supplement my writing in biology.” Like others who reported learning in the absence of remembered instruction, Miguel “just kind of figure[ed] it out on [his] own” (Miguel). Perhaps never having been asked before to take a reflective stance on their acquisition of academic writing skills, these students neither generated narratives of their own nor took up our cues about connections between their various writing courses.

Rather than articulating specific previous experiences with writing instruction (or personal practice), these students took a more present-oriented stance in their comments. They acknowledged that they have developed as writers, but their current achievements as disciplinary writers came across as an accepted truth, valued more as present practice than as a source of retrospective reflection. When pressed, students attributed development to intangible factors, such as “exposure” and “common sense” rather than to direct instruction. The students in this group did not draw meaningful connections among different learning situations but described a sense of inevitability about their improvement—it just happened somehow. These students worked across different contexts and developed as writers without remembering being deliberately guided to retrieve specific skills or make specific pedagogical connections. For example, when asked how he learned to write, a literary journalism student remarked, “I never really questioned it” (Leor). We concluded from the relative success of the students in this group that writing improvement can occur without recalled affordances for learning in subsequent classes, that progressive or connective learning on some occasions occurs outside of cued knowledge retrieval.¹³ In terms of transfer, when it is successful, the skill is remembered but the transfer is forgotten.¹⁴ But we learned more from their comments about how resistances— affective responses produced by the difficulty of university writing—and the lack of continuity in writing instruction obscure memory

of its acquisition.¹⁵ Throughout, these students underestimated their own effort and active role in their education, as well as the value or effect of the direct instruction they received.

The figures students produced to represent writing without teachers clustered into recognizable themes common in the broader non-specialist cultural memory of learning. One such figure is learning by osmosis, or an effortless absorption of ideas. A social science student admitted that she wasn't sure exactly what "comes through" from class to class but remained certain that something did: "I'm a much better writer than I was in high school, and a much better writer than I was my freshman year. So I'm sure those things come through from the lower-division [course]" (Allison). An engineering student echoed this sentiment when he explained, "you just pick things up" (Tariq) by reading models, as though principles of writing need not be extrapolated and elaborated but are simply diffused throughout the learning situation.

Along the same lines of this biological metaphor is the common theme of learning by exposure, or educational development as accumulation. One student defended the first-year writing requirement stating, "it does help, maybe not directly though," citing "exposure" as the prime value of the course (Mingyu). Another offered an image of "build up" through exposure: for this chemistry student, knowing how to do certain writing tasks "just built up over the years" from high school to his major courses (Karen). Others described the seeming cumulative effect of visual exposure, such as the psychology major who explained that she learned how to outline because she "just kept seeing that [in the teacher's notes] and that helps you figure [it] out" (Hillary). Still other students conveyed a similar sense of an unknowing absorption of skills by describing their learning as occurring on unconscious or subconscious levels. When asked if he ever applied writing skills from one course to another, one BioSci major replied, "Not consciously. I'm sure it helped. But I don't remember consciously thinking, "oh, I learned this [before] and this will help here" (Miguel). A sociology student remarked about the possibility of carrying knowledge from lower- to upper-division writing: "I probably have—probably subconsciously" (Matthew).

A second theme among the interviews in which memory was difficult to bring forward derives from a perception of writing as a static, unchanging skill acquired once and for all and merely applied as needed throughout college. Many students referred to a kind of pre-existing ability to write—developed in high school for some, "naturally" occurring for others—but seemingly unaffected by college writing (see Carroll). Allison, for example, reports, "I don't know exactly what I learned about writing," "I've always been a good writer... people have always really liked my work." A sociology

major claimed, “I have pretty much have had my own format since high school” (Matthew), belying the unique demands of college writing in general and upper-level disciplinary writing specifically. A number of students echoed this sentiment, that they were somehow inoculated against “bad writing” before college and attributed improvements in their writing to having that basic foundation: “I kind of panicked on my first essay” [in college composition], admitted one chemistry major, “but I just wrote out the introduction, block, block, block, then conclusion. And I used that pretty much the rest of college. . . . So [first-year English] confirmed what I kind of already knew” (Josh).¹⁶ With these examples, we do not want to underestimate the value of good writing instruction before college, nor do we mean to downplay the influence of natural talent. Rather, we want to draw attention to the multiple ways that students explain their writing competence without reference to college instruction or mindful practice.

