

THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING PROGRAMS IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION: A MODEST PROPOSAL

A Thesis by

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HIGHER EDUCATION: A MODEST PROPOSAL

I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in English.

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Peter Zoller, Committee Chair

We have read this thesis  
and recommend its acceptance:

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Christopher Brooks, Committee Member

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Susan Huxman, Committee Member

## DEDICATION

For those who suffered during Hurricane Katrina.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why a professional writing curriculum would be an invaluable program to institute in American universities across the country. So many people think that because we all learn to read and write in our early years of education that anyone can do it, but the problem remains that not everyone will be good at it. We need good, strong writers in the world of business and the only way to achieve that is to provide students with an outlet for specializing and learning more about the discipline of professional writing.

This thesis begins with a short history of writing instruction in American universities that will explain how liberal arts programs have evolved over the past two hundred years and how writing curriculums currently fit into that program. Once you have a better understanding of the history, I will enlighten you with my reasons for needing a specialized program in professional writing. In conclusion, I was able to develop a full-fledged plan for instituting a professional writing curriculum in the English department through a partnership between the departments of English and Communication in the college of Liberal Arts.

## PREFACE

I recently sat through a teleseminar hosted by the Public Relations Society of America on “How to be an Effective Editor,” and one of the participants asked, “When did universities move away from offering courses on writing instruction?”

Kathy Sawyer, one of the teleseminar attendees, comes from a small advertising agency in New Jersey where they employ permanent staff writers, as well as a few freelance writers. During the past couple of years she explained how she has been having problems finding college graduates who can compose effective written material without her having to interject an unusual amount of editorial control. Sawyer started questioning these professional “newbies” about their college curricula and learned that many of them received very limited training in the field of writing. “The communications graduates claim their college programs focused very little on written communications such as copywriting and composing press releases, but spent an inordinate amount of time on public speaking, PR planning, and media relations. The graduates of English departments also insist that their courses were focused on literature and research, and that they were hardly given the chance to talk about what would improve their essays and papers,” said Sawyer. She is so frustrated with the level of writing she sees that Sawyer is considering implementing a training program/trial period for all new staff writers, which will include a few weeks of intensive writing under the direction of a local organization for professional writers.

Sawyer is lucky to have the budget, not to mention the resources, to be able to put this type of training into practice for new employees. The most professional writers do not have this luxury, and are trying to reverse problems such as these themselves.

For students, leaving the academic world to write in a professional business environment is a hard transition that could be made so much easier if universities just taught them the business way of writing right from the start. In some ways, it almost seems cruel to teach students how to write in an academic style for four years just to have them find out they have to learn a whole new way later. This is a complaint I share with many other young professionals.

Because of problems like these I believe offering students and job seekers the option to participate in a professional writing major, minor, or certificate program would only help to increase their chances for development as our business world rapidly evolves.

Essentially the two major parts to my thesis that emerge: in the first part I explain the varied reasons for needing to implement a formal writing program within English departments in American universities. I will use research, as well as a series of interviews (See Appendix A for a list of the interview questions) to show evidence that not only is this program needed but it would also be successful. Similarly, I specifically point to English departments to host this program for several reasons, which I will talk about later in this paper. The conclusion will focus on a plan for making this program happen—a curriculum of writing instruction for those students who want to pursue a career in professional writing as well as for students in other disciplines who need instruction in professional writing for their field of study. However, I cannot offer my



reasons for needing this program or my plan for a writing curriculum without providing some history of professional writing instruction in American universities. The history is important in order to place my proposals in context.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### AN INTRODUCTION

Writing instruction in American universities was one of the most highly coveted elements in education 250 years ago. Students pursued a higher education in order to develop their analytical thinking skills and creative abilities, and any career choices beyond such an education were followed up with apprenticeships taken on after they completed their schooling. This type of study was considered the “norm” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States. But as the industrial revolution ensued in the mid to late 1700s and more opportunities became available in fields such as engineering and management, students were more interested in “specializing” in certain fields. Unfortunately, such specialization left little time for rhetoric courses.

The decrease of writing instruction in the American university has been an ongoing occurrence ever since the 1800s, yet the need for good writers grows more important with every piece of new technology. From e-mail and text messaging to blogs and technical manuals, professionals of every industry need to be able to compose effective written materials—not just professional writers. The majority of students choose to attend college because they have aspirations for a career and they look to the university to prepare them for what lies ahead. However, many college graduates enter the “real world” and find they are starting from scratch with their writing skills. I know a nurse who is having a hard time composing an effective memo about raising staffing requirements in her area because she does not understand the rules of persuasive writing. And I once worked with a C.E.O. who asked me for help with every letter he

needed to compose because his grammar skills were not up to par and he could never find the appropriate tone to use for the subject matter.

These are real-life situations that need to be addressed by American universities, but because of finances and limited time, band-aids are applied to one problem area after another rather than healing the wound. In my thesis, I will explore several reasons for needing more writing instruction at the university level, as well as provide some possible solutions to the problem. Some may think that my proposed solutions are on a larger scale than what could ever happen, but the lack of writing skills is a problem that calls for drastic action. My conclusions are based on research that includes interviews with professors, executives, professional writers, job-seekers, and students; books focused on the history of writing and writing instruction; current articles about writing in trade publications; and on my own personal experience as a student and as a professional writer. Before getting into the major focuses of my thesis, I will begin with a more detailed explanation of the history of writing instruction in American universities to provide a deeper understanding of how this problem has evolved.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A HISTORY

American universities were, in large part, based on the English system of higher education and they usually were founded by one religious denomination or another. Courses during the early 1700s emphasized logic, grammar, and rhetoric much more than arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. The basis for this approach may be found in Aristotle's theories on logic. "Language for Aristotle is little more than a simple sign system, with thought and word enjoying a separate existence, to be brought together only for purposes of communication," according to James A. Berlin, author of *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*. Berlin explains that the written word is not the center of all meaning for Aristotle, but rather, how those words are used in conjunction with each other takes precedence. Basically, what matters is the logic behind the words.

