

College Readiness In Writing: Report to the Field

September 2005



*Maine's
Public
Universities*

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM



Office of the Vice Chancellor
for Academic & Student Affairs
107 Maine Avenue
Bangor, ME 04401-4380

Tel: 207-973-3230
Fax: 207-973-3296
TTY: 207-973-3300
elsa.nunez@maine.edu
www.maine.edu

The University of Maine

University of Maine
at Augusta

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To the Reader

The University of Maine System is committed to ensuring that every student who aspires to higher education in a state public university graduates high school with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions s/ he needs to be successful. To that end, the Chancellor has established a Committee on College Readiness to define what it means to be ready for college in the various disciplines, with particular attention to criteria for meeting proficiency requirements in writing and mathematics.

Our data indicate that many students who graduate from Maine high schools and are accepted to college do not meet these proficiencies and are assigned to developmental /remedial courses. In fall, 2004, over 700 students enrolled in developmental writing courses and over 1500 students enrolled in developmental math courses in the University of Maine System. These courses are remedial in nature and are required for students who do not meet criteria for matriculation in 100 level courses. While students pay regular tuition for these courses and may count them towards residence requirements and scholarship aid, they cannot count them toward graduation requirements. National data show that enrollment in remedial courses is a negative factor in retention and graduation: the six-year graduation rate for students who take no remedial courses is 56%; for one remedial course it is 34%; for three or more remedial courses it is 18%.

This report, which focuses on writing, is the first to be commissioned by the Committee. It represents the best thinking of over 60 public university and college instructors of writing, who have been meeting for over a year to share practices and insights about writing in college. The report describes criteria for placement in college writing courses, identifies continuities and discontinuities between high school and college standards and expectations, and makes recommendations for easing the transition from high school to college writing and for opening dialogue among instructors of writing across the grades and institutions.

We hope you find this report useful in your work with students as they prepare for college.

Joseph Westphal,
Chancellor
University of Maine System

Elsa Nunez
Vice Chancellor

College Writing
at the
Public Colleges and Universities of Maine
Standards, Practices, and Implications for
Transitions from High School to College

Ann Dean, University of Southern Maine

In collaboration with members of the Composition Coalition

CONTRIBUTORS

This report has been reviewed and contributed to by:

Central Maine Community College; Jeff Baizley; Jeanette Baldrige (CMCC & UMA); John Blois; Ethel Bowden and Lucinda Coombs

Eastern Maine Community College; John Goldfine and Rita Haurert

Kennebec Valley Community College: S. Duren; Mark Kavanaugh; Muriel Fish and Karen White

Southern Maine Community College: Ann Boyce; Margie Fahey; Rick Hautala; David Tracy and Robert Vettese

York County Community College: Diane Fallon and David Markow

Maine Maritime Academy: Laurie Stone

University Of Maine: Pat Burnes

University Of Maine At Augusta: Harry Batty (UCB); Joanna Carson; Peg Danielson; Joyce Blanchard Garand; Karin Jackson (LAC); Gillian Jordan (UCB); Carol Kontos; Anita Kurth (UCB); Deborah Labuz (LAC); Eleanor Leo; Melissa MacCrae (UCB); Annie O'Reilly (UCB); Kay Retzlaff (UCB); Nancy Schneide and Ellen Taylor

University Of Maine At Farmington: Kathleen Beaubien; Janet Brackett; Christine Darrohn; Tiane Donahue; Elaine Eadler; Teresa Swartz Roberts and Marilyn Wegner

University Of Maine At Machias: Carol Wolf

University Of Southern Maine: Jessica Anthony; Diane Brackett; Susan Campbell; Michele Cheung; Elizabeth Dodge; Lindsay Dorney; Brenda Edmands; Nancy Gish; Karen Hall (LAC); Julie Hendrickson (USM & UMA); Christine Johnson; Susan King; Kate Mitchell; Lisa Nelson; Terri Nickel; Judy Platz; Bruce Pratt (USM & MMA); Yvonne Souliere; Laima Sruoginis; Virginia Weaver and Elaine Wight

Maine Department Of Education: Anita Bernhardt and Patsy Dunton

Maine Council Of Teachers Of English: Erika Stump (Mt. Ararat High School)

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I. Information about 100 Level Writing Courses

A. Placement

Not all students admitted into universities are admitted into 100-level courses. Although “true college opportunity includes having a good chance to succeed once the student is admitted,” many students in the United States graduate from high school under-prepared for 100-level work (Kirst 2004, 53). Estimates of how many college students are required to take remedial courses nationwide vary from 22% to as high as 49% (Greene and Forster, 2003, 7). Each university in Maine uses some combination of tests and writing samples to determine whether a student is prepared for a 100-level writing course, as shown in the chart below.

Campus*	SAT V Cut-Off	Placement Test	Developmental Enrollments: F 04
Augusta	530	Accuplacer	132 (Basic Writing) 56 (Writing Improve) 157 (Reading)
Farmington	490	Local test: 50 minute timed essay/personal response or agree/disagree	84 (Writing)
Fort Kent	500	Accuplacer	24 (Writing) 36 (Reading)
Machais	480	Accuplacer	25 (Writing)
Orono	420	Diagnostic essays in class at weeks 1 and 5; graders look for clear argument and support from text	48 (Writing)
Presque Isle	500/ACT 18	Local test: reading and essay	81 (Writing) 38 (Reading)
USM	550	Local test: multiple choice plus writing sample in class week 1	366 (Writing)
Maritime Academy	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NO DEV COURSES

* All campuses, with the exception of USM and UMFK, require matriculated and non-matriculated students to meet placement criteria before enrolling in classes; USM applies criteria only to matriculated students. UMA and USM have a high proportion of non-traditional students. Orono differs in placement procedures from the other campuses. Students with less than 420 SAT-V are placed in the Onward program, which requires a developmental writing course. All other admits do self placement with extensive counseling. The University assumes all regularly admitted students are ready for college writing, unless evidence is presented to the contrary.

Colleges use SAT scores for admissions purposes, but also establish SAT cut off scores for placement into college writing. As demonstrated above, cut-off scores for admission and placement are different across the seven campuses. Within each campus, there is usually a higher cut-off for placement into a college writing course than for admission into the university.

