

Writing Matters

Writing Across the Curriculum
Southwestern Community College

Volume VI
Number 1

WAC Workshops Available to Your Classes

Support for your students is just an email away!

Popular workshops:

- Research/research styles (APA, MLA, Chicago)
- Evaluating sources
- Note taking
- Taking Essay exams
- Creating portfolios

Email WAC Coordinator, Jenn Hippensteel, today!
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Ultimate Outcomes

As part of our goals at SCC, we aim to prepare students for transfer or see them earn a credential for professional life. However, nearly every faculty member would also state that we hope to create lifelong learners and thoughtful citizens through our classes. This involves students having understanding deeper than mere facts and making connections between what they're learning and the world around them.

We know that learning doesn't happen in a vacuum; we are constantly interacting with the world around us and being affected by people and events. Therefore, to encourage our students to become active, lifelong learners, it makes sense to create a classroom environment that fosters that kind of "connected thinking." Read below for two assignments that may help achieve that end.

Making Connections—Two Assignments to Consider

If you have been in the field of education for very long, you have probably been exposed to Bloom's Taxonomy in one form or another. Originally developed in the 1950s, the taxonomy is a visual representation of the levels of thought that our students use throughout their educations. Naturally, learning a concept begins simply—at the bottom of the taxonomy with simple cognitive functions such as memorization. However, as students move up the levels, they begin to interact with

knowledge in deeper ways—analyzing it, synthesizing it, connecting it to other contexts, and applying it in their lives. This, according to Bloom, is the pinnacle of learning.

As instructors, we seek to move our students up the taxonomy away from mere memorization and regurgitation of facts to more sophisticated ways of dealing with the concepts in our classes. An issue we commonly encounter, however, is the question of "how?" How do we help

students move towards deeper engagement and learning?

The following are two sample writing assignments that can support the type of thinking and learning we want our students to engage with.

Change of Audience

One writing assignment that works to engage students with content is to have them write to an audience that isn't you. Most student writing is for the instructor, but if we change up the audience for student writing, they will find

themselves needing to look at the content in a different way. This assignment plays on the old idea of "teach it to know it."

For example, have your students explain a difficult concept to a younger brother or a grandmother. By choosing an audience outside of your field, students will need to manipulate the language and presentation of content in their writing. This can be particularly enlightening for you as an

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**Any fool can know. The point is to understand.
—Albert Einstein**

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instructor.

Why It Matters

A second writing assignment to consider is one that asks students to explicitly make connections between your class/material and their lives or future professional endeavors. Ask students to consider, “Why does this matter?” and then to write about how this particular class will impact their thinking and learning. Don’t be surprised if you have some students respond with an emphatic, “I don’t know why this matters,” particularly with core courses that are outside their chosen fields of study. Be ready to give an example in your