Two other kinds of comments conveyed a similar sense of mystery in the educational process, or in our term, a similar lack of pedagogical memory. Time and again, students remarked upon their inability to remember previous classes, some even to the point of frustration. Without such memories of earlier courses, texts, and assignments, students described their learning as spontaneous or random rather than sequenced, cued, or guided. When asked how she learned to write thesis statements, one student claimed, “It [just] happened. . . . You don’t really *learn* to do it” (Karen, emphasis added). Others suggested, along these same lines, that learning writing isn’t always about transfer so much as “doing”: “I think you just have to do it. I think it’s the fact of doing it” (Jacopo). Finally, the term “trial and error” was used by several students not to indicate active learning and cue retrieval but to portray the fortune of random insights and haphazard methods: “I did not get any direction from the TA. . . . I think I just kind of figured it out—trial and error” (Miguel).

PROCESS PERSISTS

Students in the group we’ve just described spoke about their writing histories without much energy; their affect tended to be flat or neutral, very unlike another group for whom the invitation to talk about writing unleashed considerable enthusiasm. These students talked easily about their writing processes. But like the students discussed above who did not interpret their writing development as rooted in specific instruction, for these students, process ability floated free, not tied to discipline or to school contexts, but grounded in the writer herself. Some, using our disciplinary language, reported engaging in pre-writing, drafting, and revision: tech-

niques they learned from their lower-level writing classes. When asked an open-ended question about their approach to writing, they referred to a range of strategies: cloud and visual diagrams, the use of arrows to organize ideas, brainstorming, and free-writing exercises. Even those who eschewed a formal process and instead preferred “just to start writing” spoke of composing as a process. For example, one senior history major explained that, instead of outlining, “[his] writing will come out and it’s pretty bad for two paragraphs or so and then it gets formulated at the end and I go back and switch and then fix the intro” (Connor). A cognitive sciences major describes a similarly recursive and process-oriented approach to her writing: “Usually what I do is I will write and I will read through it and then I will write some more and then I will read the whole thing over again, and then if I remember something that I haven’t put down, I will work it in. I have never written down an outline; I don’t know why. I am writing and revising the whole time” (Shawna). Though these students may not produce discrete drafts for revision, they still view their writings as works-in-progress rather than finished products. The statement of a junior English major eloquently conveyed this conception of writing: “Writing is finding your own thought by writing it out—I guess that’s a recursive definition . . . that it’s a process, as much as product” (Geoff). A social ecology student’s blunt statement rings equally true: “I usually try to get it right the first time, but it kills me because I know you can never get it right the first time” (Hannah).

When asked about what they do when they’re stuck, student writers spoke of a wide range of strategies, from conducting more research and reading to talking with other students to breathing deeply, watching TV, napping, and exercising. Their comments suggest an understanding that impediments to writing are varied and require different responses. They recognize the role of subject knowledge (Beaufort, *College Writing*; Geisler) when they mention that on occasion additional information gathering is in order. One history major declared: “I definitely think further research enables us to get past those blocks” (Brendan). The intricate link between knowledge and audience or interlocutor comes through as a cognitive sciences major explained: “I usually can tell people what’s in my mind, but when I sit in front of the computer, and just [think] it won’t do the work and I know exactly what it is, so if I can tell somebody, then I can remember what I said, and then I can go back and write it” (Shawna). Or sometimes the problem is simply mental exhaustion or information overload, a condition best overcome with diversions, as one biology major explained: “I’ll minimize the screen and play a game or something. Just try to clear my mind, don’t think about it. And then I’ll go back and I’ll reread the

prompt, or reread the goal or the objective and try to find a new angle that I could talk about” (Keith).