Students who meet the SAT cut-off proceed into 100 level courses; those that do not have to take additional placement assessments. These assessments determine whether a student will enroll in a 100 level course or a developmental course. Developmental courses incur regular tuition costs, but do not count toward graduation or toward a student's GPA. Enrollment in a 100-level writing course is a prerequisite for entry into many majors and general education courses, so placement into a developmental course has a significant impact on a student's choice of courses and progress through a degree.

There is a significant rate of failure or non-completion for students who are placed into 100-level writing courses. In the words of the Director of Writing at the University of Maine, "The biggest problem seems to be lack of preparation for the rigor that a writing course requires. Our course requires reading of sophisticated material and reference to that material in the articulation of a writer's own argument. We expect students to write several revisions to get papers to a satisfactory level. Many, however, need to write six or seven revisions in order to produce a coherent argument because they are simply not prepared for the kind of work and/or the level of intensity we are asking of them. Those willing to keep up with the assignments almost always do well. Not all are willing. It is not at all unusual for several students to walk away from a section of first-year writing early in the semester and then to have to take the course again."

An instructor at the Maine Maritime Academy draws a similar picture: "MMA has consistently maintained that its students should arrive prepared to do college-level work. The reality is that many of our students are totally unprepared or under-prepared to write college-level material. Reading critically is a low priority for many of the students who insist they came to MMA because it's a 'hands-on' college. However, the 'hands-on' tradition here means being able to read and comprehend an extraordinarily difficult thermodynamics text as well as other engineering texts."

A community college instructor comments that students tend to write pieces that are all one paragraph, that they are unfamiliar with the conventions of citation (and thus they plagiarize), and that they do not know what a thesis statement is. The difficulties faced by such students put their college educations at risk. Students who do not complete the required 100-level writing course at USM, for instance, have difficulty continuing in college. A recent survey of enrollment data determined that around 80% of students who did not complete college writing were no longer enrolled in college two semesters later.

B. Tasks and Assignments in 100-level writing courses

At a conference in April 2005, 100-level English instructors from ten Maine universities and community colleges shared the materials and activities they use in the first several weeks of their courses. Although each instructor had designed activities to serve particular student populations and institutional contexts, the group agreed that all the courses shared the qualities listed below.

In high school English, students read novels, stories, plays, and poems. In college writing, students read analytical essays, academic papers, literary essays, and journalism.

1. Reading in first-year college writing courses

Readings assigned in the first week of the courses included texts by Malcolm X, Richard Rodriguez, Paulo Freire, Bertrand Russell, Lucille Clifton, Garrison Keillor, Susan Sontag, and D. Graham Burnett. This list differs significantly from the readings in most secondary-level English courses.

To succeed in the first year, students must write beyond their own experience. The courses put heavy emphasis on revision and rewrites, over time and immediately. All the courses address grammar, but not in isolation from other aspects of writing.

The courses teach writing as a way to make cognitive connections with reading. Students are required to interact with, use, and extend the ideas in the reading.

2. Writing in first-year college writing courses

The courses teach writing as a way to make cognitive connections with reading. Students are required to interact with, use, and extend the ideas in the reading. All courses move toward analytical writing, away from narrative.

Students are held accountable for using correct Standard Written English and for finding and correcting their own errors. Instructors in developmental courses, those which do not receive college credit, spend substantial time on grammar and usage.

At some point in every course, students are pushed to create more complex theses. Simply having a thesis is not enough. Students learn the difference between summary and analysis. Instructors work with this distinction in order to help students write papers that make arguments, rather than just rehashing the reading.

C. Expectations of Students

All the college courses share an emphasis on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation: the critical thinking skills at the high end of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Collaboration and peer review are used extensively, from the first week of the course.

Academic integrity is a topic at the beginning of the course. Students are expected to cite responsibly and correctly from sources. We accustom our students to verbal expression, both oral and written. Reading out loud, group work, and discussion provide opportunities for practice.

Students are asked to grapple with complex ideas. In college writing courses, they are asked to read academic articles, as well as literature, from the first week.

The more reading, and the more different kinds of reading, students have done before they come to college, the more confident and successful they are in their first year.

D. Expectations of College Instructors

Instructors must work to establish both trust and high expectations. Reading strategies are explicitly taught. Instructors walk students through a text, point out its features, and explain how to get the most out of a text. They discuss how to read complex, theoretical, professional, and experimental texts. They work with students on how to annotate, respond to, and question a text.

Instructors design the beginning of the course to pull students into an academic community, establishing collegiality, connection, confidence, and trust.

All instructors work with grammar, style, and usage in their courses. Instructors provide models for writing and peer revision.

Texts by both professional and student writers are used as models. Instructors give students individual attention, through careful comments on papers and through individual conferences.

Instructors adjust courses (but not their expectations) to meet students' varying needs. In Maine, college instructors teach many first-generation college students, so they must clarify expectations about classroom decorum, study time outside of class, campus resources, etc. Socialization to being in college is part of each first-year writing course.

II. Continuities and Discontinuities Between High School and College Standards and Expectations

To clarify the continuities and discontinuities between high school and college work in Maine, this report examined several different kinds of materials.

High School Materials used in this report	College Materials used in this report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Maine Learning Results</i> • An essay question from the Maine Educational Assessment • • A sample Local Assessment provided by the Department of Education 	<p>The SAT and Accuplacer tests used by universities to determine whether students need remedial courses.</p> <p>Essay questions used to determine whether/ students need remedial courses.</p> <p>Assignments and activities from 100-level writing courses</p>

A. Continuities between high school and college standards and expectations

1. Dependence on the SAT

The SAT is used by both higher education and schools to determine readiness for college. Schools use SAT scores to guide students toward college selection. Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and placement purposes.

2. Use of timed essays for assessment

UM, USM, and UMF all use timed essays along with standardized tests when determining whether students need to take remedial writing courses in the first year. (A sample prompt and two student responses are included in Appendix I of this report.)

