ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of the Empire State College Mentoring Institute

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

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Issue 3 • Spring 1994

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From the Editors
A Student-Centered Community
Lee Herman and Jay Gilbert

What's a "mentor"? What does it mean for education to be "student-centered" or "individualized"? There was a time when those questions were answered only this way: "The faculty is so diverse. No answer would be true for all, or even most. We don't want to make rules which will compromise our academic freedom." In a college considering itself progressive, how could one argue against "diversity" and "academic freedom"?

But recently, there's been a change, signs of community-seeking: collegewide discussions on workload and assessment, livelier all-faculty conferences, the reaffirmation and promulgation of "core values," faculty groups taking academic leadership within their centers, and of course the Mentoring Institute itself. What's caused the change? An inevitable period in the organizational life-cycle, an embattled feeling ("we'd best hang together lest we all hang separately"), simple professional loneliness? Who knows? Whatever the causes, it's clear at all sorts of occasions, such as the center workshops offered by the Mentoring Institute, that many of us want to share with each other our daily work, to find some common and supportive ways of talking seriously with each other about what we do. It's a talking which goes beyond the discussions we usually have to cperate our routines (assessment reviews, business meetings). Rather, we seem to be trying to find ways of locating our "grounds," some fundamental things we can explore together and build our work on, without getting in each other's way.

This isn't a movement toward "theory." Only a few of us surfed the wave of "meta-discourse," which rolled by and then washed out to sea. No, this; move toward community is something more intimate and earthy, an urge to gather 'round the fire, share stories and sing songs through the night. "Why don't we do this more often?" people ask at the end of MI workshops. It's not that the planned activities of those workshops have been so perfect. Indeed, the participants at every workshop have burst the formal structure and schedule; they want to linger and discuss their work, their mentoring problems and moves, and especially their students.

Do we have enough in common beyond the policies, procedures and routines to make a community? There has been something striking to those of us traveling the College for the MI over the past months: a passionate interest in and concern for students. Whether at Buffalo, with its reputation for high standards, or Labor with its fierce loyalty to its ways and constituency; at Rochester, with its proud, if lately tumultous, tradition or at Corporate College with its neonatal eagerness; at Long Island with its sedate seriousness about liberal studies; in the Hudson Valley family or among the grand veterans of Albany or the range-riding unit coordinators of Central New York -we mentors like to talk about our students.

It's not, by and large, the sort of talk we've all heard elsewhere: "We [faculty] had better do something about them [students], lest civilization as we know and love it expire anon." Mostly it's celebratory talk ("One of my students just finished ") and problem-solving talk ("I have a student who needs "). Even when it's troubled talk (see "Interactions"), it's mostly concerned with how we can do our jobs better rather than on what we ought to do "to them." This may be the stuff

of our bonding. It's rather rare stuff indeed.

To be sure, we have our differences. An important one is between the "curriculum-deliverers" and the "curriculum-inventors." Some mentors are more concerned with bringing an important body of knowledge to students, others with sustaining a process with students from which coherent, meaningful learning emerges. Whatever our different emphases, most of us probably do both and all of us seem concerned to help our students, each individual one of them, learn. (Perhaps this tension between "(content" and "process" is-dare we say?-"dialectical" and might constitute for us, a "discourse." But that's a topic for another discussion.)

As you read this issue of *All About Mentoring,* think about your own concerns for students and know that your ideas and stories and songs will be welcomed 'round the fire.

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Interviews with Mentors

In every issue of *All About Mentoring,* the editors hope to present two colleagues interviewing colleagues, about their work, their backgrounds, their thoughts about mentoring, ESC and other interests. We plan to present an interview with a newer mentor and a more senior one. If you would like to be interviewed, if you would like to interview someone, if you would like to suggest a colleague to be interviewed, please contact the editors.

Cate

Peggy Meerse, Fredonia and Jamestown

Last spring at the All College Conference, Catherine McAllister received the ESC Foundation's Award for Excellence in PartTime Mentoring. Just a day earlier she had successfully defended her dissertation at the University of Buffalo. Cate has taught writing and literature at the Fredonia Unit since 1986, and for much of that time I have shared office space with her. In interviewing her I hoped to capture the many qualities that her Fredonia colleagues appreciate and admire, including her dedication to students, her success in working with students at all levels, her kind and considerate attitude, and her amazing ability to remain calm and cheerful while raising her two boys, completing her education and carrying a heavy student load. We began by talking about her graduate work.

P: Could you tell something about the topic of your dissertation-and since you've been doing your graduate studies and mentoring together for several years now, could you talk about ways that they have reinforced each other, if they have?

C: In retrospect, I guess that mentoring with Empire State reinforced my desire to work on my own interests-so I chose for my dissertation topic the first long poem of Thomas Lake Harris, "An Epic of the Starry Heaven." Harris was a charismatic religious leader of the late nineteenth century who, for some time, lived nearby in Brocton with about 100 followers. His religious group, The Brotherhood of the New Life, grew grapes and ran a fairly successful winery here-they later moved to Santa Rosa. Harris was also an incredibly prolific poet. His work is uneven, but his vision is fascinating; since nothing had been done with his work, I wanted to handle it. I was lucky to have a committee who permitted me to work with such a little known figure.

In answer to the second part of your question, I would say that this process of working and going to school and caring for a family has reinforced my admiration for my students who are in that same multi-faceted role-and *yet* who are productive, calm and centered. I found this period of my life very taxing: you are placed under such stress. You worry that your family is being damaged by your busyness and preoccupation; you worry that your work in both your studies and your job is of poorer quality because your focus is divided. And these are only subdivisions of the main worry: Is this all worth it? There's no guarantee that the personal, family and financial sacrifices will bring the benefits you hope for. I think you have to remind yourself constantly that the role of student or scholar is one of dignity and value and honor, and that security is found in the present endeavor instead of being relegated to some idealized future situation. So I think of this with my students. I see them involved in courageous and honorable work now, instead of this process only being the

means to an end.

P: What are your plans for future scholarly work?

C: I feel as though I am still recovering from finishing school l didn't think it would take months to feel motivated again. But I'm working on preparing a library research guide for our students here-a practical project. And I would like to continue my work on Harris, both his poetry and his presence here in Chautauqua County.

P: I know that you were a graduate assistant at UB and that you've taught in the English Department at SUNY Fredonia. Was there anything that you've done previously-in or outside of the academic world-that prepared you to work with adult learners?

C: Well, most of my preparation occurred on the job I think, although I had already recognized the real interest I had in working with adult learners. At Fredonia, I often chose to teach the evening sections because I had quickly learned that these usually were filled with older, nontraditional students. I found them very motivated, very interested and animated. For these students, the class was more than an instructional situation. It was also a social situation where they made contact with others who were juggling several important roles, and it was a situation of personal discovery. It was very exciting to see these adults gain more confidence in their writing, learning new or rediscovering old skills.

P: Have you developed some approaches for working with ESC students that have been effective?

C: I hope so -although I'm not sure I have developed any specific approaches which are not part of the everyday operation of other mentors. I suppose the approach I have been thinking about the most lately is one which really encourages research skills. A person who can read comfortably and who has a library card can learn anything he or she wants. Confidence and competence in locating information is the basis of lifelong learning, I think.

P: Do you have any stories about particular successes your students have had?