By 1750, however, an interest in the scientific method was developing as well as an interest in and need for public speaking. More and more business leaders were realizing the importance of knowing absolutes instead of simply what was being observed. Up until this point, many theories were based solely off of hypotheses and research but little to no scientific fact. Scholars were starting to understand the positive effect that the scientific method was having on their findings and this prompted others to start thinking in terms of absolutes. Students also wanted to be able to utilize what they were learning outside the classroom. As a result, political and scientific debates became an increasingly important part of a collegiate education especially during the

Revolutionary War (Adams 4). Students were able to use their oratorical skills to speak in public about such themes such as war, independence, and taxes.

During this time, classes were small. Only a select few had the financial means to attend college, and those who did, expected to receive an education in the classical languages (Greek and Latin). For the most part, those students studying to be lawyers, doctors, and clergymen were the only ones to attend college because learning how to read and analyze classical languages such as Greek and Latin would help them in their careers, but even these groups were not required to attend college (Adams 5). In fact, even as a classical language, Hebrew was only required of those students preparing for the ministry (Kraus 72). Even as late as 1900, students were required to have only “an average of one year of high school to be admitted to an American medical school” (Adams 5). Dr. William Carlos Williams, a pediatrician and American poet closely associated with the Modernist and Imagist movements, was one example of someone who never took an undergraduate course.

In the early 1800s, specialized courses in agriculture, engineering, education, library science, business, and home economics were instituted in colleges along the east coast such as Harvard University and Yale, and liberal arts programs were being devalued for their irrelevancy in the working world (see Appendix B for a brief history of Harvard). These new areas of study were put in place for juniors and seniors so that they would have a background in a specific discipline *before* starting an apprenticeship. Students were still required to take liberal arts courses but only during their first two years, and then they could move on to one of these areas of specialized career training during the last two years.

This new system was spurred on by the industrial revolution (which for purposes of this paper is considered as having taken place from 1800 to 1900) and the need for specialization in the world of work. “The number of dailies increased from 1,489 in 1870 to 2,250 in 1914, a time when newspaper production involved more reporters than ever before” (Adams 14). As you can see, the number of circulations, as well as trade publications, was growing at a rapid rate, which drastically increased the need for professional writers of all kinds. Furthermore, it was a time when more students were entering college and when the number of academic disciplines began to increase. Despite business and governmental needs, many alumni and professors fought to keep the traditional liberal arts-focused curricula in place by imposing outlandish rules on students of the new era. For example, those not following the liberal arts track were not allowed to sit in chapels or even in dining halls (Adams 7). Professors were required to assume an increased teaching load: they were given more classes to teach with more students in each class. In effect, courses that were not seen as related to a student’s “direct route toward [a specified] career” were eliminated (Adams 1). Katherine H. Adams, author of *A History of Professional Writing Instruction*, offers the opinion that as the industrial revolution created more jobs and a greater need for managers, students began to view college as a stepping-stone in preparing for a career. Adams makes an important point because prior to this time, many job seekers relied solely on apprenticeships as an avenue to more specialized careers, whereas college now became the path to success. As jobs became more competitive, these specialized courses were being offered earlier in students’ curricula, and eventually, rhetoric (writing) courses were required for only two semesters in the freshmen year.

By the mid to late nineteenth century, professors of juniors, seniors, and graduate students began to realize that these students “were doing less written work as larger class sizes ... changed the college class structure” (Adams 36). David R. Russell, author of *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: 1870–1990*, notes that teachers had “a license to complain about poor student writing but an institutionally sanctioned excuse for not devoting time to their undergraduates’ writing” (63).

The proposed solution to this problem came from A.S. Hill and Barrett Wendell, professors at Harvard who both believed they could structure advanced composition courses in the form of electives for juniors and seniors. While some “students began their professional writing careers” in this “demanding atmosphere,” other students thought the course entirely too time consuming for an elective (Adams 37). Such elective writing courses focused on different variations of creative writing. This approach was the opposite from what British students were taught. The British felt that creative writing is something that comes from within oneself as a form of artistic expression, and is not a skill to be acquired. Although the “Hill and Wendell” courses proved to be too difficult for some, they were quite popular for the most part; and Wendell often found himself dividing the courses into as many as eight sections in a semester (Adams 48).

Professors across the country took notice of the courses provided by Hill and Wendell and realized how popular these electives were with students. They soon created their own versions of such electives at their own universities. The University of Chicago offered the first journalism program in 1899, and the University of Wisconsin started the first newspaper-writing course in 1905 (Adams 66-67). Professional writing concentrations such as these sprang up in colleges across the country.



Some literature professors were less than thrilled about this rebirth in writing instruction mainly because it took students away from traditional literature courses such as Shakespeare and Milton. Thus began what I call the “War of the Englishes.” This shift in study combined with the emergence of the curriculum called “English,” was enough to begin a revolution that continues to this day (Applebee ix). Peter Elbow briefly discusses the “war” in its current state in his essay “The Cultures of Literature and Composition: What Could Each Learn from the Other?” He refers to the studies of rhetoric and literature as being “married” and he argues that they should “stay married” rather than divorce” (Elbow 533). He also writes that “literature teachers [miss] the boat here” because they do not take the time to teach students to effectively use the English language (Elbow 537). Students are basically expected to read and analyze several canonical authors but without having a sufficient amount of writing instruction themselves, how can they realistically accomplish this? Elbow further explains that by taking the high points of each discipline and combining them into one, faculty of English departments across the country would have a better chance at effectively teaching their students both composition *and* literature.

The early twentieth century was a time of experimentation in the classroom. Teachers were focused on the “progressive education” of young students in order to prepare them for college, but the project pushed students much farther than what teachers initially envisioned. Influenced by John Dewey (1859-1952), the progressive education movement focused on helping students to “broaden their intellect and develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills, rather than simply on the memorization of lessons” (Wikipedia). While a few elements of this system did become

common practice, such as guidance counseling (which still exists today) this movement is still generally seen as a failure by many academics. While Dewey is considered a great intellectual, he was not as good of a communicator; therefore, others cannot fully grasp the overall points of some of his theories. Because so many teachers were trying to implement what they interpreted from Dewey, the progressive principles were rejected in the 1940s and 50s, and ultimately culminated in a “reestablishment of the authentic parts of the vision” in the 1970s (Applebee ix). Essentially, teachers went back to their “old fashioned” methods of teaching because the progressive ideas imposed by Dewey were not successful in their classrooms.

