

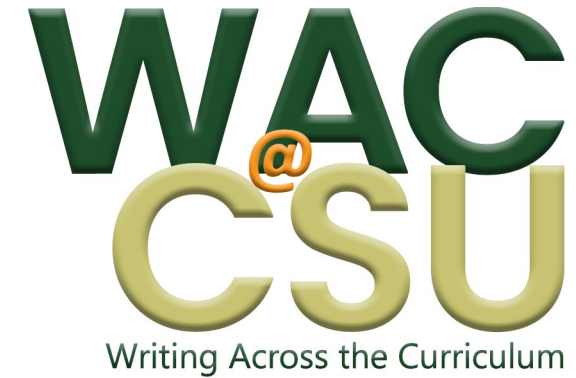


WAC  
@  
CSU

Writing Across the Curriculum

WAC Week Nov. 6-10

# Welcome to WAC Week

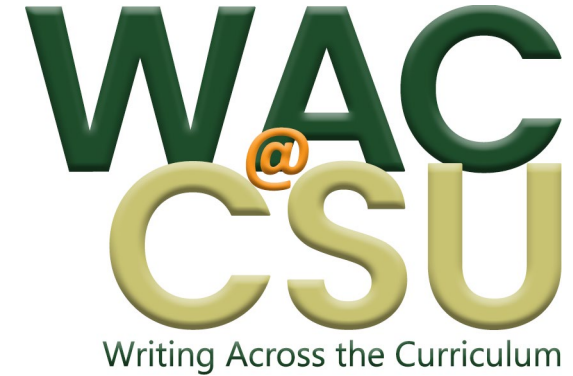


## Upcoming Workshops

- **Using Writing to Support Learning, Critical Thinking, and Inclusion at an Emerging HSI**  
Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup> | 2:00 to 3:00 pm Mountain Time | Zoom and In Person
- **Using Generative AI to Enhance Student Engagement with Course Content**  
Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup> | 9:00 to 10:00 am Mountain Time

Learn more at [writingcenter.colostate.edu/wac](https://writingcenter.colostate.edu/wac).

# Welcome to WAC Week




## Small Grant Applications

**Goal:** Develop one or more writing activities or assignments

**Support:**

- Consultation with an experienced writing instructor
- Materials development
- Outcomes assessment appropriate for demonstration of teaching effectiveness

Learn more at [writingcenter.colostate.edu/wac/grants](http://writingcenter.colostate.edu/wac/grants).



# Responding to Student Writing Effectively and Efficiently

Sue Doe and Mike Palmquist  
Colorado State University

# A Quick Overview



Dispelling some myths about responding to student writing



Exploring purposes for responding – and how they differ across assignment types



General strategies for key assignment types (e.g., writing to learn)



