Research Committee Executive Summary
2011-2012

Committee Members
Farnaz Fatemi
Roxanne Power Hamilton
Brij Lunine (Chair)
Annette Marines (Head of Library Instruction)
Denise Silva
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Committee’s Purpose
The research committee considered pedagogical approaches to teaching research, how the range of Writing 2 courses meet C2 requirements, and the role of research in C2 courses—in and of itself, as well as preparing students for upper-division writing in the majors. Beyond consideration of these and interrelated concerns (see below) we read some preliminary literature (Bean (1996, 2001) and Ballinger (in Newkirk, 1993), held a public colloquium (thanks to Roxi Hamilton) on research in writing courses, and put out a call for Writing 2 instructors’ research sequence assignments in order to survey and compare what’s being taught with greater specificity and empirical data. (Collecting assignments is being done in conjunction with the Writing Program eCommons archive site.)

Areas of Concern:
• the role of research in Writ 2/80b courses--how the unit fits into given courses
• ways of teaching research methods
• research paper as process—scaffolding activities
• teaching incorporation of sources
• how to pick topics
• how to guide students towards intellectually meaningful work
• argumentation in investigative/research papers
• types of sources
• role of librarians
• using reference materials (CQ Researcher, Gale Virtual Reference (encyclopedias))
• teaching citation in research papers
• maintenance of voice
• doing research for analytical and/or not specifically research papers
• types of paper genres we teach which require outside sources/research
• use of writing manuals or a research methods book (see Davis, The Rowan and Littlefield Guide to Writing With Sources)
Summary of Committee’s Work, Concerns and Plans

Our committee’s discussions and public colloquium have been generative in bringing to light both the successful range of practices we employ in teaching research and the inherent difficulties. While there’s a consensus, among committee members at least, that what would most benefit students is a separate “C3” course to teach research skills and writing specifically, over the course of an entire quarter, sharing what we actually do to teach the “inquiry” part of C2 courses is an extremely beneficial first step, especially since the likelihood of a new C3 requirement is slim (to say the least). The committee’s next task is to review specific assignments (hopefully as broad a range as possible) with one eye towards successful pedagogy and the other towards the C2 standards. (To that end the committee chair reviewed the C2 standards as an introduction to the colloquium.)

One philosophical tension the committee is cognizant of is between seeing ourselves as in service to the disciplines—as a preparatory, training-oriented program—as opposed to seeing what we do in Writing 2 (and Core) as an ends, in and of itself. The committee sees the skills of inquiry taught in C2 courses as crucial to students’ success in their upper-division courses. While we see our purpose as getting students to think, read and write critically, persuasively, passionately, etc. in general terms, to foster good general writing and reading skills, it’s with preparation in mind. Furthermore, communication with divisions and departments to more effectively teach with disciplinary conventions in mind strengthens the Writing Program’s relationships and stature across the university. Especially as we start to play a larger role in D.C. course instruction.

At our colloquium Lecturer Terry Terhaar generously took us through her Writ 2 course and showed us what a unique, single-project-by-way-of-many-pieces model can look like. It was eye-opening, instructive and represented one end of the spectrum of what a research sequence can be in Writing 2. It also highlighted many of the concerns outlined above of the committee.

For the upcoming academic year we will continue to work with Annette Marines, Head of Library Instruction, and review what our assignments look like in order to make sure what we’re doing collectively and what we say we’re supposed to be doing in terms of the C2 standards jibes. Additionally, the committee might consider revision of the C2 standards (which apparently weren’t sufficiently addressed and modified in the transition from Writing 1 to Writing 2). The committee could then put itself in a position to make a recommendation for or against more uniformity in teaching the research component of the C2 requirement (among other options and approaches). At the very least the committee will have an archive of assignments and can prepare a compendium of best practices and model assignments.

• preparing students for research in the disciplines