C: Particular successes? I think of the students who I meet in their first contract, maybe doing an introductory writing study, who are so anxious that they preface our work together with apologies for their lack of skills and explanations of the reasons they didn't complete college when they were 21. Each paper they write is a small success, and each revision a larger success. Later I see them coming in to meet with another mentor, or I see them in the library, and soon I hear their names at faculty meetings on the list of candidates for graduation. There's a certain success even in those who are pulled away from school by financial or family needs; they have the success of whatever they have been able to complete and the knowledge that this possibility waits for them when they can return.

P: What do you think are the one or two qualities most necessary for an ESC mentor?

C: I would say that Empire State's key word flexibility is necessary for the reasons we all know: variation in student learning style, preparation and goals. A good quantity of resourcefulness, independence and patience are pretty helpful traits too. But perhaps most of all, mentors need to take real pleasure in study and in assisting others, through study, towards their personal goals.

Dave

Nancy Gadbow, Genesee Valley Center

When I came to ESC in 1989 Dave DuBois was one of the first persons I got to know. He quickly became a valued colleague and friend. Dave truly represents what I believe "mentoring" really is all about!

N: Dave, I know you have been working as a mentor for ESC for many years. I am interested in your insights and reflections. What does mentoring mean to you?

D: I started as a tutor in 1973 or 1974, then served as an adjunct and part-time mentor for 17 years. I remember when I first started and even when I became full-time, there were times when I felt that I just wouldn't be able to cope with the wide range of studies, issues and topics. Over the years I have learned a lot about ways of approaching that concern and have developed a general competence that I can handle a wide range of studies. No, I don't know all the ins and outs of each topic, but we can learn together-a much more collaborative understanding of learning. The relationship with our students is just a very different one; they are valued much more as individuals.

Mentoring-it is partly teaching, but it is much more than that. It is also student advising, which involves getting to know where the student came from-the knowledge, background, experiences that have shaped him or her and how these have influenced the decision to pursue a degree and take particular areas of study. Then it is working with the student to find a mesh between studies that are appropriate to the area that he or she is hoping to pursue and his or her own particular interests. It is also serving a number of advisement roles in terms of employment, career planning and decisions, and personal issues. One of the frustrations of mentoring is that you are called upon to give advice in areas that you are not professionally trained in. But at the same time, this rapport has built up between you and the student and if the process is working well, it is difficult not to give advice. And so you are often acting as an advisor, but you are also learning from the student, which I am not sure happens that often in traditional classrooms. Students often have interesting knowledge and experience and they are really teaching you.

Recently I have dealt with several students in relation to issues of disability and I have had to learn an awful lot about what it means to be disabled in this country and the prejudice. But I also have been able to apply a wealth of experience in mentoring to work with these people to develop ways that will help them to be productive. I am not sure that can happen in a classroom if someone brings along a lot of abuse or damage that society has wreaked upon them because of some sort of prejudice. It seems to me that it works best when students have an opportunity to shape some of the things they are doing and relate them to their own experiences.

N: What do you do to help get the relationship going with a new student?

D: I try to share some of my own background in terms of different kinds of students I have worked with, some of the benefits that I think the College can offer them, and how to work with their mentors. I am not sure students really see those benefits. Sharing some of these possibilities is one of the ways to build that rapport. I think also that just talking with a student about his or her own background is very important.

I think it is harder to drop a cover over your ignorance in mentoring than it is in a traditional classroom. You definitely have to be more open if you are going to mentor! It is my attitude that since this is part of the process, you might as well be open and explain issues as realistically as possible. I think students generally value that and respond well. This fosters collaboration and a working relationship from the beginning.

But there are those students with whom you do not work well, for some reason or another. You just aren't comfortable or they are not comfortable with you. My own feeling has been just to be sure to try to understand why this is happening, what the issues are and if they are legitimate. Sometimes it is possible for me to make some change in the relationship and sometimes another mentor is a better choice.

N: Do you think that sometimes the discomfort is due to the growth process that the student is going through? And since our students are allowed to get into some topics that they choose that may involve some painful issues, that may also be difficult, the very openness we foster may lead to some dissonance.

D: Yes, sometimes individualized learning is painful for the learner and the whole credit-by-evaluation process can be painful. It starts the thinking about "me" as an individual. It is also painful for students to find out what they don't know. There is a certain exhilaration in finding out that what you know is valuable, but there is also a sense of vulnerability: "I don't know all this stuff! I am not quite so all-knowing about things."

It is also difficult to get some students to look at things from other perspectives. I say that I am not trying to change your

mind, but I would just like for you to look at some of the issues. It does lead to some squirming though! I have become much more comfortable over the years dealing with such situations.

N: Are there some words of wisdom or advice that you would give to new mentors?

D: Think long and hard about what's fair! Be open to a student's background and experience. Based on the broad range of students that I have worked with over the past year who have disabilities, I would say that it is important to focus on what people can do -not preconceived ideas about what people can and can't do. They are often wrong! We have a whole lot of stereotyped attitudes about people who have differing abilities than we realize. So now I am really a very strong supporter of teaching people to be self-advocates and to talk about what their strengths are and also what their weaknesses are, and to explain what the ramifications are of each. My experience has been that many students have a lot of the answers as to how they can work best wjth a mentor and how they learn most effectively. You just have to listen to them and negotiate to a certain extent what is realistic. I wasn't in that position three or four years ago. I have spent a lot of time on that.

I am also going to do another workshop called "Disabled but Enabled" this summer in Western New York. There will be several sessions and we hope to have them on sites which serve persons with disabilities. The focus will be on training leading to work, and the kinds of jobs that can be done by people with various disabilities.

There is an interesting dynamic happening in all of this. Not only are there jobs to be created and training that will lead to jobs for individuals with disabilities, but as we try to become more inclusive, there will be jobs created in support of people with disabilities.

N: What positive experiences have you had working with other mentors or in co-mentoring?

D: I have learned an awful lot working with you! It has been interesting to see the application of adult education theories and practices, the discussion about what the College could and should be.

I have had a number of experiences co-mentoring studies-at least eight-with other mentors here at Genesee Valley. I have learned a great deal. The benefits are very significant and students are very well served as a result of team mentoring, seeing different perspectives. That may be one of the best faculty development activities co-mentoring. I think students like the interchange of mentors sometimes.

You know the College does face this threat that a lot of the things we have pioneered, other people are doing. But what I don't hear them doing is individualization! They have latched on to the methods, but our real strength is the individualization! That is also true of the graduate program in which students do have the possibility of shaping a good part of the program. We should be telling that message more clearly to the world!

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Tales of the Mentor

James Robinson, Long Island Center

"Bronx Science"

It is mid-afternoon at Plethora House, the main learning center of the Midlothian Regional Center of Empire State College. Elias Pendragon, science mentor, is working to complete an evaluation for a graduating student. As he sits at his computer searching for the student's contract file, Associate Dean Winthrop DeBland drops in.

Elias: Aaaargh! (Throwing papers around on desk)

Winthrop: The revenge of a new technology, eh?

Elias: (Coldly) No. This is a shared contract, and I just realized I've lost track of who the lead mentor is. Did you want something?

Winthrop: Just wondered whether you had gotten to that file I left you.

Elias: (Suddenly suspicious) File?

Winthrop: That new entering student, Sidney Quonset. His mother called yesterday. She wants to be sure we can accommodate her son's interests. She wants him to enter graduate school in archaeology next year.

Elias: So? How am I supposed to know whether he can take archaeology or not?

Winthrop: You're the science mentor; archaeology is a science.

Elias: This should have been stopped in Saratoga. How could they admit him when we don't have coverage?

Winthrop: (Smiling) Localdiscretion. Besides, you saw the figures; the headcount is down.