At UMF, the placement test is a 50-minute response to one of six prompts. The instructions ask students “to write an essay with a clear thesis and supporting details.” Faculty members who score the placement essays look for “clear and meaningful content, appropriate structure that leads the reader through the essay, and sentences that are free of errors,” according to the instructions.

There are significant similarities between the prompts for student writing at USM and UM.

To successfully respond to any of these prompts, a student must:

- *read a passage between 250 and 1500 words long*
- *develop an argument in response to a specific question about the passage*
- *use both information and ideas from the passage in the argument*
- *analyze and evaluate ideas and information in the passage*
- *relate information and ideas in the passage to another passage or text*
- *employ standard written English*

There are some continuities between college and high school timed essays on assessments. Skills required in writing timed essay in college align with the following *Maine Learning Results*: (a) “explore ideas, to present lines of thought, to represent and reflect on human experience (b) comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate what they have read...and (3) learn to access, understand, and evaluate current information...in an integrated social studies program...and to actively engage in inquiry, research, debate, and in-depth learning.”

3. Types of Writing Assignments

There are also some continuities between assignments in high school and those in college. School districts in Maine are in the process of developing assessment tasks to measure their students’ progress. Examples of such assessments are provided by the Department of Education at its website: <http://www.state.me.us/education/lsalt/LAD/english9-12.htm>.

One such assessment asks students to read an essay about global warming written by a high school student. They are then asked to categorize statements in the essay as facts or opinions, and to make inferences about actions discussed in the essay. This assessment can be found in Appendix II. It was chosen for this report because it is in some ways aligned closely with the work in college courses.

The alignment with college writing courses is in this assessment’s topicality, its requirement that students read and respond to an expository text, and its interdisciplinary nature.

B. Discontinuities

1. College placement tests and the Maine Learning Results

There are three kinds of assessments used for placement into College Writing: the SAT, the Accuplacer (a standardized measure used in four UMS campuses and all of the community colleges), and locally designed tests.

The SAT focuses on vocabulary in the critical reading section. It is also likely that evaluation of the new writing section will take vocabulary into account. In contrast, the only mention of vocabulary in the Learning Results is in the discussion of informational texts.

Students are expected to work with abbreviations, acronyms, and technical terms, but not with more general vocabulary or with academic vocabulary.

The Accuplacer Test includes items testing knowledge of

- complete sentence recognition
- sentence coordination
- sentence subordination
- clear sentence logic

The Maine Learning Results document, in section F, “Standard English Conventions,” claims that students “will write and speak correctly, using conventions of standard written and spoken English.” The indicators in this section mention subordinating and coordinating conjunctions, but not the concepts of coordination and subordination.

The Learning Results do not explicitly mention sentence completion or sentence logic, two topics that are assessed on all three placement tests.

2. Essay questions as used in high schools and college

The most noticeable difference between the essay questions used for placement in universities and the standards for writing in the Maine Learning Results and used in most high school classes is the universities’ almost exclusive focus (in these prompts) on abstraction: argument, analysis, discussion. College faculty often say to students, “I am not asking how you feel about this issue; I’m asking what you think about this issue.”

The Maine Educational Assessment, the test used to “measure student and school progress in achieving the high academic standards set forth in Maine’s *Learning Results*,” according to the Department of Education, separates reading from writing. For example, one recent essay prompt for 11th graders was “What if there were eight days in a week? Write about how you would use the additional day.”

The LAD essay suggested for inclusion in the Local Assessment System about global warming that was referenced earlier, though more closely aligned with college writing assignments, also differs in its level of cognitive demand from college assignments and placement testing tasks. The local assessment asks students to identify and label aspects of the ideas, such as fact and opinion, but not to develop ideas of their own. The assignments that appear in Appendix II also demonstrate the differences in cognitive demand.

Direction like “explain,” “decide,” “analyze,” and “draw conclusions” have different meanings for high school and college writing.

College instructors treat work like that required by this assignment not as a finished product, but as part of the prewriting or preparation necessary for writing an essay.

Research in composition suggests that asking students to write in new and different forms causes noticeable changes in their writing. As they work on new tasks, students experience what developmental theorists call “regression.” According to Richard Haswell, errors such as faulty parallelism “naturally follow when new skill and knowledge frames replace old ones, reflecting the self-contradiction, unevenness, unstable alienation, and re-active give-and-take” of learning (196). Such experiences should be part of learning in both high school and college. If a student’s first experience of such unevenness and instability is on a placement test, however, he or she is likely to feel unprepared and insecure in the new college environment.

III. Easing the Transitions from High School to College Writing: Competences and Recommendations

Michael W. Kirst has recently claimed that “schools should. . .make it clear that a minimum competency state high school graduation test is *not* intended to measure college readiness”(2004, 53). The discontinuities identified here suggest that Maine schools and colleges are not communicating clearly to students what skills and competencies are necessary for college readiness.

This report closes by identifying the competencies necessary for success in college writing and by making recommendations for further action

A. Competencies for college readiness in writing

In order to be successful in college writing, students should have developed competence in the following areas before graduating from high school

- *developing arguments in writing and using evidence to support arguments*
- *using ideas from reading in new contexts*
- *evaluating arguments found in reading according to logical rules*
- *creating coherence between parts of an essay*
- *revising sentences for logic, completeness*
- *using subordination, coordination, and parallelism comfortably*
- *reading analytical texts which make arguments*
- *use academic vocabulary*
- *participating in discussions and in peer review of drafts*

B. Recommendations for further action

In order to ease the transitions from high school to college writing, we recommend the following:

- *Continuing dialogue between high school and university faculties would help teachers on both sides of the transition understand students' needs and experiences*
- *The State should consider the opportunity to integrate statewide 11th-grade assessment with college readiness and placement criteria. Connecting the results of this assessment to scholarships, indications of college readiness, or other stakes that matter to students would help to produce meaningful scores.*
- *Universities should share sample placement tests and scoring with high schools.*
- *Shared vocabulary would help teachers and students negotiate the work on both sides of the high school/college transition. Right now, an "expository essay" written in high school looks significantly different from an "expository essay" written in a 100-level writing class in college. Documents such as the Maine Learning Results use terms such as "persuade," "evaluate," and "analyze" in significantly different ways from the assignments written by 100-level instructors at the college level.*
- *Students in all college preparatory classes in high schools should have access to the tools they need for successful transitions to college. Right now, the "college prep" or "general" courses in many high schools are significantly different from the "honors" or "AP" tracks.*
- *In order to support high school teachers' high expectations for college-bound students, universities should make their expectations clearer and their policies more transparent, and perhaps strive for greater consistency. The State's universities should inform students and parents about the skills and knowledge required for success in college*

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IV. Appendices

- A. Samples of writing from first-year college students
- B. Assignments used in high school and college writing courses statewide
- C. Grading rubrics from Maine public colleges and universities
- D. Descriptions of class discussions in 100-level writing

Appendix A : Sample student essays from first year college students

Below is a writing prompt given to English 100 students at USM, followed by two sample student essays & instructor comments.

