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Teaching Statement for Departmental Annual Review

TEACHING GOALS AND CURRENT WORK:

I consciously worked on at least three areas of my teaching last year: 1) improving and expanding on what I already do well, 2) experimenting and trying new kinds of assignments and course designs, and 3) my ability to teach other teachers how to teach, through modeling, demonstrating, writing, and as a last resort, talking about it.

1) Improving and Expanding: My practice of not making specific paper assignments in writing workshops, in order to force students to make sophisticated writerly decisions about what they have to say and who needs to hear it, is getting more complex by understanding better the unconscious ways I and my students “read” classroom assignments, even when I insist there is no assignment. I'm getting better at making students more self-aware of their own assumptions about writing that come strictly from the artificiality of the classroom.

I've also expanded and changed my literacy strand for ENC 1101 and 1102. It's now much more comprehensive and somewhat better connected to current events. I've improved greatly on the research project after teaching it, rather haphazardly, in the fall of 1994.

In the last year or so, I have also been trying to do a better job of coordinating my course designs in courses that are taught by other faculty. LAE 5370 and LAE 5948, in particular, need as much continuity and coherence as possible in order to strengthen the First Year Writing Program staff. The graduate rhetoric courses are, I believe, stronger when the rhetoric faculty agree on the general gist of what the courses are about and don't teach whatever we are most interested in at the moment. In other courses such as Advanced Article and Essay, which I can't predict being assigned to, I try to read other faculty syllabi and talk to the faculty who are teaching the course to find out what they are doing in the courses.

2) New: The riskiest thing I've tried in the past year was teaching about 1/3 of LAE 5370 in the Computer Writing Center, using the new Daedalus software as much as possible. The students (new TAs) responded pretty well. I've also been experimenting with an emphasis on teaching and researching “after FSU” as an additional motivation for mastering theoretical knowledge.

I also tried a much more proactive approach to the research paper in my graduate courses, required pre-writing and draft workshops much earlier in the semester than any of us were comfortable with. I also worked with the graduate students on studying current journals that they could keep in mind as they prepared their research projects. Since at least two of the papers from that class were revised for publication, I think I will try this more aggressive approach in the future.

In LAE 5948, Dr. Leverenz and I have redesigned the course practically from scratch and written all new assignments, making a teaching portfolio and teacher-research a required element. Since LAE 5948 was in the past only a discussion or support group meeting time, motivating teachers to see themselves as part of a community that constantly improves and increases its knowledge has been a struggle at times.

3) Teaching teachers is different than teaching students. I'm slowly finding that teaching teachers requires as much charismatic persuasion and modeling as they do theoretical and practical knowledge. Written instructions for teachers, such as the *Teacher's Guide*, need to be not merely informative, but fascinating and yet completely “doable”-sounding. I'm striving to

improve my decisions about the best time, place, voice, and context for modeling excellent teaching.

SIRS [student evaluations]:

Since my course assignments in 1995 were all teacher-training courses, I think the SIRS are partly reflective of my role as an administrator. There's no way to separate which responses from the students were the result of being forced to take the class in order to have or keep their teaching assistantships, a few students' quite vocal belief that they already knew everything about teaching writing, or what they actually learned in the course.

In regard to LAE5370, the comments about reading too much theory are comments I take seriously. I won't be reducing the amount of difficult reading assignments (none of which were actually rigorous composition theory texts, as the syllabus can show), but I can do a better job of helping them understand why knowing *why* is as important as knowing *how*.