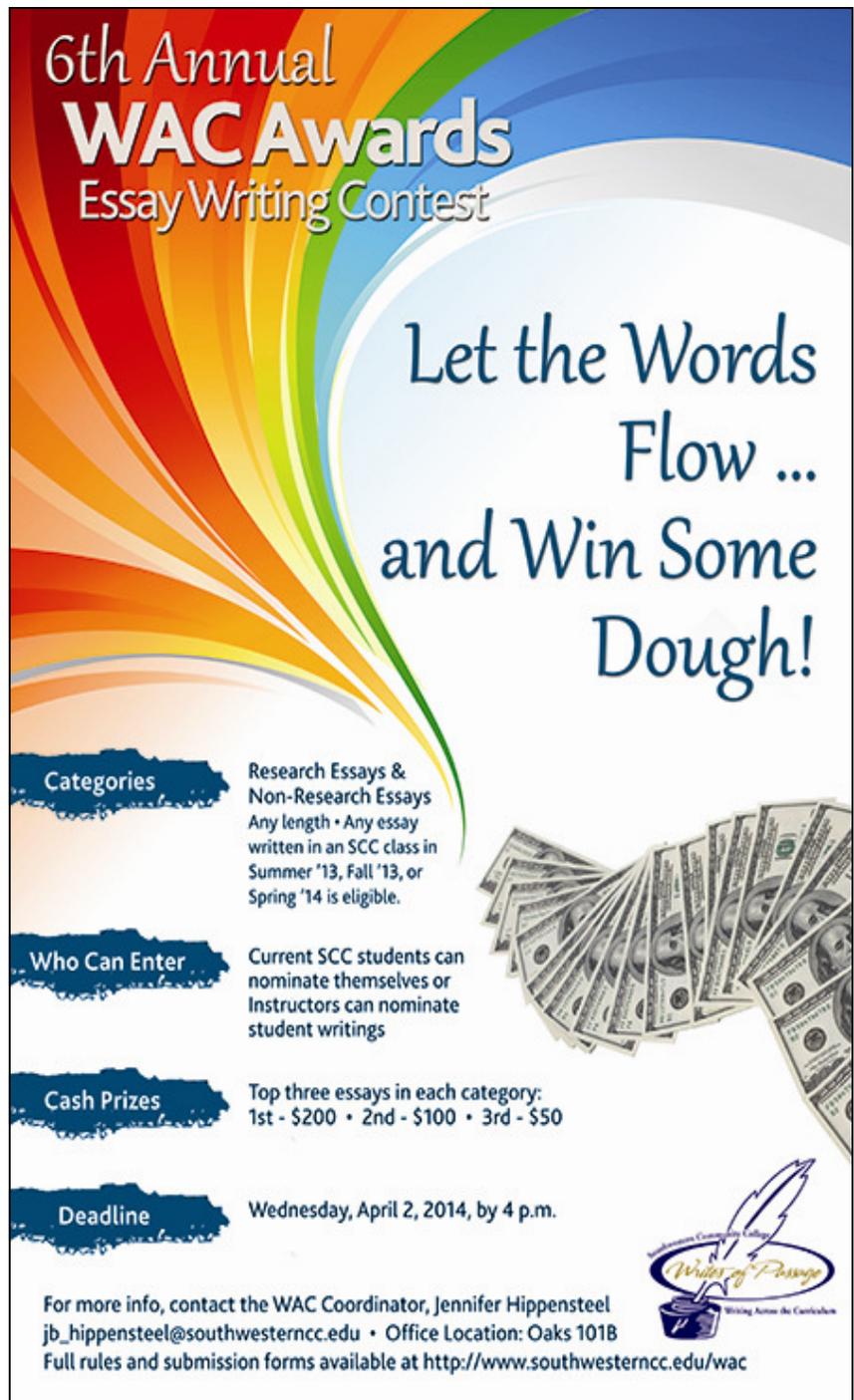
assignment sheet or in your discussion of the assignment.

Student responses to this assignment can be used to foster classroom discussion or small group discussion that will not only connect students to the class content, but it will also help forge connections between the students themselves.

These are only two examples of many types of writing assignments that will take your students’ thinking and learning to a place of deeper engagement. I encourage you to support your students in making their own connections.

That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you’ve understood all your life, but in a new way.

—Doris Lessing



6th Annual WAC Awards
Essay Writing Contest

Let the Words Flow ...
and Win Some Dough!

Categories Research Essays & Non-Research Essays
Any length • Any essay written in an SCC class in Summer '13, Fall '13, or Spring '14 is eligible.

Who Can Enter Current SCC students can nominate themselves or Instructors can nominate student writings

Cash Prizes Top three essays in each category:
1st - \$200 • 2nd - \$100 • 3rd - \$50

Deadline Wednesday, April 2, 2014, by 4 p.m.

For more info, contact the WAC Coordinator, Jennifer Hippensteel
jb_hippensteel@southwesterncc.edu • Office Location: Oaks 101B
Full rules and submission forms available at <http://www.southwesterncc.edu/wac>