These students’ reflections about their writing processes and strategies echo a well-accepted position in writing studies: the process of writing leads to the construction of knowledge. A history major explained with enthusiasm: “But then, what I do find is when I’m writing, about half-way through, I have the argument, whereas I may not have the argument at the beginning, but I don’t really care—I’m writing. When I’m mid-way through, I’m like, Oh, I just made the connection! Now I know why this paper makes sense” (Connor). An engineering major likewise reflected on the relationship between writing and content knowledge: “If you don’t understand it, it’s hard to write it, so in order to write it, you have to kind of think about it and understand it. So it forces you to sit there, and you kind of catch the parts that you don’t understand as much because those are the ones where you’re stuck, trying to finish the sentences” (Lisa). Another engineering major reflected on his growing sense that writing is a mode of inquiry and an exercise in critical thinking and ethical decision making: “The writing courses helped me a lot because I think more now. Because when I look at something I will analyze, I will take sides, I will put myself in the other person’s shoes, and then think, ‘Am I doing the right thing?’ So then writing helped me in that aspect, as in I could critically think more. And then I learned to ask questions instead of being very stubborn and thinking, ‘This is how it is and I know more’” (Jon). Notable in this student’s account are his concern for the ethics of rhetorical positioning growing out of his development from an earlier stance of unimpeachable authority to an awareness of situation knowledge and its moral implications.

The interview context seemed to enable some students to review past moments of active reflection and to continue the process of developing a metacritical stance on their identities as writers. Take, for example, the engineering major who said, “I think every time I sat down to write a paper, I was thinking about what I learned the last time I sat down to write a paper” (Josh), or the economics student who praised composition as “the stepping stone that allowed me to go over into upper-division writing (William). Like Sommers and Saltz (128–29), we were surprised by the passion with which some students spoke of their accomplishments as writers at college. A psychology and social behavior major was “amazed . . . that I could produce writing so different from my everyday speaking style. . . . I didn’t know I had it in me” (Edward). A literary journalism major reported a moment when, working with a demanding upper-division teacher, he came to adopt the stance of writer: “It finally hit home. It’s not just writing. It’s *my* writing. . . . What my teachers are seeing now is not just words, but me

behind the words and that really hit home” (Andrew). The student refers here not to the epistemological insight that knowledge is dependent on the observer but to a profound sense of personal responsibility for his writing he gained from the interaction with his challenging teacher.

In fact, a majority of the students we interviewed were able to recall specific moments of instruction or examples of techniques from lower-division writing they continued to find helpful. Some students, for example, reported the reappearance of genres or modes of development in later writing courses. The most commonly cited genre of writing was “writing about research” (the focus of the final course of the composition sequence). Students’ ability to recall research writing as an element of their lower-division writing courses would suggest they have been called upon to recognize and produce such work in courses beyond the lower division. Indeed, almost all the students we spoke with took an upper-division writing course with a research component. In addition to the students who identified the research paper as an especially common genre, a smaller number also indicated the ability to extract modes of development from the lower-division writing course and apply them in their upper-division coursework. One biological sciences student, for example, was able to translate his experiences from lower- to upper-division, indicating that while his lower-division class asked him to look at “pictures and movies” and his upper division Bio lab involves “looking at numbers and graphs.” The writing in both courses pointed toward what he calls “the same purpose.” That is, they both required him to, as he said, “use these given numbers or pictures to interpret something” (Wen). What is so promising about this student’s comment is that it shows his ability to abstract analysis and evaluation as transferable modes of development and recognize their applicability in contrastive settings.

FROM GENERAL RULES TO BRIDGE BUILDING

Despite these heartening accounts, a significant subgroup of our sample recalled knowledge of “grammar” as the most transferable element of their lower-division writing instruction (Amy, David, Justin, Kristin, Lan, Lauren, Pete). By “grammar,” they mean conventions of standard written academic English, including usage, syntax, documentation style, punctuation, spelling, and so on. Consider, for example, the comments of a biological sciences student who stated, “humanities core helped me in terms of writing. Like how to formulate my sentences and things like that” (Kristin). More reductively, other students identified grammatical correctness as one of the primary elements of good writing (Cindy, Hillary, Jan, Jennifer, Lan, Lauren, Matthew, Nandini, Pete). Some went on to complicate this defini-

tion, but most in this group provided a much flatter response to the question of what constitutes good writing such as the psychology student who replied with a single word: “grammar” (Hillary). At UCI, neither first-year composition courses, in which the curriculum is tightly controlled, nor upper-division writing, despite the variety of approaches across campus, concentrate on grammatical theory, conventions of usage, editing, or error correction. Thus the memories generated by this substantial subset of students exaggerate the significance of the “general rules” level of writing. The memory work here seems to kick in at the lowest common denominator of relationship across writing situations.