Elias: (Bewildered) I can't believe this.

Winthrop: (Holding up his hands) I know, I know. You don't know the field. You don't know how often I hear that. But that's just the point, Elias. Since nobody here knows the field, you're as well equipped C'S anyone to advise him. You just get him started; that's all. He may need tutors, or he might have to cross-register, but you can help him with that.

Elias: Win, look I don't mind doing my job, but tutors in archaeology? I don't know anybody. This is a cold start.

Winthrop: What about your cousin, Louis? Didn't he do something for us last year?

Elias: Louis's an astronomer.

Winthrop: Well, maybe he knows somebody. (Checking his watch) Look, I have to run. I told Casaubon you'd coordinate with Assessment on this. He'll find someone who can interview him about his field experiences in the Bronx.

Elias: They don't do archaeology in the Bronx.

Winthrop: Actually, they do. It seems Mr. Quonset was on a construction crew that was involved in demolition, and they found genuine remains. (Pauses to examine his nails) Look, if it doesn't work out, he can choose some other field. You're a creative guy.

Elias: Win, please.

(Exit DeBland, whistling)

Elias: (Staring at his computer screen) I don't believe this...

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White on White"

It is early evening at the Midlothian Center of Empire State College. The wind is rising outside, and the branches of trees knock gently against the windows of Marsha Conundrum's office. Marsha, a sociologist, is wondering how bad the traffic will be heading home. Her last appointment, Dave Grounder, enters. His trenchcoat covers his policeman's uniform.

Dave: Hi, Marsha, how's it going?

Marsha: Hello, David. How are the roads?

Dave: Pretty slick in places, you better take it slow tonight. I saw a couple of bad ones on my way in.

Marsha: Did you have time to finish your essay?

Dave: (Grimacing) I knew you were going to ask. To tell you the truth, these rotating hours are making me crazy. I was on steady duty for a while, and I can't get used to the four to twelves.

Marsha: I see. Well, maybe we can talk about the reading instead.

Dave: Yeah, okay. (Settling into his chair and picking up his book) You know, this author is a little far out.

Marsha: Hmm. You mean you disagree with him?

David: Did you read this one?

Marsha: (Mildly irritated) Of course. I don't assign books I haven't read.

David: (Seeing her irritation) I didn't mean anything by it, I just wondered. It happens, you know.

Marsha: Not with me.

Dave: Yeah, well it does happen. Anyway, this author, he says all this stuff about black people, and I can tell you he's got a lot of this wrong. I work with black people all the time in the city, and it just isn't as simple as he makes it sound.

Marsha: For example?

Dave: I mean, this stuff about the police not responding in the black areas. I mean we are there all the time. You wouldn't believe the stuff they call us for. Like somebody starts screaming at his wife, they call the cops.

Marsha: Isn't that the way family violence gets started?

Dave: It's more likely to cause violence if we show up.

Marsha: Do you really think so?

Dave: Sure. I was on a call last week. The guy freaked out when he saw the cruiser .

Marsha: Maybe he was scared.

Dave: Yeah, maybe. But there's no reason to be scared, not of us. Not unless he knew he was doing something wrong.

Marsha: He could be just reacting to things that happened in the past, or with other police officers.

Dave: (Shrugging) Sure, he probably had a record. Most of them do by the time they're his age.

Marsha: Why do you think that is?

Dave: It's just the way they live. No families, no jobs, doing drugs. They just live that way. I got nothing but sympathy for the women, believe me. I can't see how these wives put up with it.

Marsha: Maybe they don't have any choice.

Dave: That's stupid. (Embarrassed) Excuse me, I mean, we all have choices, right? You don't have to live that way if you don't want to.

Marsha: I'm not sure I agree with you.

Dave: (Looking around the office at the books, furnishings and pictures) Well, you wouldn't, would you?

Marsha: What does that mean?

Dave: (Shrugging) Nothing, forget it.

[Editors' Note: Look for more of Robinson's **Tales** of **the Mentor,** including "Summertime" and "Portia at the Pass," in coming issues of *All About Mentoring.*

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Interactions: "What Would You Do?"
Paula Silver, Long Island Center

Last issue we considered a case of plagiarism in a final contract. Readers' responses follow.

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Chris Rounds, Binghamton
I think Stu should be given "No Credit" for the study and dismissed from the College. The key here is that he knew what he was doing, knew that it was wrong, and did it anyway. This doesn't mean that he'll never get a degree. He could re-enroll after a few months.

We've all encountered one degree or another of plagiarism. Usually it involves a student who's done exactly that at work, and gotten rewarded for it. The rules we're enforcing are academic, and I appreciate the reality that many of our students don't know them, or don't take them seriously. But Stu had tried this before , and had been "read the riot act." This time, he should be punished.

To those who cry, "Poor Stu!" my response is, what about all of those other students who respected the rules, did the hard work, and earned a degree that they thought was worth something?

Lou Wood, Niagara Frontier
Perhaps I am lacking in the milk of human kindness, but I would file a "No Credit" outcome for the contract and pass the evidence of plagiarism on to the associate dean and /or the faculty committee charged with handling student misconduct. If this contract were part of the student's concentration, I would recommend dismissal from the College. If it were a general learning not crucial to the soundness of the concentration, I would make no recommendation beyond presenting evidence. This is neither a case of a new student who does not yet know that copying is not appropriate nor a student who, perhaps out of desperation, took a chance to get out of a bad situation (whether personal, academic or whatever). This student had plagiarized before; when caught, he tried to turn the issue into a personal matter by apologizing for "offending." I see no reason to spend my time and energy on a student who behaves this way when I have at least 50 others trying, often under great difficulty, to learn. There are people and bodies charged with handling these kinds of problems; let them do their job.

Bob Carey, Metropolitan
What would I have done? Ask the associate dean to dismiss him from the College. But, seriously folks, a good deal hinges on how we perceive the student. If I didn't trust him because of the plagiarized essay for portfolio review and now a fairly stunning piece of cut and paste plagiarism in my own seminar, I would probably find it difficult to deal with the problem that he has- he doesn't know how to read and write. To deal with that, I would have him take "No Credit" for the seminar, enroll to take it again (yes, some things are not for free), and then have him meet with me weekly

to discuss and to have him write synopses of assigned articles. He would do the reading and writing in session with me. If possible, I would have him take Research and Writing at the same time he is doing the seminar over again. If he deemed that unacceptable, I would request that he be dismissed from the College for reasons of plagiarism.

Judy Gerardi, Metropolitan

I must begin by saying that I admire Paula. It is difficult and trusting to lay bare a situation in which we question ourselves. Also, a reader could easily think, "Well, I wouldn't have let it get that far." As we think of what we would do with a student who plagiarized a paper, in the final contract no less, we are tempted to review the student's history with us, seeing all the places where we would have nipped this in the bud.

At Empire State College, we should be less likely to receive plagiarized papers since students meet with us in one to one encounters. There are several reasons why such encounters should guard against our receiving plagiarized papers. 1) It is too embarrassing to students to plagiarize and then face us. 2) We work closely with our students; we are familiar with their work and would immediately recognize work that is not their own. 3) Students learn to value learning; they would be less likely to stress end product over learning. 4) A paper does not appear full blown at the end of a contract. We have been discussing the project, the research, the learning with the student throughout the contract; this helps the student proceed well and also familiarizes us with what the student knows all aIong.