Prompt:

Please write an essay responding to the question below. You will not be graded on this essay; it is an opportunity to get started in the course and to see how you write now. Do take some time at the end to check over for any changes you would like to make. It's fine to cross out and change words or sentences.

In the introduction to *Literacies*, one of the readers used in College Writing at USM, the editors summarize Robert Scholes' definition of what makes a good reader. Good readers, they write, "have to read a text closely and openly enough to risk being swayed by what it says. . . But good readers, he believes, do not stop there. Having submitted for a while to someone else's meanings in a text, they step back, reconsider from their own perspective, and find ways to evaluate based on what they bring to the reading and what they know of the world. After having temporarily 'surrendered,' good readers use their critical skills to 'recover' their own integrity and shape their own meanings, Scholes says, which may now be broader and more powerful because they will incorporate elements of both persons' perspectives."

In your essay, describe your experience of reading a particular text, and explain whether Scholes would see you as a "good reader" in this case. Do you find Scholes' definition helpful? If no, explain how you would revise it.

Sample student essay #1:

The definition of a good reader as proposed by Robert Scholes details the reading process in such a way that likens it to the researching process. When researching one must consider the fact, figures, and findings of each cited source, in the face of inconsistencies among these bits of information, which

there are almost certain to be, the research must set to work. He must use background knowledge, newly acquired knowledge present in his sources, and critical thinking (as opposed to common sense) to conclude on a mixture of all three areas of knowledge in his final project, paper, theory etc. Ideally this final product will be just that, a *product* of multiple components, a mixture of several different pieces of information from several different sources which then creates this final product as a new and reliable source of both composite and new information. The reading process, according to Scholes is in effect research for the mind simply put in his own words; “*After having temporarily ‘surrendered,’ good readers use their critical skills to ‘recover’ their own integrity and shape their own meanings, Scholes says, which may now be broader and more powerful because they will incorporate elements of both persons’ perspectives.*”

Although I would in general like to consider myself this kind of well-balanced reader, Scholes’ definition for which I find to be the epitome of why reading is essential, beyond the entertainment and mind sharpening it provides, I can think almost solely of works of fiction with which I have prescribed to this method of being a good reader rather than non-fiction. This is, I recognize to be a result of my willingness to trust an author more so than I trust myself on a given subject. With works of non-fiction I find that I give myself over to the author and do not necessarily return as Scholes suggests that we surrender only temporarily.

With works of fiction, I am thinking particularly of George Orwell’s *1984*, and Mitch Albom’s *The Five People you meet in Heaven* I allowed their worlds, and the rules that governed them to envelope my mind each time I picked up the covers in which they were contained. Between each reading I would consider what I had just opened my mind to. Then at the conclusion of each book I realized that my thoughts on society, authority, and government would never be the same with respect to *1984*. And my personal human desire to contemplate and comprehend a higher being and a life beyond the current would be forever influenced by the words of Mitch Albom. With respect to each book the contents of their pages influence but do not dictate my thoughts on these subjects holding true to what Robert Scholes’ defines a good reader. “. . . which now may be broader and more powerful because they will incorporate elements of both person’s perspectives.”

Instructor comment on essay #1:

This sample was evaluated by the course instructor as proficient college writing for a beginning student. There are problems with the sample: it contains sentence-level errors and it is strained by a perhaps unnecessary syntactic complexity. But the student is able to integrate ideas from the passage into a new context, and to use examples from prior reading to explain an idea about this reading. The student is able to point out an idea that is implied but not directly stated in the passage, that “the final product will be. . . a product of multiple

components.” And the student makes an interesting distinction between reading fiction and non-fiction texts.

Sample student essay #2:

Interview with the Vampire by Anne Rice was a novel that engulfed my thoughts and entrapped my attention. In the book the vampire expressed his feelings of guilt and grief of the loved ones who he left and watched grow at a distance and die. Everyone can relate to a love one passing away and feeling utterly alone. The vampire uses the beauty of the world to stay in touch with the human race. Creating and viewing beauty of the world is something every human has in common with each other. I believe that Scholer would see me as a good reader because I can “use critical skills to uncover [my] own integrity and shape [my] own meanings.” I can be entranced and hypnotized by words and then am able to take a step back and see the similarities in the world and in my life in relation to a book. The book has reminded me how sweet life is and all that is taken for granted.

Instructor Comment on essay #2:

This sample was judged by the instructor as not proficient. The student misreads the prompt’s passage from Scholes, arguing that “using critical skills” in reading is the same as “seeing similarities” between the reading and one’s own life. The sample is too short to be an essay; more space would have given the student room to explore concepts like “integrity” or “critical skills.” In general, this student works with generalizations and simple comparisons: that we should all appreciate the sweetness of life, that reading is a way to “relate” to what all people have in common.

Appendix B: Writing Assignments used in high school and college courses

This section provides a sequence of writing assignments from (1) high school, (2) a developmental writing course and (3) 100 level courses.

1. High school assignments: Below are examples of an 11th grade MEA writing prompt and a Local Assessment Development task. These and other sample assessments can be found on the Maine Department of Education website at:
<http://www.state.me.us/education/lsalt/LAD/english9-12.htm>.

MEA Prompt:

What if there were eight days in a week? Write about how you would use the additional day?