Of course students’ different levels of technical competence come into play in the construction of such memories, as do individual teachers’ emphases as they discuss writing in the classroom. But given the slightly above-average performance of the students in our sample, we may be hearing in their reversion to general rules a measure of the difficulty in constructing a story of writing that puts FYC in relation to later courses. Another explanation for deference to general rules, or “grammar,” in the interviews may be the absence of a common, widely accepted set of terms for discussing writing (Yancey). As one student explained: “Obviously they don’t say this is what you learned [in first-year comp], so this is what you’re going to apply in this class, but I think a lot of it was very implicit (Pete). This student’s comment is especially revealing given what research tells us about the inadequacy of such “implicit” instruction for providing a context conducive to transfer (Beaufort, *Real World*; Perkins and Salomon, “Transfer of Learning”; Tuhomi-Grom and Engeström; Wardle). Similarly, the emphasis on context in writing and educational research suggests that a student who may produce successful analysis or persuasion in the context of class may not be able to recall specialized terminology in an interview some months or years later. And yet the intensity of interest in our field in “transfer,” our own interest here in pedagogical memory, and the national conversation about the value of higher education suggest the importance of considering writing students both as competent performers and as reflective life-long learners, capable of shaping articulate and usable accounts of their learning.

While some students saw “grammar” as a commonality binding writing courses, for others, a disciplinary gap between humanities and the rest of the university produced a profound sense of disconnection. Students moving from humanities-based lower-division courses to other disciplines were the most likely to offer such accounts, a phenomenon Bergmann and Zepernick have well documented in two other institutional contexts. Stephanie, for example, a psychology and social science major, said “All my other

classes . . . I feel like the papers they ask for are completely different than first-year writing . . . It just seemed totally different.” Or, as a mechanical engineering major observed, “There’s no expression in technical writing,” much less “social context and human spirit” (Justin). Indeed for some making this move, the perceived differences constituted an impassible barrier: “I did [think about my lower-division writing course when I was taking my discipline’s writing requirement], but they’re not alike so it was hard to apply anything. The whole time I was writing, I was like, ‘I wish this wasn’t so dry. Just wishing it was more like humanities” (Mingyu). These students refer to legitimate disciplinary differences in purpose, style, and aim, but they, like Bergmann and Zepernick’s informants, see themselves as strongly subjected to the authority of their disciplines. Their students have a “powerful—though often inchoate—rhetorical awareness” about their writing courses limited to figuring out ‘what the teacher wants” (134). A more genuine rhetorical relationship is expressed when the student imagines an addressee or interlocutor, either for her thoughts about writing or for the writing occasioned by the course itself. We found such an awareness emerging during the course of the interview on a couple of striking occasions.

A biomedical engineering major acknowledged that the research skills that he developed in FYC helped him in his upper-division biology writing course but also insisted that engineers and scientists are solely interested in facts, not style or presentation. He explained: “In our classes, we don’t have to write papers like that . . . They just want the information, not how it’s presented. Writing classes, humanities classes, things like that, it’s more about presentation” (Tariq). As he spoke about the writing sample he submitted for our study, however, he decided, “I think the way I *presented* it was good” (emphasis added). What did he mean by “presentation,” we asked? Tariq: “That it was understandable . . . Nothing to make them say, I don’t get this. I was able to make connections.” What seemed at first to be a conversation about form—an unbridgeable difference in formal expectations—became an opportunity for communication.

A double major in Asian American Studies and Studio Art presents another compelling example of movement in pedagogical memory from disconnection to integration. When asked about the writing knowledge she carried from the lower-division humanities writing course into her upper-division writing, she claimed: “There wasn’t anything I picked up from it that I still keep with me now. Yeah, I still write an intro, and I still have paragraphs and stuff like that” (Samantha). The link begins at a rudimentary level. In response to an earlier question about the purposes of the writing assignments in the lower-division course, she had stated: “Develop your critical thinking skills . . . show other people your thought processes