Now, for my reaction to what Paula told us. "Well, what would you do in this case?" My reaction is to reflect upon the need to achieve awareness about the implications of recent changes in practice for student learning. As mentors work with a greater number of students, most change the way that they work. We are more involved with some students than with others; some get more energy and intellectual engagement from us than do others. We offer generic contracts with relatively little customizing to the student's interest. We limit the topics that we tutor. We offer study groups and may be unfamiliar with students' grasp of subject matter until the end of the contract. We increase the number of students in a study group. In short, in order to handle more students, we work less closely with them.

Paula's example shows us what we have sacrificed. Not only has our own excited engagement with students been diminished, but our insight into a student's very learning has been compromised. As mentors, we should be no more likely to unquestioningly accept a paper inconsistent with a student's knowledge and skill than we would fail to question such a peculiar juxtapostion from our own child or close colleague. We must face the results of our sacrifice. We lose and students lose. They lose because their education is no longer so special. We lose because we can no longer take comfort in the unique role that we play as college faculty.

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The Actual Outcome

In the actual resolution, the student received "No Credit" for the contract and was required to take a writing contract emphasizing research paper preparation in place of the no credit contract. When the plagiarism was documented, this mentor quickly decided not to award credit. The issue of academic dismissal was considered by the center academic review committee and took longer to resolve.

While he was awaiting a decision, the student was asked to read the College policy on plagiarism in the *Student Handbook* and to explain what he understood it to mean. He was also asked to read an article on plagiarism from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* so he would see that this issue is a concern beyond the walls of ESC. When it finally began to dawn on him that he had jeopardized his degree by his repeated plagiarism, he became appropriately concerned, calling me every few days and asking anxiously what the outcome would be. By the time that the academic review committee met, I had heard his quivering voice in many a call and let the committee know that he had suffered quite a bit and waited in limbo. The committee was reluctant to decide on academic dismissal for a student just four credits from a degree and the suggested remedy seemed a constructive and creative solution. By that time I was also terribly weary of this problem and eager to be done with it, so I welcomed their proposal.

In retrospect I think that we failed to address the underlying ethical issues adequately. I've thought of several other instances where this student demonstrated deficiencies in character and judgement in his academic behavior, and I regret

that we didn't look at the broader problem. If we're lucky, we may have taught this student what plagiarism is and that it is too easily detected to be worth the risk. Have we taught him anything about academic values? I doubt it.

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The African Experience in the Diaspora

Catana Tully-Cayetano, Northeast Center

At a Center meeting last year, within the discussion about an activity for faculty development, Carolyn Williams suggested having an African American mentor from NYC visit our Center and talk to us about diversity. At the time there happened to be in the room three people of African descent: Carolyn Williams herself; Mary Neil Morgan; and me. I decided that it was time for a formal introduction as to who we were, and to spotlight the diversity of the black NEC mentors, and for all of us, to recognize that we represent a spectrum of the African American experience.

I invited Oto Jones, who had been a mentor in Albany prior to moving to CDL, to join us by sharing his story, thus contributing to an even truer reflection of the title of the evening's theme. Oto is African, a native of Sierra Leone; I am a native of Guatemala, Hispanic by definition, but my people are Black Caribs, a mix of native Caribbeans and escaped slaves; Mary Neil, of African and Cherokees descent, originates from a wide expanse of farm country in rural Georgia; and Carolyn, a native of Cleveland, brings the black urban experience to the fore. One need not be a scholar of cultural anthropology to recognize that these diverse cultures provided different life experiences and shaped very different personalities. We discovered too, that other than the color of our skin, we share intriguing commonalities.

The date was set for early February to fall into Black History Month. Invited to celebrate our diversity and our African heritage were our colleagues, all enrolled students, their families and friends. Our alumni/student association treated us to refreshments and a buffet of Jamaican delicacies prior to enjoying what would become a positive intellectual exchange for those present.

None of us could speak for others -the city not for the country, the recent immigrant not for the impassioned urbanite. We had all become Americans and had become aware of our "minority" status at different stages in life and through different interactions with mainstream American society. That, among other facts, helped shape our consciousness as black people, and forced and continues to force us to define for ourselves and for others who, what and how we are: forever needing to claim our identity either as individuals or as a political group.

The objective of the presentation was in every aspect designed to be nonconfrontational, very personal and possibly intellectual. We were, after all, among interested, friendly colleagues, students, family and friends. Our public also represented the spectrum of American society: men and women; White, Black, Hispanic; a student from India; older people; teenagers -all shared in the ensuing discussion.

I will smile for a long time to come whenever I think back to that evening: Gwen-our nervous and gracious alumna hostess-Oto, Mary Neil, Carolyn and I. I am reminded of a saying that it took six million years for this moment to happen. The simplicity of it all proved its inherent value. Each presentation was some 20 minutes long. What follows is only a "for instance" and does in no way attempt to represent even the briefest of summaries, but might shed some light on the direction of the presentations.

Otolorin Jones has traveled extensively throughout Europe and Africa. He received his formal education in Canada and

the United States, graduating with a Ph.D. in economics. He spoke eloquently of the wealth and tradition in the history of his native Sierra Leone, and the sophisticated and diverse lifestyle enjoyed along the West African coast with trade and interaction with Europeans, long before Europeans became aware of America and certainly long before the human trade. He spoke about Africa's colonization and the imposed European languages and cultures, and how African society assimilated these cultural infringements. Thus, Oto grew up living in two cultures: in private that of the autonomous person, in public that of the colonized person. In his youth he had two names, for instance, one for each circle of social interaction. When meeting a childhood acquaintance today, the name he will be addressed with will orient him to the circle in which they interacted. Oto represents the melange of cultures that color his part of the world: the races, ethnicities, religions of Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. He is a profoundly multicultural being: a Pan-African par excellence!

I deliberately chose to leave my European experience out of this sharing as it did not relate to my African ancestry. I have a D.A. in humanistic studies which reflects my multiracial approach to life and people. I spoke about my people who are known as Black Caribs, or Vincentian Caribs, descendants of the original inhabitants of the Caribbean, who retreated to the not easily accessible island of St. Vincent. The island in time became a safe haven for runaway slaves in the Antilles. A new people emerged with traditional Carib customs enhanced with African cultural distinctions. Toward the 18th century, the surviving Caribs (only some two thousand), having made guerilla attacks on British encroachments, were deported to the Honduran coast. Deported yes, but never dominated. Far from the warring world economy, these once fierce people settled peacefully in remote coastal areas, and, left to their own peaceful devices established healthy matrifocal societies. A free black-skinned people with a distinctive culture, and a fierce sense of autonomy and freedom.

Mary Neil Morgan is one of nine children in a sharecropper's family on sparsely populated farm country in Georgia. Early in life she had to work hard and was charged with serious responsibilities. In spite of, or perhaps because of this, she had a very protected childhood within the fold of an even larger and loving extended family. Away from the farm, the world in the South was a hostile one, a fact that had eluded her for the first nine years of her life. Many obstacles had to be surpassed before she could pursue a structured education and, having learned early to rely on her own resources, she adapted and adjusted to the requirements of the world of learning and teaching, ultimately obtaining a Ph.D. in political science.

Her academic research has taken her to different countries in East and West Africa, where she discovered social aspects that were similar to the practices of her own extended family. Upstate New York is far from Georgia, but Georgia is never far from Mary Neil. I feel that having lived her early years in such proximity to nature must have contributed to her well-centered spirit, her patience, dignity and, above all, her very sincere warmth.

