

# Studio for Academic Creativity

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

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## PEDAGOGICAL GOALS

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As an institution of higher learning, EKU is concerned with providing students with the skills necessary to become productive citizens. The Studio for Academic Creativity at EKU will be a participant in fulfilling the challenge put forth by the National Center for Education Statistics:

The particular challenge to higher education is how can we better prepare our students to acquire *advanced* writing skills. The ability to write clearly is more than simply conveying information. College graduates with advanced writing skills analyze their readers' needs, values, attitudes, goals, and expectations as they create their text. . . . College graduates understand the relationship between the purpose of their communication and the problems or issues that need to be resolved in achieving that purpose. (Jones et al., 1995, p. 75)

The Studio views the definition of communication broadly to encompass multiple ways of engaging in and expressing meaning. It further acknowledges that understanding the relationship between purpose and problem comes from genuine conversations that will enable students to see the diverse processes and goals of communication, thereby building their investment in and understanding of their own rhetorical opportunities. The following are among the chief pedagogical goals and philosophies of the Studio for Academic Creativity:

- Facilitate the advancement of effective communication and literacy development by providing a framework wherein students, faculty, and staff are supported in their efforts to successfully integrate writing, reading, speaking, listening, research, and critical thinking within their own literacy practices.
- Move students from a "getting help" and "needing correction" instructional philosophy to a collaborative instructional philosophy, one that fosters the essential understanding that communication and literacy are processes throughout which students must actively participate in the negotiation of meaning.
- Engage students in their own literacy processes. According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (2003) annual report: "Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and are asked to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college" (p. 9). Engaging students in the process supports their efforts to build their own schema for problem solving. This skill, according to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), is deemed necessary by employers, policymakers, and university faculty: "College graduates should learn to assess their own writing and find ways to correct problems that may exist. When college graduates are their own critics, they willingly correct problems and learn from their mistakes" (Jones et al., 1995, p. 75). One way students develop the ability to become their own critics is to "pose questions and think of their own answers. The effective use of questions can help students to construct knowledge" (Jones et al., 1995, pp. 165-166). A goal of the Studio will be to stimulate and empower students to move beyond their comfort level so that they can risk asking the questions.
- Provide an environment in which all students can actively participate in discovery and creation. Studios, by design, encourage active participation in and awareness of the natural processes of communication, which can be supported by the Studio team and resources.

- Facilitate learning through critical and creative thinking. According to the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (NCWASC) (2003): "If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if students are to learn, they must write" (College Entrance Examination Board, p. 9). They must also be able to communicate effectively in other ways as well as to understand information.
- Engage students in team building and teach effective strategies for group work. According to Ronald Rorrer: "the first thing that companies say they want from graduating seniors . . . is playing well with others, or teamwork. The other individual traits that lead to success as an engineer in the corporate world, in order of importance, are oral communication, written communication, and technical ability" (p. 50).
- Facilitate the development of effective oral communication skills. The ability to communicate well through speech and presentation is essential to success in most occupations (Ulinski & O'Callaghan, 2002; Corcodilos, 2002; Reznitskaya et al., 2001). Communication skills include effective listening, an area that needs to be developed because "our listening efficiency is about 25%" (Boyd, 2001, p. 60).
- Reinforce the significant ways in which writing, speaking, and listening are interconnected. In part, this intersection consists of an awareness of audience, including understanding cultural norms; establishment of purpose, including setting goals; synthesis of information from a variety of sources; appreciation of differing communication styles; and evaluation and analysis of relevance, adequacy, and appropriateness. Moreover, "Advanced skills in both writing and speech communication require the development of reasoning skills" (Jones et al, 1995, p. 124).
- Facilitate a greater understanding of information literacy, to "evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of the various sources of information that they review" and "analyze and evaluate information while they concentrate on the interrelationships between themselves, the readers, the text, and their purposes for writing" (Jones et al., 1995, pp. 75, 76).
- Foster the effective reading strategies described by Taraban, Ryneerson, and Kerr (2000): setting reading goals; varying reading style based on the goals; jumping forward and backward in the text to find information relevant to the goals; making predictions; paraphrasing, explaining, and interpreting the text; and constructing summaries and conclusions. With the input of faculty trained in reading, we will provide traditional resources and methods as well as explore innovative ways to allow students to understand reading as an active process, one that benefits from understanding purpose, setting goals, and engaging in dialogue.
- Provide creative spaces that engage various learning styles. For example, because writing, speaking, and research begin with ideas, students will benefit from an environment designed to specifically highlight invention processes. Though students encounter invention strategies in a very limited way in the classroom and in a typical writing center, the Studio's Invention Space will provide the tangible tools to assist students in generating, exploring, and developing ideas independently or with the guidance of a studio coach. This space will contain creative opportunities for freewriting, such as writing on glass panes, ceramic tiles, or other surfaces on which students can visually develop and manipulate their ideas and, in doing so, organize and analyze those ideas. In the Invention Space, students will also have access to technology and to Studio staff.
- Invite prospective teachers to engage more fully in an active, process-oriented literacy framework. Many teachers in the public schools and graduate assistants new to teaching are so overwhelmed with the teaching of writing that they rarely get the opportunity to learn how best to teach their particular students. Often this leads to either relying on older, less productive methods, methods used to teach them, or a basic product approach. Indeed, "teachers might find describing the writing process difficult if their own process is all they know . . . . People tend to know their own writing process almost as

intuitively as they know their own language. Watching students write and helping them work through their writing problems often gives tutors a clearer sense of how varied individual writing processes can be (Zelenak, Cockriel, Crump, & Hocks, 1993, p. 30). This understanding can then be transferred to the classroom, allowing them to teach better and better prepare their students for college.

- Invite creativity by providing resources for students to work alone or in groups, with or without technological support and with or without coaches.
- Acknowledge that learning outcomes, as defined by Battersby (2002), are not discrete skills or mere collections of knowledge but the integrated complexes of knowledge, abilities and attitudes (as cited in Mark & Boruff-Jones, 2003, p. 482).

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