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Editor: Quentin Vieregge

Dear Colleagues:

We wanted to give you a heads-up on some recent developments in the First-Year Composition Program. As you may know, we strive to create a space where students (about 9,500 each year!) can practice rigorous academic writing. To that end, we've continued to develop our presence online at <http://collegewriting.us/default.aspx>.



In each semester of 1101 or 1102, students write three major essays, all of which they revise three times in response to instructor feedback. Students write annotated bibliographies, learn summary and paraphrasing skills, practice academic citation standards, learn to avoid plagiarism, and write in various online forums and blogs.

Did you know that students in 1101 and 1102 write essays that cover various academic subjects, such as [environmentalism](#), [rhetorical analysis/marketing](#), and [linguistic anthropology](#)? To learn more about our outcomes for [1101](#) and [1102](#), or to browse some of the [resources available to students](#),

[The Iraq War and FYC](#) by Marian Conklin

Marian Conklin, adjunct instructor in USF's English Department, had her composition students write letters to U.S. soldiers in Iraq as part of her class's public writing assignment in 1101. Mrs. Conklin's students began by writing individualized letters to the troops under the command of Sergeant Major Michael Eason of the 2nd National Police Division Transition Team. Before writing their letters, students first considered their audience's needs, interests, and backgrounds. Mrs. Conklin



reminded her students that some of Eason's troops would be their age. By focusing on audience, she turned their exercise into an ideal teaching opportunity to help students understand important concepts about the nature of public writing. The assignment had the additional benefit of helping to boost troop morale. The writing exercise yielded results in the form of personal, hand-written replies from the soldiers, letters about home and family, and the interests and activities of these men who were deployed so far from home, many on their second or third tour.

Sergeant Major Eason recently returned from Iraq and will visit USF on Thursday, February 7, to meet with some of the students who exchanged letters with the men in his unit last fall. His transition team typically went out on combat missions five days a week, often more than once a day,



visit our [web site](#).

We invite you to review our program curriculum and offer contributions to it. If you have ideas for new projects, please e-mail Joe Moxley at moxley@cas.usf.edu.

Sincerely, *Joe Moxley*
Professor of English/ Director of
Composition

and they were grateful for any correspondence from "home." Eason commanded over 300 U.S. Army soldiers in his division. Mrs. Conklin's students communicated with the eleven-man Army Team who were Active Duty and Army Reserve soldiers deployed to train the Iraqi National Police in an area near Baghdad.

SGM Eason, who made a personal commitment to visit and thank everyone who helped his soldiers while they were deployed in Iraq, will be in SOC 132 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 7, to visit with the students and to present a United States flag to the university. Anyone who is interested in meeting the Sergeant Major is welcome to stop by.



Guest Speakers Visit the Writing Program

In the last year, the FYC program invited both professional writers and educators to speak to our students and faculty. [Bruce Hunt](#), a travel writer and professional photographer, who lives in the Tampa Bay area, shared his experiences as a writer with our program. Many of our students write travel narratives in [ENC 1101](#), and his talk is available in the podcast link below.

We also invited Lester Faigley, a professor of English at the University of Texas and author of the *Penguin Handbook*. Dr. Faigley spoke to our students and teachers about writing and how best to maximize the use of our handbook.

Student Success with Public Writing: MSNBC

Amanda Lyon, a current 1102 student in Kyle Stedman's class, recently experienced a surge of attention in response to her public writing. In her first blog post to *Newsvine*, a community-oriented news site, Amanda wrote [a concert review](#) which was featured on MSNBC.com. She has since received 42 comments from other *Newsvine* users, one of whom [wrote a short article](#) praising her entry into the world of public writing.

Online Teacher Evaluations and Special Thanks

The Composition program would like to offer a special note of thanks to USF's IT Department. In the past, we needed work study students to type the written comments of 9500 + students in response to end of the semester evaluations.

Now, thanks to the technical expertise of Dr. Terry Beavers, Carolyn Mourey, and Michelle Flanagan, we have an online teacher-evaluation process. Last semester, we had 2,525 online evaluations from 3,718 students, and teachers can check their evaluations online much sooner. At the program level, the online evaluation tool enables us to identify program-wide weaknesses and strengths.