Local Assessment System Task:

Students are asked to read an essay about Global Warming written by a high school student. They are then given two tasks:

1. “As you consider the article, complete the table on the following page, categorizing statements or claims that are either fact or opinion. List 4 facts and 4 opinions.”
Students are also given an opportunity to exceed the Standards: “briefly explain how you designated a statement as fact or opinion. What was your thought process? What are the characteristics that helped you to decide?”
2. “In a written response, discuss two impacts President Bush’s refusal to sign the Kyoto Treaty may have on **science & technology**. Offer specific examples of ways that the political decision may help or hurt the scientific effort to research and reduce global warming.”

Scorers are advised that a student who meets the standard

- a) accurately categorizes 4 statements as facts **and** 4 statements as opinions.
- b) demonstrates effects of political decision by including two impacts **with** supporting examples.

In order to exceed the standard, a student must **also**

- a) describe characteristics of facts and opinions, and
- b) include potential impacts for science and technology in other countries besides the United States.

2. Developmental Writing Assignments:

Instructor: Theresa Swartz Roberts , UMF

For this item, choose one of the quotes below. You will respond to it, not necessarily agreeing or disagreeing. Instead, let the quote be a jumping-off point for your essay. Make sure your finished essay has a thesis. Use the writing process to see what develops.

First, prewrite, being sure to show your work (five points).

Then, write a thesis statement about the quote. Underline the thesis statement as it appears in your essay (five points).

Write a short essay about it, complete with an introduction (eight points), body (eight points), and conclusion (eight points).

Finally, go over what you have written, editing for clarity and effect and checking for fragments and run-on sentences. (Ten points)

Quotes to choose from:

A. Nature has no mercy at all. Nature says, "I'm going to snow. If you have on a bikini and no snowshoes, that's tough. I am going to snow anyway."

--Maya Angelou (b. 1928), U.S. author, poet

B. Nature does nothing in vain.

--Aristotle (384-322 B. C.), Greek philosopher

C. Nature in America has always been suspect, on the defensive, cannibalized by progress. In America, every specimen becomes a relic.

--Susan Sontag (b. 1933), U.S. essayist

D. Nature knows no difference between weeds and flowers.

--Mason Cooley (b. 1927) U.S. aphorist (someone who says wise things)

3. 100 Level College Writing Assignments

Instructor: Christine Darrohn, UMF

Choosing one of the following options, write a carefully organized essay:

- Focusing on one or more examples from Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," examine how Walker uses authors and other artists as she creates her argument about what it has meant to be an African American female artist. As well as precisely describing what Walker does, explore the implications of her method. How is this method related to the issues that she examines? Feel free to make use of the research that you and your peers presented on the people mentioned in Walker's essay. For suggestions on how to explore this topic, you might find the descriptions of the first of the "Assignments for Writing" on pp. 747-48 and Assignment 3 on pp. 882 helpful.
- Both Alice Walker in "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" and Marianne Hirsch in "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy" are, according to the editors of our textbook, "concerned with understanding, promoting, and preserving [their] relationship to the past, a past that is both [their] famil[ies'] past and part of twentieth-century history" (749). Exploring significant similarities and/or differences between Walker's and Hirsch's essays as you focus on both what is said and how it is said, explain the kinds of relationship to the past that Walker and Hirsch advocate. In addition to presenting examples from the two essays, feel free to generate your own examples to illuminate what Walker and Hirsch claim is a constructive relationship between present and past.
- If you have an idea for a different essay in which you interact thoughtfully with Walker's or Hirsch's essay, share it with me. If it sounds like a promising idea, I would be happy to give you permission to write it.

No matter which option you choose, please do the following:

- Before you draft and as you revise, develop strong claims by following the method sketched in "Cultivating a Strong Claim" handout.
- Pay special attention to paragraphing, keeping in mind what we reviewed in our in-class exercises, especially the importance of creating meaningful sequences of paragraphs and using topic sentences to state and connect main ideas. To facilitate your attention to paragraphing, create a postdraft outline of an early draft before completing the final draft of your essay.
- Of course work responsibly with your sources, adhering to the guidelines for academically responsible paraphrasing and quoting that we practiced in class. In addition, use MLA-style parenthetical citations and create a works cited page even if the only work you cite is the essay from our textbook. To create the works cited entry for an essay in our textbook, use as your model example 14, "work in an anthology," in section 56b of The Bedford Handbook.
- The essay should be approximately 1000-1250 words.

Note from the instructor: "Our students are accustomed to thinking of evidence as simply that which proves a claim. Because I want students to be writers who use writing as a means of thinking and to realize that this process is gradual and recursive, I explicitly define evidence as that which enables a writer to generate, test, and refine a claim, as well as to prove a claim."

Instructor: Tiane Donahue, UMF

Read these two selections:

Edward H. Carr, “The Historian and His Facts,” from *What is History?*

Carr argues that writing history is much more than simply establishing what happened in the past.

Maria Calvado, “History and Memory”

A first year student, Calvado discusses her memories as “history” using an autobiography by Mary McCarthy to imagine herself as an “amateur archeologist” of her own past.

Assignment: Write an essay addressing the following questions:

What do Carr and Calvado say about the writing of history? What problems about writing history do they identify? What do you think they believe about the job of the historian? Assume that your readers have read both passages; they do not need to be told what Carr and Calvado said. In other words, resist the urge to summarize the selections, and concentrate on analysis.

More important, what are your ideas about history and about writing history? Try to draw some general conclusion about writing or interpreting history, either as a subject of study, in terms of personal history, or both. Include a specific anecdote or story drawn from your own historical studies or personal experiences that supports your conclusion. Be sure to refer, where appropriate, to specific parts of both reading selections. However, it is not enough to quote from the selections—you must also explain what you think Carr and Calvado mean.

Instructor: Laima Sruoginis, USM

In her essay “What Did You Do in the War, Grandma?” Zoe Tracy Hardy recounts her personal experiences working at the Glenn L. Martin Company during World War II. By describing her personal experiences and observations Hardy interprets a “larger truth” about her role in the war effort. Similarly, Amitav Ghosh in his essay, “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi” retells his personal experiences within the backdrop of dramatic historical events. Both essayists consider the role of the average citizen within the context of large political struggles.