of why did you make that argument and how you came to that argument. So writing can help you think more clearly because you have to break down step by step and try to make it flow and each thought is connected to the next thought” (Samantha). Later in the interview, this student talked about dividing her senior thesis into sections: “I was able to break down the Korean and Black conflict. I don’t think I’ve ever written in sections prior to this . . . each one [section] has its own theme and you relate back to the larger paper.” The links between critical thinking in lower- and upper-division became most apparent when she reflected on the challenge of defining the topic of her senior thesis: “How to approach it and which direction—which is the best way . . . [I] figured out which area I should focus on and how I could make my paper be not so all over the place . . . so figuring out which way will confuse people the least” (Samantha). Though her comment about the thesis focused on organization, Samantha wove a convincing web of connection between flow or movement of thought and the obligation of the writer to communicate in both humanities and social science. In these cases, the interview itself became the site of possibility for mapping the path from composition to disciplinary writing. Perhaps the tone of these encounters comes through in these brief quotations: a movement from something akin to belligerence in Tariq’s case, more like indifference in Samantha’s, but moving into the realm of mild pleasure at a recognition: of connection, of writing achievement, of learning remembered.

MEMORY IN THE MAKING

In a few interesting cases, students’ reflection on writing memories during the interview enabled them to create pedagogical memories linking disparate college writing experiences. Despite their initial insistence that they had carried nothing forward from FYC, they later mentioned—and, more importantly, commented upon—their use of specific strategies and genres from composition in their upper-division writing courses. An Applied Ecology Major and International Studies minor presents a case in point. Though she initially claimed that “[lower-division writing] was entirely different because the upper-division is geared toward scientific writing,” she referred to similar critical thinking and research skills in her descriptions of the writing she did in both courses. For her lower-division research paper, she explained, “We had to go out and search for books and articles that would corroborate and would relate what my topic was specifically” (Nandini). Like her first-year research paper, her upper-division biology lab required her to find relevant scholarship and demonstrate the ways her work would contribute to it. She explained, students were responsible for

“reporting what past studies have found on the issue and kind of highlighting or pinpointing some areas where future research might be needed.” Over the course of the interview, this student began to recognize the ways her learning in first-year composition helped to prepare her for the intellectual challenges of upper-division science writing. She reflected, “Maybe I did develop the skills there [in first-year humanities], and I didn’t really realize it” (Nandini).

An engineering major experienced a similar “lightbulb” moment as we talked. He spoke enthusiastically about the ways in which the research and writing skills that he developed in the second quarter of the composition sequence helped him with his engineering writing assignments. Just as vehemently, however, he claimed that the first quarter composition course, which emphasizes critical reading and rhetoric, was not “applicable.” But as he spoke, this student began to rethink the relationship between these courses, creating a pedagogical memory that forged links between what he had heretofore considered unrelated writing challenges: “Maybe [first-year composition] is not that much different. Instead of analyzing literature, we analyze whatever subject at hand—the figures, the “give,” things like that. I’m saying that writing is very different from engineering writing, but then it’s not really, because in [FYC] we were analyzing the actual pieces that we read, and, in engineering, we analyze the data that we’re given. So I guess it’s not that different” (Sean). When given the opportunity during the interview to reflect on the potential similarities in seemingly distinct writing assignments and contexts, this student showed signs of the most mature phase of writing knowledge, what Thaiss and Zawacki characterize as “coherence within diversity.”

WHY MEMORY STALLS

One cause of the absence of writing instruction in students’ pedagogical memories, or their inability to remember connections across courses, might be their desire to distance themselves from their first-year writing experience. New to college, uncertain about their abilities, they enter their lower-division writing courses laden with insecurities, and sometimes resentment about the writing requirement. In response to a question about how she generated ideas in her lower-division course, a psychology major commented: “I don’t remember. I tried to block it out” (Hillary). A computer science major could recall her disappointment about the location of her composition class more than anything she learned about writing. She noted: “Wow, I’m sorry. I don’t really remember a lot about first-year writing. That was my first class ever at UCI. It was in a trailer [laughter]. I was

like, I'm going to university and I'm in a trailer! That's a little disheartening" (Kelly). This student's reflection conveys the high expectations and emotions that many first-year college students bring with them into their composition classes. This generalized anxiety, which carries a potential for alienation and disappointment, coupled with their first encounter with the standards of "college writing" in the first composition course, might well interfere with memory.