The preceding history, while brief, brings us closer to the present day, where very few universities actually house some type of professional writing program similar to what will be described here (see Appendix C for a sample of the professional writing program overview from Purdue University). For the most part, the majority of universities have an English department with choices of a creative writing track or a literature track, or a communications department in which students usually focus on journalism or mass media communications.

As I begin the next chapter and expand on my reasons for why it is important to have a professional writing curriculum for students, one must keep in mind how the term “professional writer” has evolved over the past hundred years. The term was used to encompass a much smaller group—specifically editors, journalists, poets, and novelists—but now that short list has grown to include many new occupations, for example, speechwriter, communications specialist, technical writer/editor, copywriter, webmaster, web editor, blogger, and many others.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE NEED

*“A professional writer is a person who knows, understands, and appreciates the art of words, and can manipulate those words to achieve a variety of writing assignments.”*

I developed this definition based both on my research and on my experience as a student and a professional writer. Writing is a skill that students acquire during their early years of education, but with the proper opportunities for specialization, those skills can be crafted to make a writer every bit as professional as a financial advisor or an engineer. And while a few people believe that “anyone can write,” many business executives realize how important it is to employ a cultivated and experienced writer who understands the “art” of the written word. “The successful writer is the person who conveys information, ideas, and experience across barriers of time and distance,” is the definition given by one professor of English (Murray 1). I almost chose this definition to begin my chapter, but I felt that because it failed to recognize writing as an art form, it was not able to convey exactly what goes into the act of actual writing. “There are no absolute laws of composition,” which is why it is so important to understand when and where certain writing styles and structures are appropriate (Murray 1). This is part of what makes writing an art and not a science. Business and professional employers often want talented writers on their staff who can switch gears quickly and move from writing articles to writing technical documents with little or no questions and/or

problems. Only a professional writer will have the knowledge and expertise to be able to accomplish such a task in a timely and efficient manner.

Having covered the basics of what I believe a professional and successful writer to be, I want to explore a variety of reasons for developing a curriculum designed for this group of potential students in American universities. Some of the reasons are as simple as realizing that more students are interested in a career in professional writing because new writing positions emerge in technology. For example, such positions as webmasters and bloggers are “popping up” all around us. Other reasons can appear a bit more complex and include theories about how I think this curriculum will benefit not only those students who want to be professional writers, but it would also help students in other disciplines who are required to write now more than ever.

### **The interest is out there**

Many students maintain interest in professional writing programs, but they are forced to choose other courses of study because their universities do not offer this curriculum. Some, especially professors, have asked why these students do not choose a college with their desired curriculum in the first place. The reality is that many students in this country attend a college close to their parents’ homes or at least within their home state for financial reasons; consequently, those students are forced to choose a course of study that may be only tangentially related to professional writing. The most popular substitutes for a professional writing curriculum are currently in English or Communications.

Some students choose Liberal Arts, which houses the Department of English, because they feel they will receive more practice in writing since the majority of English assignments, exams, and finals come in the form of essays and long papers. The downside to their decision is that writing essays is, in general, the only type of writing available in this curriculum. “We cannot assume that literature is the primary interest of our students—or even that it should be. We must realize that the literary form of writing is but one form of writing. If we evaluate our students only on their ability to write literary analysis we will over-reward a minority and penalize a majority,” said Donald M. Murray, author of *A Writer Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition*. Because of this “specialization” in the essay, other students choose the creative writing track. However, the styles of writing available in this sub-specialty include poetry, fiction and non-fiction workshops, and a few other forms, but again, the curriculum is still very limited for students who want to be able to learn about technical, PR, and other forms of writing. Barbara McKenzie, a senior creative writing student at Louisiana State University, commented that she chose the creative writing option because she wanted to specialize in writing and this felt like her only option, but now that she is about to graduate and going on interviews, she is having problems with the writing, editing, and proofing tests she is given. As she says, “I have gotten so used to writing in my own voice that it is hard to adjust so that I write using a company’s ‘professional’ style, which is what they want. They do not care about my voice in their brochures or on their Web sites.”

When students choose Communications as their course of study, in place of professional writing, they often hope to gain more insight into forms of writing used in

public relations and mass media. Rebecca Craig is a proofreader in the Marketing Communications department at Pioneer<sup>®</sup> Balloon Company, an international manufacturer with headquarters in Wichita, KS. She is also a recent graduate of the Elliott School of Communication at WSU. “I wanted a more diverse background in writing, but when that was not available, I chose to major in communications,” said Craig, “it was the next best thing because I was interested in possibly going into PR. And while I did learn a bit about copywriting, I think I could have used more courses on solid writing instruction.” Her concern, like several other alumni with whom (from a number of collegiate institutions) I spoke, was that the two freshman composition courses she took were not enough to prepare her for the writing she would be doing throughout her career.

### **Bottom Line #1**

The interest in a professional writing curriculum is out there. More universities need to provide business and professional writing programs so that students would have the option available.

### **The need for good writers is growing as technology advances**

The rapid advancement of technology is an amazing thing in the business world. It has given professionals the ability to immediately communicate with each other no matter where they may be, which leads to decisions being made faster and problems being solved rapidly. It has also opened the door to more technologically based writing positions, for example, webmasters and bloggers. This field is so popular that

communities and special interest groups have formed based on “contemporary computers and writing.” For example, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) formed a specialized committee around 1998 called the “Computers in Composition and Communication” committee. Major players in this group frequently deliver keynote speeches, short lectures, and seminars based on topics such as “How Electronic Texts and Journals Will Shape Our Professional Work” and new technological writing jobs in this field (Inman 5).

The position of “webmaster” is still relatively new in our business world and not yet considered a uniform occupation across the board—a webmaster can be different things for different companies. For some it might be the person who has technical control of the Web site, and for others, it might be the person considered to have overall control of the branding of the Web site. Over the course of the last year I have seen, and even applied for a few, webmaster positions posted in *The Wichita Eagle*. The ones I chose to apply for all included the overall responsibility of content management for the company Web site, so webmasters are often expected to be experienced writers.

