

Citings

Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies Newsletter

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by and for
the DRWS
Faculty and Staff



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Department Braces for Funding Reduction

Glen McClish

It's virtually impossible for Californians to avoid the steady bombardment of bad news about the State budget. For all levels of the educational system, from kindergarten to the University of California and the California State University, large cuts are coming. Here at San Diego State University, the reductions mandated for Spring 2003 are only a prelude to the extensive cost savings we must realize in Fall 2003 and Spring 2004. There are no easy fixes available. Every academic unit will take a big hit, and none is happy about this inevitably. Along these lines, the DRWS will be compelled to accommodate approximately the same number of students we are handling this academic year with significantly fewer classes. The last time I checked, our course count could drop somewhere between 15% and 20%.

What, in very specific terms, does it mean to reduce classes while serving the same size

student population? Most obviously, there will be more students per class. It's imprudent to predict the precise number of students who will actually sit in a given class next year, but I will suggest that an average of 27 in the standard lower and upper division writing courses might not be too far off. In developmental writing, an average of 25 might be near the mark. It is certainly premature to set such figures in stone, though, since new information about the budget arrives daily.

As is fitting, the DRWS Council will deliberate about the departmental response to the mandate to teach more "efficiently" (my word). It needs to be clear to us and to those beyond the DRWS that although we must assume our share of the College's cut, we believe that larger classes degrade teaching and learning and that we look forward to the time when lower class sizes are again

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Author Will Speak on Discourse Studies

On March 10 at 1 PM and 7 PM in Scripps Cottage, Brenton Faber will be giving an IRA funded talk entitled "Discourse of Emerging Space: Studying Language and Social Change." Each one-hour presentation is open to all and a question and answer session will follow. These may be of particular interest to graduate students, faculty, and certificate program students. Faber is an Assistant Professor of Technical Communication at Clarkson University where he teaches courses in discourse analysis and professional communication. He is the author of *Community Action and Organizational Change*, published by Southern Illinois UP (2002).



T. B. Day Freshman Success Programs Thanks the DRWS

Melody Kilcrease

As the new director of the T.B. Day Freshman Success Programs, I want to thank every instructor who has ever taught in these programs. Your work, either as a University Seminar instructor or as an IC writing instructor, has made a significant difference to our students (even if it didn't seem to at the time). You have built programs that effectively help our students adjust to university life, and reach their academic goals.

In particular, I want to point out the unwavering and usually unheralded contributions that Elise Miller and Leslie Johnson make to the FSP. Their dedication to its continued and complex operations has sustained the FSP in ways most of us never see. If Elise ever retires it will take at least two people to assume the tasks she so gallantly performs.

The new challenge for FSP is to raise the bar on what our programs can do and whom they can serve. We see opportunities to build on the Integrated Curriculum model, to learn more about effective approaches to University Seminar, to adapt FSP for transfer and non-traditional students, and to more carefully target our outreach efforts. We will be studying every aspect of FSP this semester, with the goal of learning more about what we are doing well, and finding out how we can strengthen aspects of the program that haven't met expectations.

You will be hearing more from the FSP soon, as we continue our study. For now I want you to know how much your efforts have added to the FSP. Your students are very fortunate to have your interest in and dedication to their success.

Thanks Randy

Annette Cavender

On behalf of the lecturers, I would like to extend a huge thank you to Randy Harrison for volunteering his time and talents to improve computer access in the lecturers' offices. SH 238 is now operating at much faster speeds, with several additional work stations and printers, as well as improved network access. He is now going to work on SH 237. His efforts are particularly appreciated since the department does not currently have the funds for the massive improvements Randy is making.

If you have questions or need assistance with computer or Internet access in your office, please contact me at x40634 or cavender@sunstroke.sdsu.edu. And thank you for your patience as we have worked toward a solution to the problems many of you have had in accessing the technology needed to do your jobs!

Papers, Etc.

Bicho Raro (Rare Bug), a publication of Southwestern College, has published **Matt Costello's** "The First Enemy of the 21st Century," a pictorial collage layered with textual collage made up of lines of poetry and presidential rhetoric.

Carl Fielden's article "Students with disabilities: Who are they? And how can we accommodate them?" appears in *Diversity in the College Classrooms: Practices for Today's Campuses*, edited by Ann Johns & Maureen Sipp and published by the University of Michigan Press.