Carolyn Williams is a Center administrator with an M.A. in public administration. She teaches various studies in that area. Her presentation focused on the intact African American urban institutions which made the Cleveland community of her childhood socially and economically autonomous. Growing up she felt safe and protected within the fold of her family, her church and her school. She spoke passionately about her encounter with a hostile "mainstream" world, and how to this very day she needs to return to her community which is for her a haven of acceptance and security. Carolyn's perspective is that which is most loudly heard in the political world, and the one that is generally assumed to represent the black experience in the United States. The fact remains that black urban neighborhoods were the social fabric that nurtured, sustained, supported and encouraged their young to succeed. And many have succeeded. Today the Cleveland neighborhoods are witnessing the return of many who, like her, had left and embarked in successful careers, and are now choosing to reside in, and thus restore to greater grandeur, their childhood community.

After our presentations, our public, intrigued by our stories, had many questions which led to sometimes emotional discussions. Our families and friends know about our outlook on life. What I have heard from our colleagues and friends, is that they learned interesting new facts about us personally and in several instances were surprised at the situations we sometimes still have to confront and deal with socially. The evening gave everyone much to think about. Thoughts about individual and communal identity, mainstream society's indifference, general fears and frustrations, anger and indeed, hope.

We had estimated a two hour evening; after almost four hours we had to bring the evening to closure. Mary NeIl, in her vibrant contralto voice, sang two songs a *capella* to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The evening

concluded on a tremendously high note. I could not sleep all night and had bouts of hyperactivity the following day. I knew many things had gone extremely well. We were children of Africa, and our distinctive stories had been woven into a beautiful fabric. I felt that anyone seeing us sitting there must have felt that we were a truly beautiful creation. Colors, textures, shapes, but also emotions, feelings, love. At a time when the racial and social confrontations in America are extremely disturbing, this evening represented diversity devoid of anger, hatred and social accusations. An evening in which we affirmed and celebrated our heritage, and proudly introduced ourselves to our colleagues and students as The African Experience in the Diaspora. Yes!

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Professional Development in Progress
Jay Gilbert, Hudson Valley Center

I have been a member of the American Society for Engineering Education since 1968, and have been an active member of its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) division since 1974. This division is made up primarily of continuing engineering education direct- from universities, and education managers and program directors from scientific and technological industrial corporations. Most of the "students" that my colleagues in this division work with already have bachelor's degrees, but in virtually all other respects (age range, work specializations, etc.) they are very comparable to the students that I see at ESC.

The CPD division (along with three other ASEE divisions) sponsors the College-lndustry Education conference, an annual midwinter meeting which I have tried to attend regularly. Over the years I have presented papers, led sessions, organized division programs, and served on the division executive board. Attending the conference has always been a very positive experience for me; I have always gained current information and new ideas from the experiences and perspectives of others, which have inevitably had applicability for me at ESC. I have also been very fortunate to have become part of a network of highly interesting, capable and creative coworkers and colleagues from a wide range of settings throughout North America.

At the 1993 meeting, I was part of a panel session on educational programs available to working professionals in industry. I presented (for the first time since I did it in the late 1970's) a reasonably complete outline of how I work with ESC students. I described my multi-functional role as mentor, and showed examples of how we structure curriculum plans and study topics and how we monitor progress through our written documents. I emphasized how we can work with industrial professionals as tutorial and evaluative resources in their specialties, how the work environment can be structured to support learning, and how the ESC ability to individualize permits great flexibility and challenge for our mostly adult students.

Several educators from Finland who had attended the talk spoke with me afterward, and, several months later, invited me to participate in a meeting of the working group on Continuing Engineering Education of the European Society for Engineering Education, held at the Institute of Technology in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, in early December. How could I turn down such a request?!

The working group has identified four "significant themes" which they deem vital for their future activities- needs, demand and supply; credit accumulation and transfer toward "portable" qualifications; learning and teaching, theory and practice; and continuing engineering education management. They have been pursuing these themes through multinational study teams assembled from the overall group to work specifically on each topic.

The meeting in Eindhoven focused primarily on the theme of credit accumulation and transfer. Nearly 40 people from The Netherlands and from all over Europe attended the meeting: from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in the east to Ireland and the UK in the west, and from Norway, Sweden and Finland in the north to France, Spain and Portugal in the south-I was one of only two people there who was not European. It was truly a working meeting; there were no papers presented, no

separate sessions. Everyone was together around tables in one room; sometimes we listened and responded to one of the group leaders, and sometimes we worked in separate groups on discussions directed at common goals.

The advent of the European Community has made credit accumulation and transfer- the mobility of people, education and credentials- a difficult but necessary issue with which this group of engineering educators must grapple. Educational processes can occur in one country that are not possible in the same way in another country, due to differences in education law. This group is, therefore, presented with quite a challenge- to develop a structure that can recognize and accommodate differences in education law in each nation, while at the same time providing a "supranational" mechanism within the structure that permits access, mobility and acceptance of different kinds of continuing learning by individuals.

Part of the challenge comes because many of the attendees at this meeting were pretty traditional standard classroom program-type educators; newer learning methods are only slowly making headway. So my short talk on what I do at ESC left many of them with their jaws (figuratively) dropped open- they almost could not believe that our ESC structure was legal! (Our being a part of SUNY, our full accreditation, and our longevity and number of students and graduates were convincing, however!)

For the next day or so, I spent many a conversation expanding on the number of ways in which we actually do contract learning, individualized curriculum planning and credit by evaluation, and how we identify and utilize learning and evaluative resources both within and outside of the faculty. I made sure to point out that the keys to the system were the multifunctional role of the mentor and the collaborative interaction developed between the mentor and the adult learner. In part (I believe) as a result of these short discussions, several members of the learning and teaching study team will set up a sub-team on self-directed learning, to expand their knowledge and recognition of directed study by individuals as another viable and appropriate path to continuing professional development.

I learned about some very interesting European programs: Denis McGrath (Dublin, Ireland) described his work at the National Council for Educational Awards. This is a government agency that accredits all courses in the non-university sector of higher education in Ireland, consisting of nearly 40 regional technical colleges, art and design colleges, and others. The agency permits individuals to study at one or a series of these institutions at their own pace, and serves as "registrar" through a straightforward credit accumulation system. For sufficient level and type of credits, the agency then grants certificates, diplomas or degrees. To my knowledge, no such system exists in the U.S.

Kirsti Miettinen is based at the Centre for Continuing Education of Helsinki University of Technology in Finland, and is manager of EuroPro, a European professional development program for people who already have degrees. EuroPro acts as a framework for continuing education studies developed through a partnership among individuals, employers and education providers. Each individual student formulates a study plan together with his or her employer and university representatives, including flexible studies adapted to the individual's work schedule, and a development project which has a clear connection to the individual's work. Academic studies and studies with distinctly European components are accomplished through the guidance of company mentors, academic tutors and university counselors. Sound familiar?

I've received many requests for further information about ESC, PONSI and ACE, and I've responded to them all. I certainly hope to hear more from this group of very interesting people, and I hope that my experience at ESC can be of some help to them in their work in Europe. They are attempting to forge mutually profitable working relationships among educators who share common goals, have comparable students, but happen to be from different nations. I have taken this approach as a model to emulate, and will redouble my own efforts to encourage ESC's movement toward a truly statewide college, with collegewide enrollment goals rather than competition for enrollment among centers, and with supportive interrelationships between and among students and faculty wherever either happen to be located.