“Blogger” is an even newer position in the world of technology than webmaster, but it is becoming popular with large scale companies who are trying to get messages out to society in a less formal mass medium. TiVo<sup>®</sup>, for example, hosted a “TiVo Ambassador Blogger” contest, and the winner, Matt Ward, is now running their blog site at <http://blog.tivo.com/>. Ward, from San Diego, wrote the script for a funny film clip and also an essay sharing his passion for his TiVo, which is how he won the contest. Now he is responsible for monitoring the blog site. He frequently posts messages to

customers so, of course, TiVo wants a good (not to mention “clever”) writer in this position to represent their company.

“Most American high school graduates do not know how to write. This is one of the few statements on which most educators agree” (Murray 103). So if students are not being taught valuable writing skills during their high school years and the majority of them are graduating without knowing how to compose effective written materials, how can we expect two college-level freshmen composition courses to correct the problem? How can we reason that these two courses are going to prepare students for these new technological fields of writing? The simple answer—we cannot.

## **Bottom Line #2**

Writing jobs in technology-based fields are opening up all around us, and having a degree in a curriculum such as professional writing would only help to increase the chances of job seekers looking for these positions, and also help to cultivate the talents and skills of those currently holding positions in related fields.

## **The program would benefit students across several disciplines**

Stan Weir, the art director of the company I work for, recently received an e-mail from a recently graduated graphic designer seeking a job. The e-mail (with an altered name and phone number) read as follows:

Dear Sir or Madman,

My name is Andrew Smith. I’m intrested in the graphic design

job I saw on the careerbuilder with your company. I have many and



good skill that I think you'd be impressed with. please call me.

so I could talk to you. 316-123-4567.

Andrew

Attached to this e-mail were the job seeker's cover letter and resume, both of which were written about as well as his e-mail. This person is an excellent example of what happens to college graduates who do not receive adequate writing instruction. The sad part is that "Andrew" may be an amazing graphic designer but my company will never know because of the image represented in his email.

Cover letters and resumes are just two examples of written communications that professionals in all fields need to master because they could mean the difference between getting a job and not getting one. But those are actually the easy ones to write, because job seekers can always enlist editing help before sending out this information. A more significant problem is the longer writing assignment that is assigned at the office; for example, an engineer needs to put together a proposal to persuade his/her boss that the company needs to purchase some large piece of equipment to finish a current project. If the engineer does not understand the formula for writing a persuasive paper, he may never get the tools he needs to effectively do his job.

Technology is also requiring more forms of written communication in every area of the business world than ever before. These include e-mail messages, text messages, and blogs, and if college graduates find themselves unable to keep up with the writing, it will not matter how good they are at the other parts of their jobs. E-mails are especially important for most business and technology workers, and being able to compose an

effective e-mail is a skill that workers need to be able to execute on a day-to-day basis. “E-mail is actually the preferred method of communication right now in just about every industry,” said Wynn Ponder, director of Marketing Communications at Pioneer Balloon; “It is such a rapid medium for communicating that it is usually more efficient than using the telephone or even getting out of your chair to walk to another floor.” Text messaging, on the other hand, is slowly on the rise but starting off just as e-mails once did, and soon we will all be texting to get instant responses. Blogs are probably the most recent form of technological communication (among the ones listed here), but are quickly becoming more prevalent to major companies like TiVo (see page 14 for information on TiVo) and Coca-Cola®.

Unfortunately when some people compose their e-mails, text messages, and even blog entries, they do not take the time to formulate their thoughts before writing. Such haste and lack of writing technique can lead to many kinds of miscommunications. And now that we, as business professionals, are using the internet to communicate with each other on a regular basis—as opposed to the old fashioned “get out of your chair and walk over to their desk”—we all need a little more training in basic writing techniques. A good writer leaves little to no room for further interpretation of his or her messages. This is a simple concept that so many business professionals do not understand because many have never had a formal class on writing instruction.

### **Bottom Line #3**

Students across many disciplines would benefit from the establishment of some form of a professional writing curriculum, especially those looking to advance their writing skills for technical purposes.

### **The invaluable need for specialization in writing**

Let us look at it this way—an attorney may be better at family law than he is at real estate law because he chooses to specialize, but it does not mean he is unable to understand what is happening in a real estate case. The same can be said for a writer: one writer may specialize in the novel while another writer may focus on copywriting. The novelist might not be as good at writing ads as the copywriter, but he would more than likely do better than a math teacher. Learning more about a specific profession and specializing in an area of study is a large reason why many students choose to attend college in the first place.

In *Everyone Can Write*, Peter Elbow includes essays on the art of teaching writing. He even goes as far to say that “being unable to write” in graduate school is what initially sparked his interest in writing (Elbow 5). Anyone can write, but a professional writer views words as a form of art and knows how to manipulate those words for specific instances. Writing is a skill that we all acquire during the early years of our education but with the proper channels, those skills can be crafted to create expert writers. Just as accountants specialize in numbers, writers need to specialize in words.

Cameron Bellows, a marketing analyst at International Marketing Systems in New Orleans, LA, was recently asked by his boss to provide script copy for a new commercial and content for coordinating brochures. Cameron immediately thought this would be an easy task and even a little fun—something different from his daily responsibilities of analyzing the market and their customers’ competition. To his surprise, it ended up being a rather difficult responsibility, one that he could not complete. Irritated and pressed for time, his boss decided to “splurge” and contract a freelance writer to finish the project. They were both so pleased with how great the copy turned out in such a short period of time that they decided to hire a full-time staff writer. Cameron’s boss finally saw the advantages of having a professional writer to provide their marketing copy, rather than dumping the extra work on an employee whose specialization was elsewhere.

Professional writers are also familiar with the rules and regulations necessary to compose legally effective written materials. For example, a successful writer will understand the ethical realizations of copyrights laws and “fine print” on packages and other consumer goods.

#### **Bottom Line #4**

Professional writers are an important part of our working culture, yet the majority of American universities do not provide students with the knowledge they need to specialize in this field. Hence, some employers end up expecting that all of their employees are also writers even though they may not have the skills and knowledge to successfully accomplish many writing assignments.

## **In conclusion**

You can see, several reasons for needing to offer professional writing programs in more American universities:

- The interest is out there
- The need for good writers is growing as technology advances
- The program would benefit students across a variety of disciplines
- The invaluable need for specialization in a highly visible field is increasing

Once we face the realities of our rapidly evolving business economy, putting together programs at the college level for future writers will seem more like our only option.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SOLUTION

The University of Southern California (USC) was one of the first American colleges to recognize the importance and need for professional writers in our ever-demanding workforce in 1971. USC chose to enhance its Creative Writing Department by renaming it the Professional Writing Department and instead of only focusing on certain genres, they stretched their course requirements to include a variety of genres. Students are still given the opportunity to concentrate in an area, such as non-fiction, poetry, novel, film, drama, and TV, but other options became available such as technical writing/editing and PR writing.