As Marshall W. Alcorn, Jr. observes in *Changing the Subject in English Class*, "writing begins with desire that is mobilized at the level of an individual memory, but this desire quickly becomes embedded in a social network" (64).¹⁷ Many students experience the required first-year composition course as a "pedagogy of demand," in Alcorn's term (31–53), forming impressions of writing in ways quite alien to the intentions of writing teachers and researchers:

Those of us who teach writing want to believe that learning to write is a pleasurable event, and often it is. But . . . writing is always haunted by masters and interlaced with forms of authority or correctness that we cannot easily abandon without guilt or discomfort. (95)¹⁸

The dispositions and authority relations produced by the cultural and institutional histories of writing must certainly play a role in students' memories of writing instruction and yet are not easily incorporated into the research paradigms currently in use.

Passion, or even simply pleasure, is possible for writing students, as Thaiss and Zawacki emphasize, and seems to have a salutary effect on memory (see also Sommers and Saltz 145). They report that students who enjoyed their assignment or topic generally had a much easier time recalling how what they had learned in their various writing courses informed their writing process. In our study, a chemistry major, who emphasized in her interview that her ability to choose her paper topic made the lower-division research and argument class more interesting, could speak confidently about what the course had taught her about writing: "I learned a lot about how to determine whether arguments were good or bad and whether or not I could use them in my writing." Another student so enjoyed her lower-division writing experience that she opted to become a literary journalism major and write for the campus newspaper: "I enjoyed the books we read, I liked the topics, I thought the essays weren't dry, the class discussions weren't dry, the TAs were really good." This student easily articulated what she had learned about writing in her lower-division courses and how that learning informed her upper-division research, critical reading, and writing

processes. In short, our interviews suggest that students might well learn something about writing in lower-division classes for which they exhibit little passion, but that they are less likely to bring that knowledge to mind when they enter their upper-division courses or to articulate it in explicit terms when generating a pedagogical memory.

CONCLUSION: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS MEMORY?

- “This is bothering me that I don’t remember.” (Patricia)
- “It’s funny; I’ve never really asked myself that question [about writing in lower-division courses].” (Andrew)
- “I don’t think I’ve thought once ever since then back on that course, but I’m positive it did influence my writing.” (Leor)

Why don’t students remember? The quandaries of the students quoted above, along with the mixed memories within the retrospective accounts of our other interviewees, lend credence to the perspectives on transfer offered in the introduction: transfer is extremely difficult to chart and may in fact be the wrong question. Our study confirms Bergmann and Zepernick’s observation that, in general, “students do not look for . . . situations” in which knowledge from FYC can carry forward (139).

Where does the burden for “transfer” lie? If it lies primarily with the writing teacher or program, then we should examine our disciplinary languages. While our interviews have testified to the success of process writing in penetrating the consciousnesses and practices of students over time, they also give evidence of the persistence of out-dated writing practices like the five-paragraph theme (“block, block, block”) and “grammar” as technical correctness. We could read this evidence as an indication that the profession should agree on a disciplinary language (our candidate would be rhetoric) and stick to it, turning our efforts to consolidating disciplinary definitions and presenting them more forcefully and uniformly across the curriculum and across institutions. But given the diversity of our “dappled discipline” (Lauer), where we juggle the languages of genre studies, activity theory, social cognition, critical pedagogy, rhetoric, cultural studies and more, as well as the rarity of integrated writing programs like the University of Rhode Island’s, such an agenda seems unlikely to succeed. In light of this difficulty, our energies as writing instructors and WPAs could be spent on helping students learn how to translate discourses about writing from one site to another. For example, as a teacher makes visible the logic behind the framework of a writing class and its specialized terminology (emphasizing rhetoric, genre, critical pedagogy, social cognition, etc.), she might more

actively acknowledge the diversity of the field and the likelihood that each student will come with a distinctive history—another set of terms which may need translation in the present context. Situating the student as “translator” constructs an active relationship to pedagogical authority; on this model, a student’s active framing, or mapping, of writing experience across the years is valued and fostered.