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Two Young Professions With Common Practices and Challenges

Carolyn C. Shadle, FORUM/Central New York Center

We're not alone. I discovered that there's at least one other profession struggling with some of the same issues that ESC primary mentors face. That group is also enjoying many of the same types of pleasures and successes. The group is known outplacement professionals--career counselors and consultants who serve the $700 million industry that has emerged in the last 25 years to assist terminated employees in making the transition from fired to hired.

As the first outplacement professionals were applying their knowledge of career counseling and consultation to the unique problem of helping outplaced key executives make a major transition, Empire State College was a gleam in someone's eye. Thus, as "sister professions" of about the same age, it's not surprising that we are experiencing similar growing pains.

Below are outlined some of the ways in which the outplacement process and that of educational planning are similar. This is followed by a discussion of some of the common issues we face and some learnings ESC mentors might glean from the outplacement industry .

SIMILARITIES

The Organization of Services

As the demand for outplacement services grew, firms often expanded by acquiring autonomous firms in other parts of the country or world. These acquisitions enabled them to serve clients in New York, for example, who might want to relocate to Atlanta and vice versa. As they have expanded, they also found that a larger professional staff enabled them to draw upon specialties. So, if a client chose to start a business or move from public sector to private sector, someone in the network of firms had the experience and expertise to advise on the matter .

Having established autonomous units and regions around New York State, Empire, too, has a network of autonomous units with professionals comprising expertise on innumerable subjects.

In both settings, the professionals work quite independently, often unknown to each other. Though part of the same organization, they are comfortable with their independence and have developed rather separate cultures and ways of doing things.

Phase Outplacement	ESC Mentoring
1.venting, processing emotion 2.assessment of skills, abilities, preferences, style, values 3.developing a targeted resume and self-marketing plan networking, interviewing	adjusting to independent learning assessment of goals, preferences, values developing a degree plan

4.negotiating for a job 5.landing a job	preparing CBEs and LCs seeking approval of assessment committee receiving a degree

The Process

Although no two clients or students are the same, both outplacement professionals and ESC mentors facilitate a similar process for each person, and the processes of the two professions have parallel phases.

Methods

Both outplacement consultants and educational planning mentors frequently use similar methods. For example, both provide coaching in the use of information interviewing as away to clarify objectives and gather information needed to build a resume or a degree plan. The questions suggested to outplacement clients for their information interviews are useful guides for preparing mentees for effective interviews.

In both the self-marketing campaign of the job seeker and the rationale written by the Empire student, the objective is to define one's goals and defend the end and the means to that end. Doing library research about career and educational opportunities, talking to people in the field, and interacting with the consultant/mentor through written exercises and face-to-face meetings, helps jobs seekers and students know themselves and describe their goals.

COMMON ISSUES

A Science and an Art

In both professions, outplacement consultants and mentors bring to their respective tasks expertise with a process, as well as knowledge of some of the fields their clients or students will explore. They also bring a variety of gifts and styles nurtured in various former careers. Given this mix, as well as the infinite variety among clients and students, the consulting/advising process can never be cut and dry , never reduced to a mere set of steps to be followed mechanically. In each case, professionals are challenged to combine education, training and experience in a process that is both science and art -both prescribed and creative .

Empowering Process

Both outplacement professionals and mentors endeavor to empower their clients or students to manage the process and arrive at their own well-researched decisions. The process may be managed by the outplacement professional or mentor but the outcome must be right for the client or student.

Autonomy and Control

Both outplacement professionals and mentors come to their respective roles from a variety of backgrounds. Some outplacement professionals come from diverse helping professions, such as human resources, vocational or career counseling, psychology or psychiatry-particularly comfortable with the emotional adjustment stage. Others come to outplacement work from business-often marketing or entrepreneurship-and are particularly comfortable with such aspects of the process as resume writing and the self- marketing campaign. ESC mentors also come from a variety of backgrounds, some from adult education or counseling with well-honed process skills, others from content areas such as mathematics, art, history or business, eager and able to instill learning related to a particular discipline.

With such diversity, it is not surprising that one finds in each profession a plethora of ways of doing things and a lack of uniformity in how the process is implemented. In both settings, attempts to modify the structures and bring about consistency in the process are threatening. Individuals within both professions want to protect the way they've been doing things. There are fears within both groups that consistency will compromise the need to deal creatively and individually with each client or mentee and might bring into question a professional's use of certain favorite strategies or methods.

Time Constraints

Both outplacement professionals and mentors feel pressured to complete the process within certain time constraints. In the early days of outplacement, contracts for services were open ended.

In those days, outplacement professionals agreed to work with their clients until they were placed in appropriate positions- no matter how long it took. All this changed, however, when the purchasers of the outplacement service tightened their belts and growth in the number of outplacement firms increased the competition. Also, as clients faced increasingly tough job markets, purchasers and users of the service became anxious to expedite the process. In response, outplacement consultants began to look for ways to reduce the amount of time the client engaged the services of the professional without, of course, compromising the quality of the service.

The plight of ESC mentors is similar. Reduction in State educational allocations and resulting reductions in staff have put pressure on mentors to find ways to accommodate more students in the same amount of work time. As with outplaced employees, students need the process to move efficiently along to completion without a compromise in the quality of the experience.

LEARNINGS: WAYS TO MANAGE THE PROCESS

If, in fact, we want to expedite the educational planning process and/or be more consistent in the process, we might want to look to the outplacement industry's struggle for clues to managing the educational planning process in a way that expedites the process without sacrificing quality or individual creativity.

Outplacement firms eager to manage the process more efficiently, have begun by defining the common phases in the process, and then worked toward isolating best practices or common methods within each phase. They have established a base threshold, a core of services (including certain strategies and methods) below which one must not go.

Next, the firms have examined the phases to determine norms-how much time "usually" is spent on a given phase or "ought" to be spent. Despite the variety of professional styles and client needs, close examination has yielded not only common outcomes but common processes and time frames.

To facilitate working toward the norm, the phases have been defined and training made available to all continuing and new consultants. Also, a reporting mechanism has been established to help consultants and clients mark their progress. A "quality reviewer" spot checks clients' files, reviewing the reports which detail completion of each phase or notes explaining why omission or modification of the phase was appropriate. This recordkeeping provides consistent information that is useful, not only to client and consultant, but also if a new consultant has to move into a particular case. It also enables the reviewer to "flag" outliers.

When the time spent on a particular phase exceeds the expected time by a considerable margin or when the anticipated amount of time was not spent on a certain step, the file is flagged. The reviewer discusses the case with the professional, offering assistance to get the process moving or advice in slowing the process, if such advice is warranted. The receiver's task is not a punitive one but rather that of a peer professional available to confer regarding the "outlier" cases. In most cases, the definition of norms has served to help individual consultants know when they need to revise their approach or reach out for peer input or assistance.

As with mentees, each outplacement client is different, and the implementation of the process for each candidate is unique. Some clients need more time venting their anger and adjusting emotionally to the trauma of termination before getting on with the job. Others want to roll up their sleeves and get to work finding employment. Some will need to change careers and require more time with the self- assessment process. Others know their job fit and have chosen afield that is open and available. Among ESC students, mentors find that some students are reluctant to get into the process. Others are ready to move ahead. Some students are unsure of their goals or concentration. Others need only to put the degree program on paper.

Aside from finding comfort in knowing that other professionals face the challenges of time and quality, as ESC mentors do, it may be possible to learn from such a profit-driven human service industry .Some aspects of the industry's endeavor, such as the institution of a quality reviewer, may represent an unwelcome additional layer if instituted at Empire. Other aspects, such as the norming or training, might be worth examining. Since the outplacement industry's effort in these regards is in its infancy, watching how the industry develops its process management may be instructive. It might provide for ESC some clues regarding how to establish consistency while leaving room for individualization; how to expedite the process without sacrificing quality; how to foster consistency without threatening the autonomy of both staff and client- in

short, how to maintain quality within the constraints of time and cost.