The fact remains that the solution for setting up a professional writing program is going to be different for every university. Unfortunately, we cannot all follow suit and provide a program just like USC. Besides finances and time allocations, other factors would need to be considered to construct an effective professional writing program such as:

- How the departments are set up at present;
- What types of writing courses are already being offered;
- Which department(s) currently take ownership of these writing courses.

Because the possibilities of how this program could be set up are endless, I am going to focus solely on WSU and its current structure as my example for how this program could be implemented.

When I first began the quest to complete my thesis, I initially believed that an entire curriculum needed to be developed at WSU to fit the program. I was, in fact, very

wrong. WSU currently offers a wide-range of possibilities for students to further develop their writing skills—those options just happen to be spread between the English and Communication’s departments in the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

My proposal would be to offer what I will call a “concentration in professional writing” through the English department. Because basic grammar, punctuation, and writing skills anchor this curriculum, it would make the most sense to house this program in the English department, but this program would be a joint effort with the school of Communication. By declaring a major in English with a concentration in professional writing, students would have the option to specialize in writing instruction and enhance their knowledge of professional writing rules and skills.

For those students choosing a different major altogether, a minor and a certificate program in professional writing could be made available. For example, a student choosing to major in finance would have the option to dramatically improve his business writing skills for the professional world simply by taking some additional advanced writing courses. Whether students want to pursue a minor or a certificate would depend on how many extra courses they want to take. The standard minor curriculum at WSU requires 12 hours while the certificate program might require 15 to 21, depending on the guidelines set by the English department.

Of course, students would be required to take the two standard freshmen composition courses, as well as a few electives based on the fundamentals of composition. The purpose here would be to set students up with a solid foundation for writing throughout the remainder of their college years and, also, in their future careers. Besides acting as a basic stepping-stone for advanced writing courses, another major

benefit of these writing electives would be that they could actually benefit students in all majors. The course would be open to students pursuing the professional writing curriculum, as well as to all students just wanting to solidify their writing skills for their future. This plan follows the current policy for students wanting to obtain a minor in other WSU curriculums.

Once solid writing skills are identified in students who want to follow the professional writing track and a specified GPA is attained, they would be admitted to the concentration after completing 24 hours (their sophomore year). Once accepted, they would be expected to complete 33 hours of advanced writing courses. I specify 33 hours because this is consistent with the current standards of other programs offered by the English department. Because the majority of these courses are already in place and being hosted by the English Department and the Elliott School of Communications, it would be a shared effort on the part of both departments. Students would take a combination of English and Communications writing courses. Based on the student's interest, he/she may want to focus on a specified area or just take a variety of courses to see what is out there. (See Appendix D for a complete list of the English and Communication courses that would apply to this program.)

## **In Conclusion**

While I do not believe this thesis to be an *exact* plan, I think it is exactly what is needed to start the dialogue on this topic. My hope for this thesis is that it sparks interest, and even debate. The more attention it receives—positive or negative— is exactly what we need to sit down and start the conversation. It is time we talk and



brainstorm ideas about what we can start doing *now* to change the current dynamics and bring more focus to the field of professional writing.

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## REFERENCES

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## **Interviews**

John Jeffries – Editor – Splurge Magazine

Wynn Ponder – Pioneer Balloon Company – Director of Marketing Communications

Rebecca Craig – Pioneer Balloon Company – Writer – Balloon Images Magazine

Julie Conner – Pioneer Balloon Company – Editor – Balloon Magic The Magazine

Dr. Robert Shenk – University of New Orleans – Professor of Literature and Rhetoric

Barbara McKenzie – LSU Creative Writing Student

Carmen Bellows – International Marketing Systems – Marketing Analyst

Washington Speechwriters Roundtable

National Writer's Association

Society for Technical Writers

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Introduction to Appendix A

Appendix A is a list of the interview questions I used to conduct my research. Although there were other questions that came up during certain interviews, these specific questions were asked of each interviewee.

#### Questions for Thesis Interviews

**Instructions: Please put your answers on this form, save it, and send it to me as an attachment to an email. Thanks.**

(1) Please state your name, title, and company, as you would like it to be referenced.

(2) What estimated percentage of your workday do you spend writing?

- Less than 2 hours
- Between 2 and 4 hours
- Between 4 and 6 hours
- More than 6 hours

(3) Do you write for pleasure?  YES or  NO

If so, about how much time do you spend on this hobby per week?

- Less than 2 hours
- Between 2 and 5 hours
- Between 5 and 10 hours
- More than 10 hours

(4) If writing is one of your hobbies, do you think your hobby has helped your career? If so, how?

(5) Do you have a college degree?  YES or  NO

What is your highest degree? Bachelors ; Masters ; Doctorate

From what university or universities did you receive your Bachelor degree(s) and what was your major?

University: \_\_\_\_\_; Major: \_\_\_\_\_

- (6) Did you take writing courses in college?  
 Fewer than 2 writing courses  
 Between 2 and 4 writing courses  
 Between 4 and 6 writing courses  
 More than 6 writing courses
- (7) How helpful do you feel these writing courses were/are to your career?  
Very Helpful  Helpful  Somewhat Helpful  Not Helpful
- (8) If you did not attend college, how did you get into writing (i.e. job responsibility, mentor, hobby, etc.)?  
Please explain briefly:
- (9) Based on your knowledge and experience, please explain what you mean by the term "professional writing."
- (10) With respect to your answer to Question #9, do you think having a "professional writing" curriculum in American universities would be beneficial to potential job seekers today? YES  NO
- (11) If you responded "Yes" to question #10, would you recommend:  
A certificate program of 4-6 courses? YES  NO   
A Bachelors degree program of 8-10 courses? YES  NO   
A certificate program for professionals who already have a Bachelors degree? YES  NO
- (12) Do you have suggestions about what might be included in a professional writing program?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **HARVARD HISTORY**

#### **Introduction to Appendix B**

Appendix B is a brief history of Harvard taken from the Harvard Web site. It is included so that readers who may not be familiar with the history of American universities will have more insight into how many of them came to be. For those who have some basic understanding of this history, this Appendix may be useful to clarify some of the information found in Chapter Two of my thesis.

