

Report of the Writing Essentials Group
Syllabus Writing Workshop, August 7-8

Chris Gillen
David Rowe

The Writing Essentials group held a syllabus-writing workshop on August 7-8. The purpose of the workshop was to allow faculty to better integrate writing assignments in their syllabi, share best practices of writing instruction, and discuss ways of strengthening Kenyon as a writing college. There were 23 faculty participants, representing all divisions of the College and all faculty ranks, from newly-arrived dissertation fellows and junior faculty to full professors.

The first day of the workshop was devoted to individual faculty development. Participants broke into small groups to discuss and share their writing instruction practices in their individual courses. Topics ranged from issues such as how to “scaffold” writing assignments over the course of a semester to how to structure one’s syllabus to provide students with timely feedback. The second day of the workshop was devoted to discussions about how to strengthen Kenyon’s writing culture, both in terms of the faculty’s ability to better develop the writing skills of our students, and in terms of the faculty’s role as professional authors.

The workshop produced a number of suggestions for improving writing instruction at Kenyon. The most important suggestion was for the College to continue to provide ongoing, structured venues (such as this workshop) in which faculty meet and collaborate over issues related to writing and writing instruction. Another suggestion was to develop in conjunction with the CIP a repository of writing assignments (along with explanatory commentary) that faculty have found to be particularly effective. Yet another suggestion was to provide every new faculty member with a standard writing text, such as Rosenwasser and Stephen, *Writing Analytically*, as an instructional resource. These suggestions would also address a critical need identified by the workshop: the development of a common vocabulary of writing instruction among faculty so that students receive consistent feedback across courses and departments, enabling them to cumulate feedback throughout their four years of undergraduate education.

The workshop also identified ways of strengthening Kenyon as a writing community. Senior faculty saw the nearly steady encroachment on their time as a key impediment to the production of professional writing. One way to combat this could be to institute weekly “Research Hours” for faculty, a posted five-hour block of time in which faculty cannot be disturbed because they are working on their scholarship. Junior faculty sought more opportunities (such as an expanded Kenyon Seminar) in which they could both share their scholarship with faculty who work in related fields and receive focused, critical feedback to help them prepare their written scholarship for submission and publication. All saw continued faculty collaboration as the essential component to living up to Kenyon’s reputation as a writing college.

List of Participants

Nahla al-Huraibi
Chris Bickford
Piers Brown
Pamela Camerra-Rowe
Katie Corker
Paul Curran
Joseph Ewoodzie
Sarah Finley
Monica Garoiu
Chelsey Hamm
Sarah Heidt
Drew Kerkhoff
Travis Landry
Ian Lowman
Ted Mason
Jacqueline McAllister
Sarah Murnen
Ryan Phillips
Nancy Powers
Clara Román-Odio
Stephen Volz

Organizers:

Chris Gillen
David Rowe