[Building Connections Through Technology](#)

Our program highly values collaboration, and consequently, our own contribution to Web 2.0--collegewriting.us--allows any of our instructors to contribute to our writing projects. Moreover, instructors may add teaching resources for fellow

instructors or students via our SharePoint portal. From the student's perspective, this website enables constant access not only to assignment requirements, but also to other [resources](#) for students.

[Bullitizer Prize](#)

For the last two years, the FYC program has rewarded our best first-year writers with a departmental award that we call the "Bullitizer." When students write exceptional drafts, their instructors may nominate them for an award. In the Spring semester each year, a committee reads hundreds of excellent projects to select first- and second-place winners in three categories: "Best ENC 1101 Essay," "Best ENC 1102 Essay," and "Best Blog Entries." The students who wrote the selected work receive a gift certificate from the USF Bookstore and a departmental plaque at our annual awards ceremony. In addition to these rewards, these essays are published annually in a booklet given to incoming students in FYC. If you would like to receive a copy of the Bullitizer Prize booklet, contact the Department of English.

[Online Classes](#)

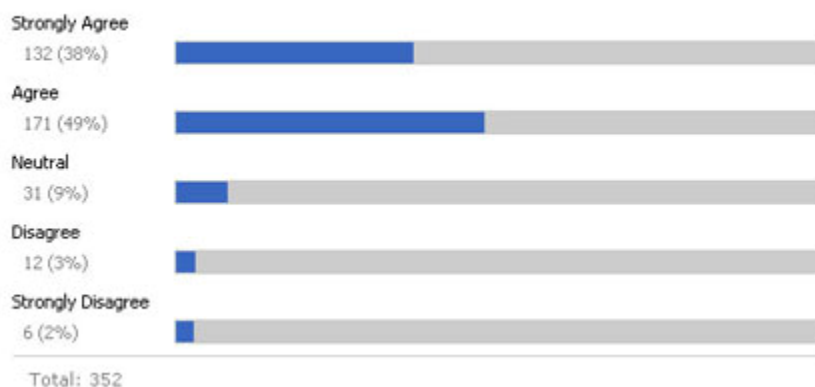
Online classes will be offered in Fall 2008 as they have been in the past. This semester 10 online classes were offered. These classes are especially useful for non-traditional students whose schedules prevent them from taking a full course load on campus. Several of our instructors also take advantage of the opportunity to teach in a more virtual setting, and by doing so learn valuable professional skills.

[Student Comments on Our Program](#)

Students review their professors every semester in each class with eight standardized questions. These surveys identify what students liked, disliked, and learned from their instructors.

Because we value a collaborative atmosphere and an evolving curriculum, learning from students is how we improve our program. This last fall we asked students in our FYC classes to evaluate the *program* in addition to the instructor. About four hundred students replied to our detailed survey, and you can read a summary of the results below.

17. I can tell from my teacher's feedback the one or two major problems with my work for each assignment.





- All student suggestions contribute to our changing curriculum.
- Students often praised teacher feedback and reported they especially enjoyed some of the writing projects such as "[Analyzing Advertisements](#)," "[Taking a Stand Against a Social Injustice](#)," and the film analysis projects (both in [1101](#) and [1102](#)).
- However, students also felt that peer review was unproductive at times and contradicted instructor commentary.


In terms of informal public writing, students appreciated being able to write to a public audience but felt their posts or blogs could be assessed more closely.


[Podcasts](#)

The FYC Program has been developing a number of Podcasts for students and teachers. Below are a few of the Podcasts we thought you might enjoy.

 Bruce Hunt discusses his experiences as a professional travel writer. Note: this podcast is about 50 minutes long (10/07)

 Drew Smith, Nancy Cunningham, and Quentin Vieregge discuss Public Writing (10/01/07).

 Joe Moxley interviews John Nieves, Ryan Meehan regarding ways to collaborate on USF's writing program (8/29/06).

 Taylor Mitchell, Melissa Tully, Quentin Vieregge respond to instructors' concerns about using technology in 1101 and 1102. It answers the question, "What are the basic requirements?" (9/17/06)

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