#### **The Harvard Guide: History, Lore, and More**

##### **The Early History of Harvard University**

Harvard University, which celebrated its 350th anniversary in 1986, is the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. Founded 16 years after the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, the University has grown from nine students with a single master to an enrollment of more than 18,000 degree candidates, including undergraduates and students in 10 principal academic units. An additional 13,000 students are enrolled in one or more courses in the Harvard Extension School. Over 14,000 people work at Harvard, including more than 2,000 faculty. There are also 7,000 faculty appointments in affiliated teaching hospitals.

Seven presidents of the United States – John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Theodore and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Rutherford B. Hayes, John Fitzgerald Kennedy and George W. Bush – were graduates of Harvard. Its faculty have produced more than 40 Nobel laureates.





On **June 9, 1650**, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts approved Harvard President Henry Dunster's incorporation. The Charter of 1650 established the President and Fellows of Harvard College (a.k.a the Harvard Corporation) and a seven-member board that is the oldest corporation in the Western Hemisphere.

Harvard College was established in 1636 by vote of the Great and General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and was named for its first benefactor, John Harvard of Charlestown, a young minister who, upon his death in 1638, left his library and half his estate to the new institution. Harvard's first scholarship fund was created in 1643 with a gift from Ann

Radcliffe, Lady Mowlson.

During its early years, the College offered a classic academic course based on the English university model but consistent with the prevailing Puritan philosophy of the first colonists. Although many of its early graduates became ministers in Puritan congregations throughout New England, the College was never formally affiliated with a specific religious denomination. An early brochure, published in 1643, justified the College's existence: "To advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches."



## New Schools and New Houses

The 1708 election of John Leverett, the first president who was not also a clergyman, marked a turning of the College toward intellectual independence from Puritanism. As the College grew in the 18th and 19th centuries, the curriculum was broadened, particularly in the sciences, and the College produced or attracted a long list of famous scholars, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, William James, the elder Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louis Agassiz, and Gertrude

On **Sept. 8, 1836**, at Harvard's Bicentennial celebration, announced that President Josiah Quincy had found the sketch of the College arms - a shield with the word "VERITAS" ("Verity" or "Truth") on three books - while researching his History of Harvard University in the College Archives. At the Bicentennial, a white banner atop a large tent in the Yard displayed this design for the first time. Until Quincy's discovery, a hand-drawn sketch (from records of an Overseers meeting on Sept. 6, 1644) had been filed away and forgotten. It became the seal officially adopted by the Corporation in 1837. This sketch informs the version used today.

Stein.

Charles W. Eliot, who served as president from 1869 to 1909, transformed the relatively small provincial institution into a modern university.

During his tenure, the Law and Medical schools were revitalized, and the graduate schools of Business, Dental Medicine, and Arts and Sciences were established. Enrollment rose from 1,000 to 3,000 students, the faculty grew from 49 to 278, and the endowment increased from \$2.3 million to \$22.5 million. It was under Eliot's watch that Radcliffe College was established. In the 1870s a group of women closely linked to Harvard faculty were exploring ways to make higher education more accessible to women.

One of this group, Stella S. Gilman, was married to historian and educator Arthur Gilman. In 1878, at the urging of his wife, Gilman proposed the foundation of a college for women to President Eliot. Eliot approved, and seven women were chosen to design the new institution. Among them were Stella Gilman, Alice Mary "Grave Alice" Longfellow, a daughter of the famous poet, and Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, the widow of renowned naturalist Louis Agassiz. In 1879, the "Harvard Annex" for women's instruction by Harvard faculty began operations. And in 1894 the Annex was chartered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as Radcliffe College, with Elizabeth Cary Agassiz as its first president.

Under Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell (1909-33), the undergraduate course of study was redesigned to ensure students a liberal education through concentration in a single field with distribution of course requirements among other disciplines. Today, 51 fields of concentration are offered to Harvard College students. The tutorial system, also introduced by Lowell and still a distinctive feature of a Harvard education, offers undergraduates informal specialized instruction in their fields.

One of Lowell's most significant accomplishments was the House Plan, which provides undergraduates with a small-college atmosphere within the larger university. After being housed in or near Harvard Yard during freshman year, students go to one of 12 Houses in which to live for the remainder of their undergraduate careers. (A 13th House is designed for nonresident students.) Each House has a resident master and a staff of tutors, as well as a dining hall and library, and maintains an active schedule of athletic, social, and cultural events.

## **Recent History**

Recent presidents James Bryant Conant, Nathan M. Pusey, Derek Bok, Neil L. Rudenstine and Lawrence H. Summers each made significant contributions toward strengthening the quality of undergraduate and graduate education at Harvard while, at the same time, maintaining the University's role as a preeminent research institution.

Conant (1933-53) introduced a system of ad hoc committees from outside the University to evaluate tenure candidates being considered for faculty positions. Conant also initiated the General Education Program to give undergraduates breadth in fields

outside their major study. And it was under Conant, in 1943, that Harvard and Radcliffe signed an agreement allowing women students into Harvard classrooms for the first time.

Under Pusey (1953-71), Harvard undertook what was then the largest fundraising campaign in the history of American higher education, the \$82.5 million Program for Harvard College.

The Program strengthened faculty salaries, broadened student aid, created new professorships, and expanded Harvard's physical facilities. A similar but greatly expanded fundraising effort, the Harvard Campaign (1979-84), was conducted under the leadership of Derek Bok (1971-91) and raised \$356 million by the end of 1984. Some of the important educational initiatives Bok undertook include: reform of the undergraduate course of study through the innovative Core Curriculum, the introduction of graduate programs crossing traditional borders of professional disciplines, new approaches to the training of lawyers and doctors, and a renewed emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning at all levels. A 1977 agreement delegated responsibility for the education of undergraduate women to the College.

Rudenstine, Harvard's 26th president, served from 1991-2001. As part of an overall effort to achieve greater coordination among the University's schools and faculties, Rudenstine set in motion an intensive process of University-wide academic planning, intended to identify some of Harvard's main intellectual and programmatic priorities.