Strategies for increasing efficiency

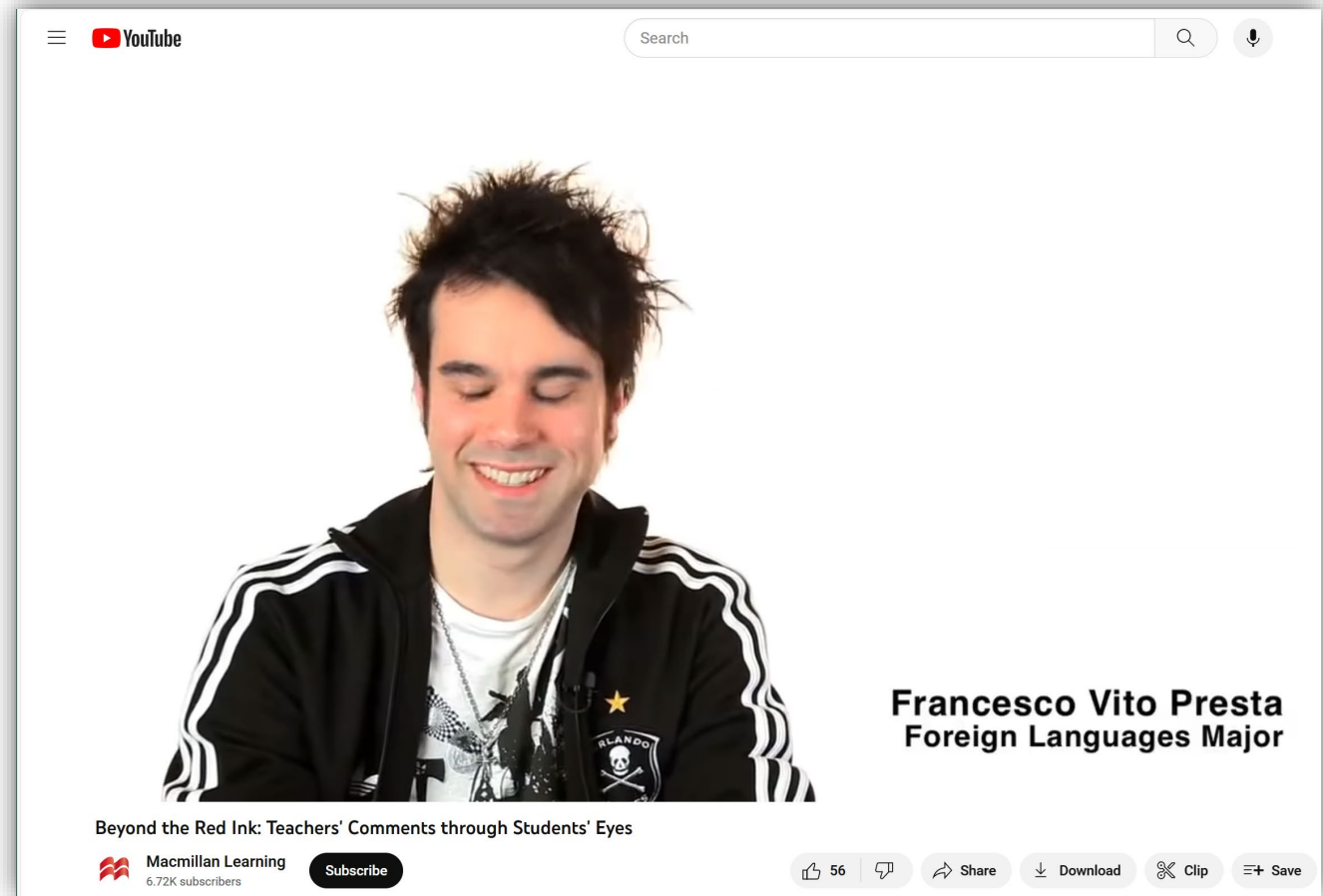
# Some Interesting Myths

## **Using writing activities and assignments well ...**

- Requires expertise in grammar
- Always requires a great deal of time
- Is another way to make life easier for writing faculty
- Reduces time I can spend on course content
- Doesn't have an impact beyond the grade. Students don't read—and don't care about—instructor comments.

# One Interesting Myth

## Students Don't Care? ... Not Really the Case



View “Beyond the Red Ink: Teachers' Comments through Students' Eyes” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKfLRz7h7gs>.

# Getting Started with Responding



Read the entire set of assignments first. If you're working with a large set, scan them to get a sense of the work.



Plan to use both summary AND marginal comments. Consider having marginal comments substantiate your summary comments.



Be prepared to offer reader-response comments in the margins—rather than only “diagnostic” comments on observed deficiencies.



Remember that your goal is formative, to help students improve. Use forward-looking comments, such as “Next time...” ( “HINT”—How to Improve Next Time)



# Some Guidelines



Focus on the most important advice a writer needs at this time. You might focus only on content, only on understanding or effective application of a method, or primarily on effective communication.



Point out spots where the reader is making good decisions in the writing. There's always something good to point out.



You can't—and shouldn't—comment on everything.



Connect the grade to your evaluation criteria.



Substantiate the summary comment with marginal comments that explain where the work comes up short or meets/exceeds expectations.

# Provide a Constructive Summary Comment



Point out the strengths of the work.



Identify the main problem(s) to be addressed in future writing.



Provide specific suggestions for how to improve based on the main problem(s) you've identified.



Thank the student for their efforts.