Another article by **Carl Fielden** and W. Pines, "How to design Web sites for users with disabilities," appeared in the *American Medical Writers Association Journal*, Volume 17 Number 4.

Smart Classroom Studied

Judith Annicchiarico is working with ITS this semester, comparing learning outcomes in RWS 200 between two sections taught in a traditional "Chalk & Talk" classroom and two others taught in the experimental "Smart Classroom." The ITS Smart Classroom contains a variety of high tech tools, including wireless laptop computers, a "Smartboard," and the standard "Smart Cabinet" accessories.

Judith is particularly interested in verifying whether these tools and other features of the room's design will affect the rate at which students learn to apply the on-line research and essay composition and revision strategies she and her students practice in class.

Judith will be participating in a Brown Bag presentation featuring a variety of faculty engaged with similar research, and at the completion of the project, will work with Prof. Linn Bekins to correlate learning outcome data with data Prof. Bekins has collected in similar studies for possible publication.

Book Fair Reminder

Mark your calendars. The annual DRWS Spring Book Fair will be held Wednesday, April 16, from two to four P.M. at Scripps Cottage. Join your colleagues, view the offerings from publishers, and enjoy the refreshments.

Correction

The December 2002 issue of *Citings* contained a photo of the DRWS Lecturers' Council members. The caption beneath incorrectly identified Michael Underwood as Michael Thompkins. The editors regret the error and it has been corrected in the on-line version, which is accessible from the DRWS's web site.

Integrating Sentence Structure Lessons Into Student Writing

Albert Moorin

In the book *Body for Life*, author Bill Phillips calls the gap between wanting to improve one's physical conditioning and taking the action to do so as the Great Divide. In academic parlance it is the gap between knowing and doing. Thanks to our scintillating professional instruction, students may know about sentence structure formats and sentence variety and appreciate its value but then using them in their own writing ... well, there's the rub!

Unquestionably, there is no single right answer. One possibility is to compel students during classes to write over and over again—compound and complex constructions and sentences using relative clauses, verbals, and absolutes, preferably about the subjects of the class readings. What a treat for them! To make sure they have mastered these constructions and will use them in their writing, you can make them a component of a

writing assignment, naturally as part of the grade. That's the second rub!

The following prompt for an in-class writing assignment provides a template for you to use to get this process started: **Writing Assignment: Dr. King**

Over the past couple of weeks, we have reviewed ways of combining sentences and providing sentence variety.

1. Transitions: using transitional expressions such as furthermore, on the other hand, instead, similarly, meanwhile, finally, for this reason, of course, obviously, for example, besides, and overall to show connections between one paragraph and the next paragraph and between one sentence and the next sentence and to indicate a writer's voice.

2. Coordination: using coordinating conjunctions abbreviated FANBOYS, between two short independent clauses: *For many, freedom provides initiative to inspire great deeds, but for Sisyphus,*

freedom is a state of mind.

3. Subordination: using dependent clauses to make one idea subordinate to another idea: *Although Sisyphus was condemned to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain and letting it fall, he found happiness within himself.*

4. Phrases: using appositive phrases to show affiliation or personality: *Albert Camus, an existentialist author, wrote "The Myth of Sisyphus."*

**Each time you use one of the above elements, place its number in

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Congratulations!

Randy Harrison was given the Greek Week Outstanding Professor Award for 2002. The Greek community chose three instructors from across the campus.

Crisis Carnival Needs Student Organizers

Cezar Ornatowski

The 2003 Crisis Carnival, the annual graduate student conference cosponsored by DRWS and the Department of English and Comparative Literature, is seeking graduate students willing to serve as co-chairs for the conference and as members of the Conference Committee. Participation on the conference committee provides a chance for graduate students to get experience in planning and organizing a major academic event, to network with faculty, students, and administration, and to see how the academic world works on the inside.

The conference, which is usually held in October, traditionally has two co-chairs who serve for a year. The co-chairs are trained and helped by the previous year's co-chairs as well as by the faculty advisor. They work with the Conference Committee, whose members work on the many tasks that

need to be done to prepare the conference.