In 1999, he announced the launch of a major new venture in interdisciplinary learning, the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study, created through the merger of Radcliffe College with Harvard.

During his tenure Rudenstine worked to sustain and build federal support for university-based research. Under his leadership, Harvard's federally sponsored research grew to a projected \$320 million in 2000, up from \$200 million in 1991. Rudenstine also stressed the University's commitment to excellence in undergraduate education, the importance of keeping Harvard's doors open to students from across the economic spectrum, the task of adapting the research university to an era of rapid information growth, and the challenge of living together in a diverse community committed to freedom of expression. Summers served as Harvard's 27th president from 2001-2006. He is now the Charles W. Eliot University Professor. An eminent scholar and admired public servant, Summers served in a series of senior public policy positions, most notably as secretary of the treasury of the United States.

During his presidency, Summers focused on laying the foundations for renewal that will be necessary to sustain Harvard's excellence into the 21st century and beyond. Under his leadership, the University made numerous changes directed at providing the best educational experience for students across the University. His ambitious plans also encompassed significant growth in the faculties, the further internationalization of the Harvard experience, expanded efforts in and enhanced commitment to the sciences, and support for the humanities and the arts. Summers also spearheaded the effort to ensure that Harvard attract the strongest students regardless of financial circumstances.

Derek Bok returned to the president's office as interim president in July 2006. To learn more about Bok, visit the webpage at <http://www.president.harvard.edu/>.

<http://www.hno.harvard.edu/guide/intro/index.html>

## APPENDIX C

### PROFESSIONAL WRITING PROGRAM AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY

#### Introduction to Appendix C

Appendix C includes a summary of the professional writing program that can be found at Purdue University. It is helpful for us to see how some of these programs are being set up and utilized around the country.

#### About Professional Writing

Professional Writing at [Purdue University](#) includes undergraduate major areas in Technical Writing and Writing and Publishing, Business Writing (ENGL 420) and Technical Writing (ENGL 421) courses for students across the University, and PhD Secondary Areas in Technical and Professional Writing and Rhetoric, Technology, and Digital Writing.

Our area, part of the [Rhetoric and Composition Program](#) in the [Department of English](#), is noted for cultivating expertise in writing for the digital workplace, for teaching and researching multimedia writing and visual rhetoric, for digital and print publishing, and for emphasizing collaboration and community service. Professional Writing at Purdue is known nationally for its innovative and productive faculty, the doctoral research of its graduate students, and its creative and cutting-edge approach to writing and publishing in the digital age.

Professional Writing also publishes [The Writing Instructor](#) and the [Kenneth Burke Journal](#), both networked journals and digital communities, hosts [Digital WPA](#) for the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and houses two small but state-of-the-art [multimedia production labs](#). Students also have opportunities for internships with a wide variety of local companies, including [Parlor Press](#), which has strong ties to Purdue. In Fall 2004, we launched the [Open Source Development and Documentation Project \(OSDDP\)](#). In May 2003, we hosted the international Computers and Writing Conference, which brought hundreds of teachers, writers, and scholars to Purdue on the theme, "Discovering Digital Dimensions" (3-D @ Purdue).

The Purdue alumni network in Professional Writing and Rhetoric and Composition is wide and has binding ties to important sites in academia and industry. On our Website, we feature some outstanding work by current and former undergraduate students: [e-portfolios and course projects](#). We also feature the [professional portfolios](#) of current and former graduate students.

In the spring of each year, Undergraduate Professional Writing majors and graduate students can apply for one of five \$5,000 [Crouse Scholarships](#) in Writing and Publishing, Technical Writing, Print and Electronic Publishing, and Writing Lab Collaboration. Two of the scholarships honor graduate students at the beginning and end of their graduate work. Students also have ample opportunities to gain valuable experience in [Professional Writing Internships](#) in the community.

If you have questions about Professional Writing, please email the Director, [Dr. David Blakesley](#), or the Assistant Director, [Jingfang Ren](#). For technology support questions, contact Technology Coordinator, [Karl Stolley](#) or Drupal Coordinator, [Jeremy Tirrell](#). (To request use of PW program technologies, please fill out a [technology request form online](#).)

From <http://pw.english.purdue.edu/node/40>

## APPENDIX D

### WSU COURSES AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

#### Introduction to Appendix D

Appendix D includes a list of several English and Communication courses taken from the WSU Undergraduate 2006-2007 Catalog. These are the courses I propose WSU should use to set up professional writing certificate, minor, and major programs. With relative courses such as these already in place, it would make it that much easier for the Liberal Arts and Communications colleges to partner in making these programs happen.

#### Taken from the WSU Undergraduate 2006-2007 Catalog

##### English Courses (pages 156-159)

- **ENGL 101. College English I (3).** *General education basic skills course.* Focuses on developing reading and writing skills appropriate to academic discourse. Integrates the writing process, rhetorical modes, and library skills into writing assignments related primarily to nonfiction readings. Prerequisite: qualifying score on ACT or placement exam, or successful completion of ENGL 011.
- **ENGL 102. College English II (3).** *General education basic skills course.* Emphasizes critical reading, research, and argumentation. Prerequisite: ENGL 101, with a C or better.
- **ENGL 210. Composition Business, Professional, and Technical Writing (3).** Provides instruction and practice in writing the kinds of letters, memos, instructions, and reports required in the professional world of business and industry. Emphasizes both formats and techniques necessary for effective and persuasive professional communication. Prerequisites: ENGL 101 and 102 or instructor's consent.
- **ENGL 680. Theory and Practice in Composition (3).** Introduces theories of rhetoric, research in composition and writing programs, and practices in schools and colleges. Students investigate the process of writing, analyze varieties and samples of school writing, and develop their own writing skills by writing, revising, and evaluating their own and other's work. Designed especially for prospective

and practicing teachers, and may not be taken for credit by students with credit in ENGL 780.