Write an essay comparing the two essays and the way in which the two essayists use large historical events to analyze simple human truths. What conclusions do both essayists come to about truth? About honesty? About a government’s relationship with the governed? Finally, bring in your own opinion. Do you believe that citizens need to be fully informed of military secrets during times of war and civil unrest? Consider our present political situation. Do you feel that you need to know exactly what your role is in the larger picture?

How do you perceive your role within the larger political drama our nation is now involved in?

Appendix C: Grading Rubrics from Maine public colleges and universities

This section contains sample grading rubrics for five college/university courses at the developmental and 100 level.

1. English 009: Developmental Writing, USM: Rubric

A	Responds comprehensively to assignment Authentic voice Coherent, unified; makes connections and uses transitional elements well Sentence-level errors minimal; evidence of strong proofreading and/or editing skills
B	Meets all expectations of assignment Competent content; may take some risks in content or style Well organized Strong sentence variety and/or diction Sentence-level errors minimal; evidence of proofreading skill
C	Adequately meets expectations of assignment Recognizable organization Limited sentence variety and/or diction Meets minimal requirements for topic development Sentence-level errors generally under control, although they may be numerous. The errors, however, do not impede readability.
D	Neglects or avoids the general nature of the assignment Serious lack of topic development No discernible pattern of organization Weak content Recurrent, serious sentence-level errors; these affect/distract from readability
F	Does not address the issue(s) raised by assignment Frequent, serious sentence-level errors interfere with readability

2. English 100, USM: Rubric

A paper

The principal characteristic of the "A" paper is its rich content. The information is presented in such a way that the reader feels significantly taught by the author. The writer sustains a thoughtful, analytic argument, looking at ideas from more than one point of view, asking difficult questions and following them up with analysis. Sometimes a paper achieves an A because a student develops a thoughtful and well-defined interpretive approach and an awareness of his or her own position in relation to the positions in the assigned readings.

An A paper must demonstrate the writer making substantial interpretive connections between the ideas of two or more texts.

It is also marked by stylistic finesse: the title and opening paragraph are engaging; the transitions are substantive rather than superficial; the phrasing is tight, fresh, and highly specific; the sentence structure is varied; and the tone contributes to the meaning of the paper. Sentence-level error must be minimal.

Often an A paper has one or two "B" or even "C" moments, but they do not significantly detract from the overall force of the paper.

Finally the "A" paper leaves the reader with a sense of having read—and being eager to reread—a complete, satisfying piece of work.

B paper

The "B" paper is significantly more than competent. It delivers substantial information—substantial in both quality and interest. The paper does everything a C essay does but offers a sustained and meaningful structure and a project that is more complex than what one finds in a C-range paper. The paper might tackle a significant contradiction, problem, or moment of connection in the readings and develop it in a sustained way.

The paper shows the student beginning to take interpretive risks, responding to the assignment and to the readings in thoughtful and distinctive ways.

The use of words in the "B" paper is more precise and concise than in the "C" paper.

The paper demonstrates coherence in its overall presentation: the relationships between the paper's parts are clear. The transitions between paragraphs are for the most part smooth, and the sentence structure is skillfully varied.

B papers may include "C" moments in otherwise well-reasoned and well-developed analyses.

Sentence-level error must be minimal. Sentence structure is varied, with competent use of subordination.

C paper

The "C" paper is competent: it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors, and is reasonably well organized and developed. C papers demonstrate the student's ability to work with more than one reading and to create meaningful connections between assigned readings.

C papers comment on and use the ideas in the readings rather than just summarizing them.

Papers often achieve a passing grade by demonstrating one outstanding or two significant moments of analysis in an otherwise flawed or undistinguished performance.

C papers often create coherent relationships between paragraphs even if they have not developed a larger organizational structure.

In a C paper there is evidence of an emerging project—something the student wants the paper to accomplish.

A C paper has sentence-level errors under control. Although errors may appear on each page, they do not significantly impede the meaning of the essay. Sentence structure is somewhat varied and there is some use of subordination. There are fewer than three of the following kinds of errors per page: mixed construction, fragments, verb endings.

D paper

This paper resembles a rough draft. It may reveal some organization, but what is presented is neither clear nor effective. It may contain the germ of some good ideas, but these are not well developed or unified.

A D paper may do one thing really well and another not at all—for instance, it may be full of interesting ideas but entirely without formal control. Or it may be very correct and neat but present no original ideas at all.

A D paper may overgeneralize about the reading or depend largely on undirected summary. Or it may depend on uncritical personal response in order to avoid dealing with the reading directly.

It is unable to make a meaningful connection between two of the assigned readings. It might place quotes or other key conceptual terms from the two works side by side, implying but never analyzing or explaining the connection. It might include summaries of two or three works followed by some analysis of individual works but never sustains the analysis or shows connections between the works. Alternatively, these papers sometimes attempt a series of connections that do not make much sense.

A D paper often has a significant pattern of sentence-level error, especially with sentence boundaries, verbs, and mixed construction.

F paper

An F paper does not engage with the assigned readings and does not work effectively with quotations.

An F paper demonstrates a serious lack of basic reading comprehension or an inability to grasp the outline of an author's argument.

It has no coherent sense of project, little sense of the connections between paragraphs, and/or no organizational structure.

It has significant sentence-level error that makes the essay difficult to follow. A paper should not pass if the following kinds of errors occur more than once or twice a page: fragments, mixed constructions, incorrect verb endings.

It does not meet the assignment's minimum page-length (4.5 pages for most papers in College Writing).

These criteria were adapted from grading criteria used at Wake Forest University and Rutgers University.

3. English 100, University of Maine: Rubric

A	The writing shows insightful and substantial commitment to the assignment and assurance with the vocabulary and conventions of academic discourse.
B	The writing goes beyond competence; it shows thoughtful commitment to the subject and assurance with the conventions of academic discourse. It has the strengths of a C paper and these further qualities: It shows a thorough understanding of and personal commitment to the assignment. It is logically and rhetorically focused. It is substantially developed throughout. Its sentences are correct and at least occasionally varied. It shows only minor problems with spelling and punctuation. Its vocabulary is precise.