If you would like to be a co-chair, submit the following to the Crisis Carnival mailbox in the DRWS office:

1. Statement of Interest (why and in what capacity you want to participate).

2. Curriculum Vitae or Resume (or a brief description of who you are, if you do not have a CV).

If you would like to serve on the Conference Committee, submit the following:

1. Brief note that you'd like to serve on the Conference Committee.

2. Curriculum Vitae or Resume (or a brief description of who you are, if you do not have a CV).

If you have questions about the conference, contact me at ornat@mail.sdsu.edu.

Tech Writing Hosts Open House

On April 22, the DRWS Advanced Certificate Program in Scientific and Technical Writing will host an Open House in Scripps Cottage. Three speakers will address the theme "Exploring Workplace Possibilities in Technical Communications."

The first speaker will be Allison Rossett from SDSU's Department of Educational Technology, speaking on the topic of e-learning and curriculum development.

She will be followed by two speakers from the nonprofit sector, Eric Naslund, FAIA, a partner at Studio E Architects in San Diego, and Matt Jumper, the Executive Director of San Diego Interfaith Housing. Each of the speakers will discuss opportunities for technical communicators within their fields.

Budget Crisis

possible.

Second, fewer classes means fewer instructors teaching next year. Although I cannot provide precise figures at this time, I am certain that we will have more qualified and experienced instructors desiring work than classes available. The impact will be particularly painful in Spring 2004, since the second semester of the academic year is always lighter than the first. How will we reduce our faculty to align with the decrease in sections available? As always, we will follow the guidelines established in the Memorandum of Understanding between the CSU and the CFA. We will heed, for example, the contract's stipulation that among lecturers, those with three-year, full-time contracts are most protected, whereas those with one semester contracts are most vulnerable. To the best of our ability, "similar assignment" must be honored. In addition to the MOU, we will be guided by the DRWS's policy on lecturer appointment. As you may know, our policy places significant emphasis on an instructor's experience within the Department.

Since we are anticipating difficult personnel decisions ahead, the Periodic Review process becomes increasingly important. I urge all those who undergo Periodic Reviews this spring to assemble their materials carefully and to present precise, accurate, and complete accounts of their records over the last year. If, for whatever reason, elements of your report require explanation beyond the bare details called for by our policy, then provide the necessary information. It's not a matter of covering up or whitewashing imperfections, but of interpreting and providing context for potentially problematic data.

I would like to conclude on a more personal note. Department chairs walk a fine line between faculty and administration. In one sense, we are the lieutenants of deans and vice presidents, executing at the departmental level the mandates and policies developed by the institution's leadership. Serving at the pleasure of the President, we constitute the administration's presence within the individual units of the academic program. In another sense, we represent

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the interests of students and departmental faculty to those administrators with broad oversight over the academic sector of the university. In this capacity, we advocate for the principles and practices endorsed by our faculties. Such advocacy depends upon rhetorical, rather than institutional, power, but its importance should not be understated.

In times of budgetary crisis, this fine line becomes increasingly difficult to travel, partly because the differences between institutional and rhetorical power tend to be exposed. Furthermore, chairs' weaknesses and blind spots become increasingly visible to all. With respect to my very real shortcomings, my best and only response is that my door is open and will continue to be throughout this trial. No doubt my insufficiencies will remain, as will the imbalance between the force that pushes us and the force we exert back. Together, though, we might make a little progress with both.

Sentence Structure Lessons

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parentheses immediately after the sentence **

Using the above techniques, write a response to ONE of the following:

1) Discuss the meaning and effectiveness of two examples of figurative language for both the target audience and the larger audience.

2) Using two examples from the text, analyze and discuss the meaning and effectiveness of the following quote: *"He who patiently accepts evil is as much involved as he who helps perpetuate it."*

3) Summarize one issue discussed in "Letter" and make a tangible connection with an article, story or novel that you have read, an experience of your own or someone else's, a historical

event, a corroborating or contrary opinion, a metaphor or famous quotation, or something else.

Choose a focus that you can discuss thoughtfully, coherently, and fluently.

For this in-class writing assignment, please use ink and write on every other line on one side of the page. You may use your books and notes. Place the number of the question you answered next to your name. Good Luck!

If the above techniques appear workable for your teaching style, use them (or abuse them, if you wish). If you can improve upon them, please write a follow-up article for another issue of Citings.

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