- **ENGL 685. Advanced Composition (3).** Explores the relationships among contemporary issues, problem-solving, and communication. First objective: engages students in interdisciplinary inquiry into some aspect of social policy, inquiry which asks students to apply analytical approaches of their major fields in to current issues of broad, general interest. Second objective: develop students' abilities to communicate their knowledge and assumptions about this issue to a variety of audiences and for a variety of purposes. Prerequisites: ENGL 101 and 102 and upper-division standing.
- **ENGL 285. Introduction to Creative Writing (3).** An introductory course; the techniques and practice of imaginative writing in its varied forms. Prerequisites: ENGL 101 and 102.
- **ENGL 301. Fiction Writing (3).** Primary emphasis on student writing of literary fiction. Students study form and technique by reading published works and apply those studies to the fiction they write. Course may be repeated once for a total of 6 hours of credit. Prerequisite: ENGL 285 with a B or better.
- **ENGL 303. Poetry Writing (3).** Primary emphasis on student writing of literary poetry. Students study form and technique by reading published works and apply those studies to the poetry they write. Course may be repeated once for a total of 6 hours credit. Prerequisite: ENGL 285 with a grade of B or better.
- **ENGL 401. Fiction Workshop (3).** Advanced course. Manuscripts will be critiqued to develop skill in writing, rewriting, and polishing literary fiction. Repeatable for credit. Prerequisite: ENGL 301.
- **ENGL 403. Poetry Workshop (3).** Advanced course. Manuscripts will be critiqued to develop skill in writing, rewriting, and polishing literary fiction. Repeatable for credit. Prerequisite: ENGL 303.
- **ENGL 517-518. Playwriting I and II (3; 3).** The writing of scripts for performance. Emphasizes both verbal and visual aspects of playwriting. If possible the scripts are performed. Not repeatable for credit. Prerequisite: instructor's consent.
- **ENGL 585. Writer's Tutorial Prose Fiction (3).** Tutorial work in creative in literary fiction with visiting writer. Repeatable for credit. Prerequisite: consent of creative writing director.
- **ENGL 586. Writer's Tutorial Poetry (3).** Tutorial work in creative writing in literary poetry with visiting writer. Repeatable for credit. Prerequisite: consent of creative writing director.



- **ENGL 318. Dialectology (3).** Cross-listed as LING 318. An introduction to the study of regional and social dialects of English. The relationship between language and factors such as socioeconomic class, social networks, sex, nationalism, and geography.
- **ENGL 681. Editing American English (3).** Students master the rules and conventions of grammar, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, usage, and mechanics, and learn how to apply them while they are revising and editing a written text. Students work as tutors in the Writing Center to learn and understand the practical application of editing rules. Includes instruction in the conventions of editing Standard English (also known as Edited American English) and in methods of effective tutoring. Prerequisites: ENGL 101 and 102.

### Communication Courses (pages 144-148)

- **COMM 301. Writing for the Mass Audience (3).** A hands-on introduction to writing for the mass audience, including print and broadcast journalism, advertising, and public relations. In this survey-style course, students become acquainted with various news and promotional writing techniques and formats, develop reporting and interviewing skills, and learn to apply media judgment and ethics. Prerequisites: grade of C or better in ENGL 101, ENGL 102, and COMM 130; and pass the department's Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation (GSP) exam.
- **COMM 305. Visual Technologies (3).** Examines the importance and meaning of visual symbols in modern society. Explores the methods by which visual images inform, educate, and persuade readers.
- **COMM 430. Communication Research and Inquiry (3).** *General education further study course.* Introduces the process of research and inquiry across the discipline of communication. Helps students in communication become more intelligent consumers of research and investigate inquiry, and to become more adept at designing their own research projects. Includes information gathering, structuring inquiry with qualitative and quantitative research designs, and processing and reporting information. Prerequisite: junior standing and COMM 130 or instructor's consent.
- **COMM 630. Communication Law and Responsibility (3).** Emphasizes both oral and written aspects of communication law and responsibility. Addresses general functions of the law including the right to communicate, broadcast law, and laws of the press. Includes discussion of the First Amendment rights, libel, privacy, copyright, advertising, obscenity, pornography, and communication concerns. Prerequisite: COMM 301 with a C or better or instructor's consent.

- **COMM 311. Persuasion (3).** *General education further study course.* Explores the history, development, and manifestation of persuasive techniques through the study and .or creation of persuasive messages in speeches, mass media, advertising, politics, and organizations. The student becomes a better user and critic of persuasive messages and strategies. Prerequisite: COMM 111.
- **COMM 313. Argumentation and Advocacy (3).** *General education further study course.* Studies the principles of effective rational discourse, oral and written, dealing with controversial issues in public deliberative, forensic, and educational areas. Includes valid and fallacious reasoning as well as tests of evidence.
- **COMM 401. Beat Reporting (3).** Reporting and writing about events in the community. Stories assigned and handled under the instructor's direction may be used in various publications. Prerequisite: COMM 301 with a C or better.
- **COMM 500. Advanced Reporting (3).** For juniors and seniors, the techniques of reporting and writing the more complex and important types of news stories. Covers police beat stories, sports, and economic reporting; includes the study and practice of journalistic interviewing. Prerequisites: junior standing, COMM 301 with a C or better, and either 401 or 402.
- **COMM 502. Public Information Writing (3).** Uses basic journalistic skills of clear, precise writing to communicate effectively with various audiences. Students write press releases, speeches, and popularizations of complex documents. Techniques learned are valuable in writing grant proposals, committee reports, pamphlets, and journal articles. Prerequisites: COMM 301 with a C or better, junior standing, or departmental consent.
- **COMM 510. Editing for Print (3).** Selection, evaluation, and preparation of copy and pictures for publication. Covers copy, editing, rewriting, headline, and caption writing, and page layout. Prerequisites: junior standing and COMM 301 with a C or better.
- **COMM 525. Advertising Copywriting (3).** Detailed practice at writing various kinds of advertising copy, including print and broadcast forms. Emphasizes terse, precise writing that evokes response sought by advertiser. Prerequisites: COMM 324 and COMM 301 with a C or better or departmental consent.
- **COMM 550. Opinion Writing (3).** Studies editorial judgment, including practice in the writing of print, broadcast, and electronic opinion pieces, and examination of traditional and new technology research materials available to opinion writers. Prerequisites: COMM 301 with a C or better and junior standing.
- **COMM 571. Feature Writing (3).** Writing features for newspapers and magazines. Nonfiction topics may include personal experience essays,

consumer pieces, travel articles, and personality profiles. Prerequisites: COMM 301 with a C or better and junior standing.