# Some Values and Ethics

01

**Respect Students.**  
Respond to them as peers.

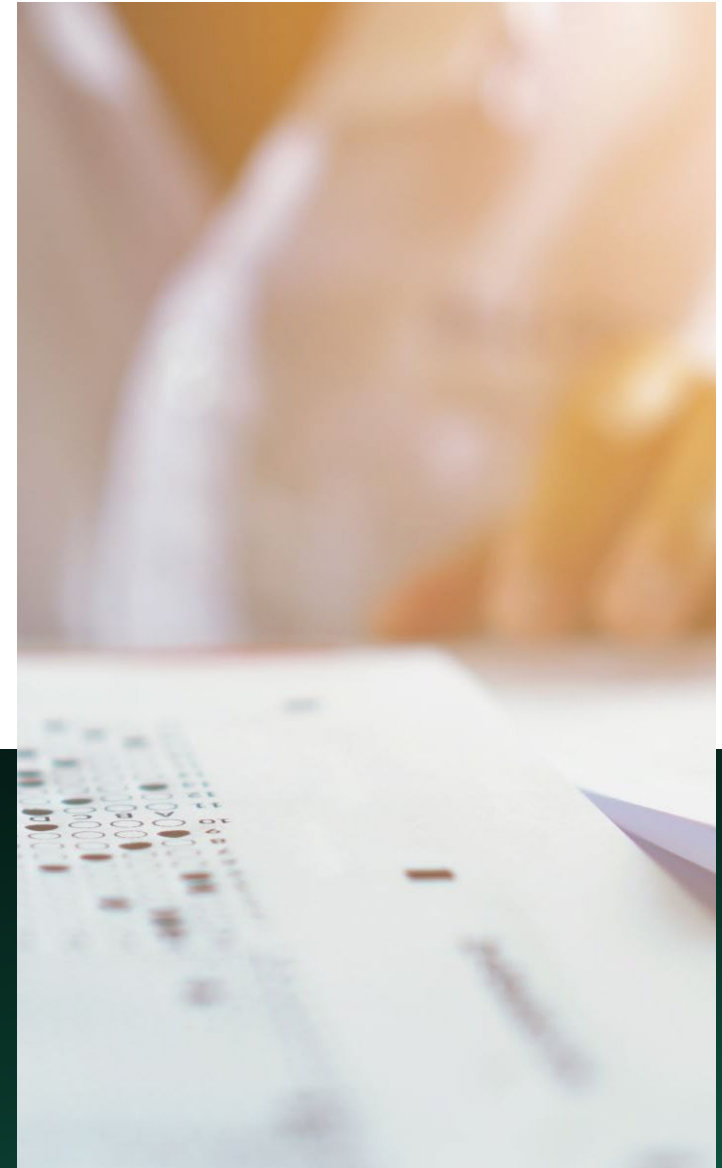
02

**Offer Positive Feedback.**  
Research tells us that telling someone what they're doing well has more impact than telling them about deficiencies.

03

**Beware of Fatigue.** Focus on your message and how well it is being targeted to your students. Ask whether you've said too little—or too much.

# Responding to Writing in Courses Across the Curriculum



# Why Assign Writing Tasks?

- To support student learning
- To engage students in course content
- To support development of disciplinary critical thinking skills
- To prepare students to participate in disciplinary discourse

These break down into the three primary varieties of writing across the curriculum:

- Writing to Learn
- Writing to Engage
- Writing in the Disciplines

# Purpose: Writing to Learn

- Goal: Helping students remember and understand information
- Example Task: Lists, Questions, Summaries, Explanations
- Stakes: Low
  - Assignments are typically ungraded
  - The focus is on accuracy of remembering and understanding; writer-based prose is expected
  - Writing quality is not typically an issue
- Response Types:
  - Collect and respond to students as a group, pulling out examples
  - Check (or check plus, check minus, missing)
  - Points (0 / 1 or some sort of scale)
  - Grade (but this is rare)

# Purpose: Writing to Engage

- Goal: Helping students practice and gain control over disciplinary processes and critical thinking processes (e.g., applying, analyzing, evaluating)
- Stakes: Low to High
  - Assignments are longer (more than two pages but less than five)
  - Assignments are typically graded
  - The focus is on applying knowledge gained through the course; attention to audience (typically the instructor) is expected
  - Writing quality is important, but not viewed through a disciplinary lens
- Response Types:
  - Narrative Response
  - Points
  - Grades

# Purpose: Writing in the Disciplines

- Goal: Helping students learn how to communicate in their discipline or profession
- Stakes: Typically High
  - Assignment length is consistent with genres typical of the field
  - Assignments are graded
  - The focus is on communicating with other professionals; attention to audience is required
  - Writing quality is important; particular attention is paid to disciplinary norms for style, tone, evidence, methods, and so on
- Response Types:
  - Narrative Response
  - Points
  - Grades



# Designing Writing to Learn Activities



Keep it focused and straightforward



Define the length



Provide an example



Set a deadline

# Responding to Writing to Learn Activities



Keep your response as simple and efficient as possible



If possible, use points rather than grades; better yet, use a check system (done well, done acceptably, done poorly, not done)



Focus on content; writer-based prose is acceptable



If the writing is difficult to understand, consider referring the student to the writing center

# Designing Writing to Engage Assignments



Provide a fairly detailed set of directions



Clarify the relationship between the assignment and course content



Provide an example



Set a length limit and a deadline

# Responding to Writing to Engage Assignments



Provide formative and summative comments



Provide an overall assessment through grades, points, or narrative feedback



Focus primarily on content but identify larger issues with writing quality (e.g., use of examples, organization)



If the writing is difficult to understand, consider referring the student to the writing center

# Designing Writing in the Disciplines Assignments



Provide a fairly detailed set of directions



Clarify the relationship between the assignment and course content



Provide an example



Set a length limit and a deadline

# Responding to Writing in the Disciplines Assignments



Provide formative and summative comments; use reader-response feedback; offer detailed feedback



Provide an overall assessment through grades, points, or narrative feedback



Focus on both content and disciplinary writing norms



If the writing is difficult to understand, consider referring the student to the writing center



# Pursuing Efficiency in Complex Assignments

- Ensure your assignment is detailed and clear
- Provide example documents
- Develop instructional materials
- Use peer review and require that it be submitted with the final draft
- Require revision after peer review
- Require reflection about what changed as a result of peer review



# Seeking Support for Assignments

- Work with the WAC Program to develop an effective and workable design
- Consider the role of TAs and GTAs.
- Consider support from writing faculty (e.g., team teaching)
- Seek advice from experienced colleagues (and borrow effective assignment designs)



# Some Useful Reminders

- You can't respond to everything in a document.
- You are providing formative feedback students can use down the road.
- There are real people on the receiving end of your comments.



“The best kind of commentary enhances the writer’s feeling of dignity. The worst kind can be dehumanizing and insulting—often to the bewilderment of the teacher whose intentions were kindly but whose techniques ignored the personal dimension of writing.”

- John Bean



# Reaction Comments Discussion

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Visit WAC@CSU at  
<https://writingcenter.colostate.edu/WAC>