One of our more thoughtful interviewees helped us formulate this idea through his experience. A recent immigrant from Argentina who had spent much time in ESL classes on his way to becoming an engineering major, this student took his second quarter of required composition in poetry-writing before moving on to technical writing in his major. As a newcomer to higher education in the U.S., he came without the anxieties and negative pre-conceptions about first-year composition discussed above. And unlike many of the students in Bergmann and Zepernick’s study, this young engineer did not find the expressive and creative experience of a first-year writing class in English—poetry-writing, no less—a barrier to writing in his field. He valued the experience with various forms of writing, comparing the movement from genre to genre, arts to technology, with learning a new language: “so you experience many kinds of writing and then you’re more open. . . . [T]he process of learning how to write the new format is faster because you already switched once. It is the same with languages” (Juan). Juan’s experience suggests that, rather than fixing on a set of terms and hoping they will be viable in the next context, writing teachers might place more emphasis on preparing for learning, a manner of learning that acknowledges students’ pasts (rather than obliterating them with notions of progress and increasing sophistication) and gestures toward their writing futures.

Another way to construe our study is to envision a shift in responsibility, or perhaps less onerously put, a shift of the burden of hope from top-down curricular planning to the individual student’s sense-making. While all the students in our study were surviving as writers, the ones who seemed to be thriving had a stronger ability to narrate their writing experiences, to see themselves in relationship to writing teachers and other audiences, and to confront the emotional challenges writing poses. These capacities can be developed through pedagogical memory work, the cultivation of a student’s ability to narrate her own writing history with its gaps and continuities, its emotional ups and downs. This approach to writing instruction would focus on map-making (Reynolds). It would underscore the inclination toward reflective writing already well accepted in the field, but would construct such opportunities not as validation of already determined institutional goals but as tools for use by individual students to map their own

idiosyncratic pasts and to imagine future writing lives. Finally, we suggest that ongoing interview projects conducted by WPAs outside the strictures of institutionally mandated assessment may offer a student-oriented means of gauging the effects of writing pedagogy across years and disciplines.

NOTES

1. The authors would like to thank the editors of *WPA*, Duane Roen, and an anonymous reviewer for very helpful comments on this essay. For earlier conversations and suggestions, we are grateful to Christina Haas, Christopher Thaiss, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. Colleagues at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, provided stimulating opportunities to share our work. Finally, we acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Iveta Cruse, Administrative Assistant in the office of the Campus Writing Coordinator of the University of California, Irvine.

2. Anne Beaufort (*College Writing*) and Kathleen Blake Yancey offer recent critical overviews.

3. Richard Haswell's "Documenting Improvement" is one of few studies making a case for statistically significant change in student writing over the college years toward standards valued in the workplace. See also *Gaining Ground in College Writing: Tales of Development and Interpretation*.

4. Richard Fulkerson comments on the increasing lack of agreement among writing scholars about disciplinary directions now as compared with ten years ago.

5. Haswell ("Documenting Improvement") reports evidence of development. Thaiss and Zawacki use a developmental frame successfully to organize a longitudinal study including students and teachers.

6. The flipside of bewilderment would be the "confidence" reported by first-year students concerning their writing abilities in a study of students at two universities by Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff—a misplaced confidence, they argue, given the quality of students' writing.

7. The University of California, Irvine (UCI), is a large, public, research-1 institution requiring three quarters of writing of all students. At the lower-division, students may take a two-course composition sequence, beginning with critical reading and rhetoric, and proceeding to a course in argument and research. Or they may elect a 3-quarter interdisciplinary humanities option. The third required course is taken at the upper-division, most often in the discipline of the student's major. With IRB approval, we selected students randomly from disciplines across the curriculum, balancing variables of gender, native English vs. ESL, and "native" UCI matriculator vs. transfer student in proportion with our population. They gave one-hour interviews at the time they were completing the upper-division writing requirement (see Appendix A for interview questions).

8. They confirmed Kathleen Yancey's observation that, as a discipline, we have broad agreement on process as a viable, transferable writing practice ("The Things They Carry," forthcoming).

9. Julie Foertsch reports a similar finding (376).

10. See Appendix B for second-phase interview questions.

11. See for example sources cited by Chris Anson regarding retrospective accounts (63) and by Tomlinson on verbal reports of mental processes (433, n. 2).