[Editor's Note: Carolyn Shadle has studied the outplacement industry, resulting in a co-authored book, *The New Outplacement Process*, to be published by Greenwood Publishing (Quorum Imprint), Spring, 1994.]

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Creative Passwording
Kathy McCullagh, Coordinating Center

Hi. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Kathy McCullagh, and I work in the Computer Services Office at the Coordinating Center in Saratoga. I am responsible for setting up all new computer VAX accounts, and believe it or not, our student computer usage has increased so much that I find I am creating anywhere between 7 and 15 new accounts *every* day!

Since this might be considered monotonous by some (me, for example), I had to do something to add an element of fun to this otherwise mundane task. Hence, I came up with a little diversion while setting up new VAX accounts that I like to call "creative passwording." It involves trying to come up with passwords that somehow correlate to the students' names. I frequently get comments from mentors and/or students, telling me that they get a kick out of some of my passwords, and so I thought I would share some of my favorites in this newsletter. Please note that all of the following accounts are no longer active and have been deleted from the system.

Diana Georgia DGEORGIA ONMYMIND	Sharon Willman SWILLMAN PIGFOOD	Walter Klock WKLOCK TICKTOCK
Michael Shea MSHEA NYMETS	Kent Warren KWARREN BUNNYPAD	Janet Moore JMOORE ORLESS
Louise Cummings LCUMMINGS ORGOING	Sid Deathidge SDEATHRI WORMFOOD	Tricia Marsh TMARSH BOGLADY
Nicholas Barber NBARBER SEVILLE	Vicki Tagg VTAGG YOURIT	Evelyn Wiggins EWIGGINS MSBUNNY
Thomas Mangano TMANGANO MRFRUIT	Clarence Owens COWENS MOOTOWN	Stuart Low SLOW SLOW TURTLE
Joanne Rice JRICE UNCLEBEN	Ed Prinze EPRINZE OFAGUY	Gary Dee GDEE TWIDDLE
Rosenorma Green RGREEN	Michael Savage MSAVAGE	Catherine Ryan CRYAN

WHYISGRASS	UBEAST	BOOHOO
Robert Hynes RHYNES FIFTY7	Charlene Hugggard CHUGGARD MUGOBEER	Peter Olijynk POLIJNYK FROGHEX
Paul McDonald PMCDONALD HADAFARM	Ellen Woonton EWOONTON EGGROLL	

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Reading, Writing and Basic Skills

Bob Carey, Metropolitan Center

What are we saying when we say that reading and writing are basic skills? "Basic skills" would seem to suggest something indispensable. This is the stuff you absolutely need. They are crucial, tools for living. You can't leave home, shouldn't leave home, without them.

But apparently people do. "Hooked on Phonics" ads suggest rather directly that whatever children do at school does them little or no good in learning how to read. Anyone running for a school board bows in the direction of "basics," back to which we should be getting. Discussions of Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are occasions of gloom or special pleading or both. There are too many stories of college athletes who discover to their chagrin and amazement that they cannot read and write. It is an article of faith among college faculties that students who can read and write, can't read and write and that things have never been worse.

Faculty members are not simply repeating a received litany of woe when they say that their students can't write. They are using the short form of a longer statement: students cannot write in the faculty member's subject area. "Not being able to write" translates into not writing well about, say, Madison's #10 in *The Federalist Papers* or Morrison's novels or Kohut's theories about the self.

Students can write; they know English more or less and grammar more or less and can usually get through a page of writing without fatal errors. But it is also true that most are not familiar with-nor good at-writing as a way of exploring, explicating or critiquing ideas. The same, alas, is true of the faculty who complain about students' writing abilities. Far too many cannot write clear, thoughtful English. They might write in their discipline and for fellow practitioners but that act is no guarantee that they have mastered what they expect from their students-clear English prose. It is probably true that Jacques Barzun's observation-"Simple English is no one's mother tongue"- describes our present and future situation.

How did such a state of affairs come to pass? How does it happen that we have bright students who can write but not write, read but not read and a faculty that seems unwilling (unable?) to address the problem?

First, the terms we use aren't as clear as they might be. "To write" and "writing" seem clear enough as do "To read" and "reading," but we use them in different ways. Most people, I would guess, use the words "write" and "writing" to refer to the mechanical, grammatical aspects of writing. But we also use them to describe a means of expressing ideas. When we say something is well-written, that someone is a powerful writer, we are attesting to the power of ideas, images, descriptions of things to engage us, move us, persuade us. "Well written, good writing" describes writing that requires our thought and attention; grammar is usually a secondary consideration in such an instance. The reader can put up with grammatical mistakes, gaffes and occasional howlers because what is written is powerful and shines through the imperfections.

Reading has some of the same ambiguity. Reading can mean little more than a kind of "word processing," a scanning operation that results in an awareness of what is in a book or an essay without going any further. It is bookreport reading.

You know the kind. This book is about a whale and a man named Ishmael and some other people who go on a boat named Pequodwith a Captain, Captain Ahab, and then, and then, and then. The report is the short dry version of the original text. Meaning is a stranger to such reading and the writing that follows on its heels.

But reading can also be a kind of intense listening; it means keeping track of the trajectory of an argument, allowing oneself to be tested by what an author is saying as much as one pokes and probes and sounds out the author's argument.

It is a mathematical certainty that people who read in the second way are going to write far more interesting and engaging stuff than people who read as though the page were a TV screen on paper, passively and without really listening. Attentive reading makes for good writing.

Equally to the point is that good academic writing is usually writing about what has been read. That sounds simpleminded in the extreme, but it is something that students have to learn to do until it comes automatically.

All too often one hears the question, "Can I express my opinion?" Devils lurk in that question. It is the result of too many writing classes encouraging students to react, to let go, to go with your feelings, to connect and other such directives that promise to unleash the power within.

The answer is, "No, unless you first demonstrate that you understand what the author is saying and can discuss the implications of the argument. You can, if you like, discuss what assumption or set of assumptions undergird her approach. If you do all of this, then I will know your opinion. You will have one worth paying attention to because it will be an informed and nuanced opinion about this thing."

The question about expressing an opinion is a certain sign that for the speaker, reading and writing are discrete activities, not joined in any vital way in the work of learning how to think and to express the substance of thought clearly and succinctly. The student now reads in order to report what is in the book and then, having discharged that duty, to rehearse herself at length in writing that presumably improves on the text rather than explicates it.

A student once called me when I was an associate dean to protest an instructor's grade. He had been used to getting good grades and no comments on his written work, so when he got a low grade and a lot of comments on his paper pointing out shortcomings, mistakes and other gaffes, he was quite put out. I listened to his complaint, said that as an associate dean I could not go behind an instructor and change a grade, stated further that I knew the person to be a careful reader and fair grader. I hazarded the opinion that if the paper had not been clearly written, the instructor might very well have concluded that the student's grasp of the material was not all that it should be. His response was, "Wait a minute, this was a course in sociology, not a course in English." To which I replied, "It's all English, all the way down."