C	<p>The writing demonstrates competence. It has these strengths:</p> <p>It shows the writer’s understanding of the assignment and ability to fulfill its purposes.</p> <p>It is unified.</p> <p>Its major assertions are logically connected.</p> <p>Its development is substantial enough to be convincing.</p> <p>Its sentences are correct.</p> <p>Its spelling and punctuation are under control.</p> <p>It has only occasional sentence-level errors; they do not interfere with comprehension.</p> <p>Its words are correct, if not always fully effective.</p>
D	<p>The writing is marginally competent. It shows some of the following flaws:</p> <p>It demonstrates only a partial understanding of the assignment.</p> <p>It is in parts so minimally developed that it does not engage its reader.</p> <p>It shows an uncertain grasp of academic discourse conventions.</p> <p>It shows spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary problems so severe that they interfere with comprehension.</p>
E	<p>The writing is unacceptable; it suggests that the writer did not understand the assignment or has only an uncertain grasp of the conventions of academic discourse.</p>

Note: The phrase “conventions of academic discourse” means different things in the contexts of different academic disciplines. In ENG 101 it refers to the use of introductions that establish a critical context for the coming argument, the use of details and lines of reasoning in support of assertions, the appropriate use of textual evidence, and the use of various textual features to achieve coherence throughout an argument.

4. English 100, UMF: Rubrick

In an outstanding paper, all of the following will be true:

- A). The essay as a whole is interesting to readers who have not read the sources and who are part of the UMF college community.
- B). The introduction gets the reader excited about continuing the essay, finding out what it's about.
- C). The introduction gives a sense of direction for the rest of the essay, sets it up.
- D). The writer's personal experiences and the theoretical insights from the reading are balanced, interrelated, woven back and forth in the essay.
- E). The writer works both "with the grain" and "against the grain" of the reading.
- F). The writer's interpretations of the reading, as shown by the summaries, paraphrases, explanations, and so on, are accurate.
- G). The writer's explorations of the ideas in the reading move beyond classroom discussion and partial understanding; the reader might feel intrigued or surprised by the writer's perspective.
- H). Each paragraph gives a feel of wholeness, covers the idea it sets out to cover, leaves no important questions about the idea unanswered unless there is an authorial reason to do so.
- I). The shifts from one idea to another, whether within a paragraph or between paragraphs, are comfortable—there's no sense of "wait, how did we get to this next idea?" and no need to re-read the few sentences beforehand to figure out the connection.
- J). As paragraphs are developed, ideas are offered that move beyond a simple "claim-support" structure to more complicated forms of development.
- K). Individual sentences make sense.
- L). Sentences don't all follow the same syntactic pattern; there is syntactic variation (subordination, coordination, embedding, etc.) without unnecessarily convoluted structures.
- M). There are no grammar mistakes that make the reader feel the writer is not in control of his/her language and ideas.
- N). MLA in-text citations are correct. Quotes, paraphrases, summaries, ideas from the reading are all cited.
- O). The essay ends with some form of conclusion, even if it is short and to the point.

In a very good paper, all of these elements will be attempted but the quality of a few will fall short.

In an average paper, all of these elements will be attempted but the quality of some will fall short.

In a below average paper, not all of these elements will be attempted or the quality of all will fall short.

5. Portfolios for ENG 101, Central Maine Community College: Rubric

A	Portfolio is complete and well organized. Essays have been completed on time. The writing is fluent in content and style. Essays reflect the writer’s ability to critically evaluate and interpret information to support a clear point of view. The writer demonstrates the ability to revise independently, reaching beyond others’ suggestions. Reflective papers reveal sophisticated insight about the writing process and the qualities of good writing. Borrowed information is documented correctly. The writer employs skillful use of sentence structure. The portfolio demonstrates the student’s mastery of all course objectives. [Sophisticated]
B	The portfolio is complete and well organized; essays have been completed on time. They are effectively constructed, with relevant information selected to support a clear point of view. Revisions demonstrate the writer’s ability to recognize and make necessary changes in content, structure and style, based on input from peers and instructors. Reflective papers are thoughtful assessments of the essay and process, demonstrating the writer’s awareness of influences on quality of writing. Borrowed information is documented correctly. Sentences are clear and generally correct. The portfolio demonstrates the student’s competent achievement of course objectives. [Effective]
C	The Portfolio is complete. Essays are adequately composed, and address the assigned topic. Support for the main point may be insufficient, disorganized, or general. Revisions, though complete, are not as thorough as necessary and may disregard good advice given in reviews. Reflective papers, though descriptive of essay and process, appear obligatory and lack the insight of papers contained in A or B portfolios. Borrowed information is documented correctly. Sentences exhibit frequent errors in style or mechanics. The portfolio demonstrates the student’s understanding of the course objectives, though they may not be evenly met. [Adequate]
D	The Portfolio is complete, but may be poorly organized. Quality of writing is marginal: essays fail to address the assignment, ideas may be unclear or disorganized. Support is meager and details are incomplete. Revisions are superficial, and reflective papers do not demonstrate an adequate understanding of the qualities of the process of writing. Documentation style is incorrectly applied. Sentence-level errors (mechanical or stylistic) interfere with the readability of the paper. The portfolio represents only minimal understanding of the course

	objectives. [Marginal]
F	The Portfolio is unacceptable for any of the following reasons: it is incomplete, papers are either not revised, or revision is limited to correcting mechanical errors; mechanical errors are so serious as to interfere with readability; the writer offers no evidence of understanding the process of writing, the portfolio contains plagiarized work. The student has not met the course objectives. [Unacceptable]

Appendix D: Descriptions of Class Discussions in 100 level writing

Activities, goals, and pedagogies vary from campus to campus and from section to section of 100-level writing. The following account gives examples of discussion in one class: ENG 100 with Richard Swartz, USM. The observation was written by Suzanne Philbrick, an English major in her senior year. Who was an intern in the class as part of a senior seminar in literacy studies.