12. Students in their surveys criticized the "English" orientation of first-year composition, describing it as "fluffy," not relevant and thus not transferable. Our students definitely echoed these views, although not in as extreme terms or in as convincing numbers. Sciences and engineering are very strong schools at UCI, and the humanities/science-technology divide is often referenced. Perhaps the differences in our findings have to do with a very well established humanities program taken by many biology majors here and with the difference between survey and interview. Science students may have felt more license in the survey setting to criticize English than a student being interviewed by a writing teacher.

13. The average GPA of students in our study was 3.28, compared with a 3.01 average for all UCI students that year. Both lower- and upper-division writing grades fell in the same range.

14. Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* is the best-known source on such "tacit" knowledge.

15. Upper-division writing is mandated at UCI, but the timing of courses is unregulated. Some students do not take the upper-division course until late in the senior year, leaving a gap of years between writing-intensive courses.

16. A reviewer notes that this writer's strategy is a classic example of regression under pressure. True enough, but more significant to us is the fact that the student, an upper-division writer at the time of the interview, claims to have continued to use this method throughout his college career without building on it. This seems to us as a situation of forgetting or down-playing writing instruction he received in later classes, such as the science-related writing class required of a chemistry major.

17. Alcorn employs psychoanalytic and postmodern theories of subjectivity to question the efficacy of politically oriented composition teaching. His idea that any experience of learning involves loss at a psychic level is compatible with the analysis of memory and forgetting presented here. See especially Chapter 5, "Engaging Affect" (93-126).

18. See also Deborah Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives*, especially Chapter 5, "The Sacred and the Profane: Reading versus Writing in Popular Memory." Her informants link writing with work rather than pleasure and associate it with "secrecy, censorship, pain, and opprobrium" (196).

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APPENDIX A: RETROSPECTIVE WRITING HISTORIES
(2003–04), INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Lower-division writing

How did you fulfill the lower-division writing requirement?

What determined your choice of Humanities Core Course or WR courses? If you opted for WR 39B, did you select 39C, 30, 31, or 38 for the second part of the requirement, and why?

What grades did you receive in these courses?

What did you learn in these courses?

How would you characterize your effort in these courses?

How would you characterize your experience in these courses?

Did you receive useful feedback from your writing instructors and/or from peers?

Do you think your writing improved as a result of having taken these courses? Why or why not?

Upper-division writing and writing in the disciplines

Have you taken the upper-division course yet? If so, which course?

What did you learn in these courses? Could you apply anything you learned in lower-division writing courses to this course?

In what other courses have you been assigned writing? What kinds of papers? (exploratory, argumentative, research, etc.) How long? How many? Were you asked to revise written work in these courses? Did you receive narrative comments from the instructor?

Do you think writing in your major is easy or difficult? Why?

Do you get stuck when you're writing, and if so, what do you do? From whom do you get help?

What is your writing process? When do you get writing assignments done?

Have you ever visited a writing consultant at LARC or some other campus center for writers? If so, did you find it helpful? Why? If not, why not?

Do you feel that once you graduate you'll be well prepared to write in the "real world" and on the job? Why or why not?

If you could tell your teachers one thing about writing, or how they teach writing, what would you say?

APPENDIX B: PEDAGOGICAL MEMORY (2006–07), INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Lower Division Writing

How did you fulfill the lower division writing requirement?

What did you learn about writing in these courses?

What terms come to mind for the types of writing you did in these courses/what types of assignments did you have (e.g., description, summary, analysis)?

How did you learn to generate ideas in this course?

Did you enjoy writing in this course?

What was writing meant to do in this course? What was its purpose?

Upper Division Writing and Writing in the Disciplines

How did you fulfill the upper-division writing requirement?

What did you learn in this course?

What terms come to mind for the types of writing you did in these courses/what types of assignments did you have?

How did you learn to generate ideas in this course?

Did you enjoy writing in this course?

What was writing meant to do in this course? What was its purpose?

Transferability of Writing Instruction

Can you apply anything you learned in lower-division writing courses to this course?

[Using the writing sample provided by the student]

What was the assignment for this paper?

What do you think you did best in this paper?

Where/how did you learn this particular writing strategy/technique?

Thinking across your writing experiences at UCI (and at transfer institution if applicable), how would you characterize good writing?