He was simply giving voice to what he had been taught and what more than a few faculty members believe. The world is organized into disciplines; writing is something that writing specialists teach, reading is something you should know how to do when you come to school. Reading and writing are not the proper concern of a faculty member. He or she is responsible for teaching the *discipline.*

By a student's senior year in high school, the discipline is about to overtake reading and writing as the intellectual focal point of schooling. By college, certainly, writing has become a mystery (some have the gift because God loves them, the rest of us are cursed to struggle on with little hope of success), reading has ceased to be something that anyone talks about. "Basic" no longer means essential or indispensable; it has acquired a sense of "early," or "prior." This should have been done first. Mention "basic skills" to a college teacher and she will take it for granted that you are describing a problem.

Turning basic skills into a "problem" requiring special help has enlarged the employment possibilities at the university, so there are a host of programs helping people do what they can't do in class. They have to go to another class to learn to do what they are not for some reason learning in class. It sounds a little crazed, but it works after a fashion. It preserves a sense of hierarchy-teachers of disciplines are on top; below them, close to being, if not already, in the dust, are other academic workers who correct things like reading and writing skills problems- basic things that are beyond the ken of departmental and disciplinary oracles.

We are, however, left to ponder a large question. What is happening in class, what are people learning to do in mastering the discipline if reading and writing are now the province of specialists housed somewhere else on campus? If English is only taught or spoken or written in the English Department or in the reading or writing labs to which even English majors go, what gets spoken or read and written in the disciplinary quarters? A dialect, somehow related to English, but essentially a local language that one picks up in the course of studying different subjects, something we could call psych-speak, or bus-speak or socio-speak.

On the other side an equally interesting question looms. What do writing specialists teach? Once the grammar and vocabulary drills are done and some pesky idioms reviewed, writing still waits to be done. Writing is always writing about something. Does it really fall to the specialists to show a student how to write a paper about Rousseau, or Morrison or Kohut? If they are not doing that they are conducting swimming classes on dry land. But, for that matter ,so are the teachers of the "discipline" if they are not taking the time to explain what reading in the discipline involves and demonstrating how it is done and what good writing in the discipline looks and sounds like.

A few years ago William Zinsser wrote a good little book, *Writing to Learn,* in which he explored what good writing was in a variety of disciplines. Not surprisingly he discovered that it was clear, free from "noise" (his term for obscurity, various pontifications and sheer sloppiness) and accessible. Whatever the discipline, good writing in it did not scare people off .

It is something that students need to hear, something they need to know they can do. The only "improvement" on Zinsser I would suggest is that we not begin in our work with students with writing but with reading, with reading that will end in writing, that will end in writing about what they have read. Let the circle come full and all of what Zinsser and indeed a half dozen other writers about writing say will happen for students. It will turn out that they can write after all. Who would have thought? Go figure.

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Poems
Translated by Regina Grol-Prokopczyk, Niagara Frontier Center

The Furnace
The absurd has been our garden of knowledge, this century's deity,
The emperor of pitiful gains, smoldering in the unextinguished hearth of twenty centuries.
Their force coagulates in you, you future Human running toward ...
Indeed, our alchemy -hope
Is fanned by wormwood bitterness And the cruel change .

-Renata Maria Niemierowska

The Majority of Votes
They're taking a vote
whether to kill
to kill Socrates
having made the most
of democracy
and they'll just wait for the boat from Delos
and drunk with cheap wine
already they are staggering
while he is swallowing the last drop of hemlock.

-Anna Frajlich

The Noose
So I am one of them already,
of the old women
bent over someone else's life like over a sink,
in which dirty wine glasses and milk cups
await to be washed of their stickiness, dirt, necessity.
Our efforts are to give meaning
to the dead minutes and snail paced hours,
to years galloping like a herd of stallions.

The old women's refuge is the dark coolness of the church,
where one must be silent, motionless,
and where lips must move in a prayer ,
which is to save from the world,from the children,
from the strings of attachment tied tightly
on the frail neck.

-Ludmila Marianska

The Penitent

I've entrusted you to maids cleaning ladies nannies
they carry you like a precious amethyst ring
my tiny fistful of laughter my daughter
Your words like sweet crumbs
they sweep out the door unceremoniously
Your jokes brittle straws
the kitchen draft picks up
Mummy mummy you moan in your sleep
Oh joyous childhood behind which the seasons
are lined up in a silent row
right next to the door of a child's bedroom
I only see with a heart compressed like a bandage
And instead of watching over you like an old loyal bitch
I dash off to hunt and beg
and from my forays I bring at night bones and scraps
of sorrow

-Julia Hartwlg

Talking Not Just to Myself

Make some more room for yourself, human animal.
Even a dog spreads itself on the master's lap to
make itself comfortable, and when it needs space, runs
ahead, paying no attention to any summons.
If you have failed to receive freedom as a gift, demand it as courageously as you'd
demand meat and bread.
Make some more room for yourself , human pride .
and dignity.
The Czech writer Hrabal said: I'll have as much
freedom as I take.

-Julia Hartwig

ALL ABOUT MENTORING
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MI News

Wanted! Next MI Cochair. Looking to make new friends, for fun, intellectual stimulation and travel? Looking for a leadership position? How about becoming cochair of the Mentoring Institute? Lee Herman's time in that position will end in June 1994. Jay Gilbert needs a partner. Send questions and statements of interest to Jay and Lee (JGilbert, LHerman).

Read any good books or articles lately? We know you have! Send *All About Mentoring* a little review, or a big one. Doesn't have to be grand, doesn't have to be sophisticated, doesn't have to be about mentoring. We just want the College community to share its collective learning and thoughts. Write 'em down, put them on email to the editors (JGilbert, LHerman). We'll do the "spell check" and then publish what you have to say.

Scholarship Exorcism. Results Guaranteed! So your sabbatical or reassignment is over. You've presented at a conference. You've been collecting notes for that book or article. And there your ideas sit, on the corner of your desk, in the draft mode in your computer. Haunting you. If you could only find the time to write them up and send them out -to the cold, cruel world of refereed publications. Frightened, guilty, depressed, but eager? Why not try taking a little step before you take the big one? Send *All About Mentoring* your "work-in-progress." No, it doesn't have to be about mentoring; in fact, we'd like to know what else mentors think about! We'll publish it here -almost no questions asked. (Please, just send it via email or on disk as an ASCII file, to the editors, JGilbert, LHerman.) We'll help with editing; we'll try not to be intrusive. You can see your "stuff" in print; your colleagues around the College can offer you some responses. And you can start to put that little scholarship demon in its place.

Contract Corner. Written an interesting contract lately? Done something you think/hope your colleagues might be able to use? Send a description to *All About Mentoring.* We'll publish it here. Call it "synergy." Call it "community-building." Call it "letting the left hand know what the right is doing."

Received from Sharon Villines (Metro): Sharon has written three documents for students which other mentors may be interested in using or adapting for their own students: "Keeping a Learning Journal," "Writing a Contract" and "Writing a Self-Evaluation." She would like to share these documents with anyone interested and also would like to see anything along these lines that other mentors have written.

Received from John Strozier (Long Island): "Operating Systems and Networks" (12 credits, advanced)The objectives of this study are to acquire a basic understanding of the system software which allows for the efficient and economical exploitation of computer hardware, especially in a network environment. An interesting feature of this study on an increasingly important topic is that it makes use of ready-made course and testing materials, created by the Novell Corporation, for certification as a "Certified NetWare Engineer" (CNE). Topics include: DOS; microcomputer hardware concepts; data communications; networking and connectivity, including network cabling; the NetWare 2.2 and 3.11 operating systems; memory management; advanced network optimization, servers, directories, security, utilities, installation and troubleshooting.