The students from my internship class had to write their first paper in response to the question, "Why are you at USM now?". Their second paper assignment was a rewrite of the first. Obviously, both of these were very personal response-type papers that required very little thought about integrating academic material to support an argument or illustrating key points. Their third assignment is to write a paper responding to an article by Robert Kloss, which asserts that genuine learning involves loss. The basic premise is that college students must let go of many dearly treasured and widely accepted belief systems in order to learn university-level material. It suggests that students go through a sort of transitional period where they feel resistant to believing what they are being taught because it is opposed to what they have believed for many years. Once they understand that they have to give up some old ideas so they can integrate new ones, they often feel a sense of dismay, uncertainty and loss.

This is an interesting way to get into this whole writing-about-feelings-versus-ideas issue, I think. First of all, Professor Swartz starts with two highly personalized papers that require little, or perhaps more accurately in most cases, no, thought about discourse or academic terminology. All they really had to do was to write about their feelings and experiences in a coherent, grammatically accurate manner. His grading for the first paper was almost exclusively based on grammar, style, paragraph coherence and how well ideas were explained. I will say that the grades were awful. Truly, the highest grade was a "C" and most were well below that. Due to the nature of the second paper, I suspect the grading procedure will be very similar, but I think they have a better shot for a decent grade because he's gone over many of the mechanical issues he wanted addressed in class. Professor Swartz introduced Kloss AFTER they got their horrendous grades back. In essence, they EXPERIENCED the loss Kloss talks about. He had them write these papers that sounded so easy; they felt very confident of receiving good grades when they turned in their papers; they received poor grades and they were blown away. I was there that day. I'm surprised someone didn't take a contract out on Professor Swartz's life...they were so angry. After that class, the professor started doing more with how to think about and use ideas instead of feelings.

During the next class session, Professor Swartz lectured on the difference between writing a paper about more subjective concepts (i.e. feelings) as opposed to objective ideas. This was one of the toughest classes for me to sit quietly through because I really think he was brilliant in the way he got this through their heads. He opened the discussion with where they were and what they were doing when they first heard

about the September 11 attacks. Seventy-five percent of the class responded to this discussion. Some were quite emotional and expressive as they spoke. Professor Swartz revealed that he had known someone on one of the planes.

Once he had them all getting into the feelings aspect, he specifically told them that he wanted them to shift gears, and he asked if anyone knew exactly what Al Quaida's stated mission is and why they have that mission. Lots of guesses emerged before he told them that Al Quaida's main stated goal is to get westerners out of Saudi Arabia and more specifically, Mecca. He went into a bit about the historical context and how Mecca is a very sacred location for Islam. He asked them to think about what would happen if people who believed the polar opposite of Christianity were to move into Jerusalem or Bethlehem or even Rome and start making cultural changes through their mere presence. Even if they weren't overtly doing anything to harm Christianity, could it be construed as malicious? How would Christians react? Might they (and perhaps we) think they have some justification for reacting that way? What measures would be adequate to get it to stop? What would be too much?

Once most of them seemed to be thinking through the implications, he was very specific once again: he reminded them about how a few moments before, everyone in the room was having his or her own emotional reaction to the memory of 9/11, but that their thought process changed dramatically when they started talking about and considering the ideas that brought the event to fruition. He asked them if knowing that information made them change their feelings; all said, "no." He asked if knowing the information gave them a better understanding of why it happened; most said, "yes." He went on to make the point that knowing the "why" didn't alter the feeling and the feeling didn't alter the "why." He went on to ask how they would integrate the feelings and the "why" into a paper if it had been assigned topic. By this point, most of the students were very reflective and a bit drained, I think, but they started coming up with some good ideas. They fed off each other as they talked about writing about their own experience of 9/11 and how they felt first, but then, many were able to start putting out ideas explaining who or what Al Quaida is and what their beliefs are. They included some bits about geographic location and some historical context, too. To me, it was a really intriguing way to get the students to make this huge leap in a way they could connect with. It was a hard lecture and it really drew some emotional juice out of the group in my opinion, but the depth of emotion made the line between feelings and ideas very clear. When they were done, the students were drawing those distinctions with very little guidance from the professor. They could talk about the personal and launch into the impersonal without getting lost in the fuzzy areas in the middle.

This should be helpful in their third paper, which is responding to Kloss's argument that real learning involves loss. They are to use a personal experience of loss in learning and explain or support it using Kloss. Again, they are tapping feelings, but using an article's argument to prove or clarify their assertions, statements or whatever. It will be very interesting to see if they are able to keep the Al Quaida lecture in mind as they do this. I think it will be very hard for some of the younger ones because a

couple still have huge chips on their shoulders and they just don't pay attention in class, so the message may not have gotten through as well as it should have. If they read ahead on the syllabus, the professor's direction would be very clear, I think. It's a progression that gradually goes from one extreme of writing (the personal) to another (very objective argument). The problem I can see is that some are so wrapped up in their feelings that they have a really hard time to approach anything (of any sort) objectively. I think that will pose problems for some.

The second observation was written by Matthew Desenberg, also an intern in literacy studies. This is an account of a class discussion he led.

Every member of the class seemed to stay quite focused during the duration of our 30 minute talk about Edward Said's essay "States," which concerns the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I pretty much led the discussion, which was oriented around the questions at the end of the essay which they had written on as well as a series of points in the essay which I thought to be significant. I think the main reason the discussion was a success in terms of participation was that I consciously led the discussion towards areas where the students seemed to naturally gravitate. For example, one point in the essay talks about the majority of Palestinians being perceived as terrorists, which of course is far from the truth. Many students were struck by this, and this interest in turn prompted a further investigation into the various aspects of Palestinian culture which are highlighted by Said. The students contrasted these cultural statements with speculation on how they might be viewed by the outside world, positively or negatively, as well as how they relate to the evolution of the Palestinian people as a whole (the essay is strongly rooted in past-present comparisons, making the latter points significant). By following their natural interests in the subject and asking questions which built upon the discussion, I was able to engage more and more students as the class continued. In several instances, this also illuminated various ideas which I had not thought of, which further added to the development of the topic.

In addition to this, I took care to involve each student in the conversation by asking them to summarize their individual paper topics and give an example of a quotation they used to support their ideas, which they had experienced problems doing in the past. One girl in particular did not participate in the [earlier] discussion, so this invited/forced her to become involved through her paper topic, which ended up leading the conversation into a whole other area.