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## ***Guest Article: Beyond the Page***

*By Dr. Craig Wynne*

*Assistant Professor, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages*



When I mention that I teach “freshman composition,” responses vary from, “Students just don’t know how to write!” to “They just don’t have good grammar!” to “It seems like they just don’t need to practice the rules of writing when they leave ENG101 and ENG102” to “I’ve given up assigning papers because they just can’t write.” It’s easy for me to fault them by thinking, *well, he’s a SCIENCE person. He just doesn’t understand how writing works!* As a faculty member who has to work not to start banging his own fists on the table in frustration when a rhetorical or grammatical concept I’ve gone over with students doesn’t seem to register, I can identify with the anger felt by my colleagues across the disciplines, even as I explain and defend my perspective on student writing.

My first job in academia was at a small proprietary college in the Northeast as an Academic Support Center (ASC) Assistant. For a campus of 600 students, I was, for all intents and purposes, the Writing Center. Instructors would send their students to me when they saw them struggling with writing. As we had a high population of second-language learners, I worked

with students for whom the English language proved to be a challenge. In November of my first year in the position, I came to an epiphany, which would lead me to my search for possible answers to such negative perceptions of student writing.

I worked regularly with a Korean student named Chang, who had brought in an essay for me to help him with. I noticed his essay had a substantial amount of awkward sentence constructions. In looking at one of these sentences, I wasn't sure what he was trying to say, so I asked him, "What is it that you're trying to tell me here? Just talk to me like you would talk to a friend." He told me the idea orally, and I understood it. I then said, "Write down the idea the way you just told me." He did. I then asked him, "Pretend you're the professor. Which sentence do you think is the better one? The one you typed or the one you wrote?" He then said, "The one I wrote. It's easier to understand. For some reason, whenever I write, I get really nervous. I think the professor's gonna correct every single thing." At that moment, my interest in writing anxiety was born, as students often face it with regard to their audience.

Over the next two years, I would tutor hundreds of students, and my favorite sessions were the ones in which I could help students overcome any anxiety about their writing. At the time, my training in composition pedagogy was limited to a small amount of expressivist theory, so I primarily used Peter Elbow's freewriting technique that I had learned about. At the time, I was reading *Writer* magazine heavily, where I came across an article by Deanna Roy called "Forget the Rules and Make a Leap." In this article, she discusses how she overcame her writer's block by jumping out of an airplane, because when you jump out of a plane, you can't think about it too much.<sup>1</sup> You just have to do it.

This article, combined with my experience with these students, inspired me to take a drive up to Gardiner, New York with my friends Robyn and Eric to undergo the experience of "taking a leap." A link to the video of my jump is here, complete with captions offering the analogy between jumping out of a plane and "jumping in" to the writing process:

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<sup>1</sup> Deanna Roy. "Forget the Rules and Make The Leap: How Skydiving Taught a Writer to Follow Her Passion – and Keep Her Sense of Humor." *Writer* 1 (March 2009): 15-16.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPxnOfER53Y>

Over the next several years of teaching, I showed this video to several hundred students. Eyes would freeze and mouths would gape simultaneously. After getting through a few minutes of questions like, “Were you scared?” “How much did it cost?” “Where did you do it? “Is it near here?,” I gently guided students toward a writing prompt about the comparison between skydiving and writing and seeing where they could apply the metaphors to their own writing processes. In my student evaluations, several indicated that the video helped them to develop their confidence in their writing abilities.

In contrast, I also would notice that during low-stakes writing exercises and journals, students would express their thoughts clearly and cogently, while their essay writing seemed stilted. In many cases, students whose writing was lucid and clear in journals would have trouble developing ideas and writing coherent sentences in their formal academic writing. In conferencing with students, they would confess having anxiety when it came to their writing, even though confidence-building is a major part of my pedagogical philosophy. When I give presentations about the link between procrastination and anxiety, I offer the following scenario:

“When I’m anxious about something, I know I’m going to want to find excuses to not do it. I have to walk the dog. I have to vacuum the car. I have to get more research. And then the day comes when it’s due. So I’d better write something or get a zero. And I just don’t have time to check for grammar or do the citations correctly. Better to get points off than none at all.”

The students in these presentations look at me as if I’m one of the profilers from *Criminal Minds*, and I’ve gotten inside their heads. When I tell complaining faculty about this scenario, they change their tone and say, “Yes, that’s very important” in a sincere tone. They can’t say much beyond that.

A more troubling finding is when I talk to my colleagues in Rhetoric and Writing Studies and they say “yes, that’s VERY important” in a tone even more passionate than people outside our field. Indeed, there was a great deal of research in the 1970s and 1980s on writing anxiety,

started by the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (Appendix A). Sadly, the field has moved away from it. In my “Comp Camp,” a two-week training course we took in order to teach in the First-Year Composition program at the University of Texas at El Paso, we read plenty of relevant scholarship, but nothing on how to build student confidence. Yet, when I talked about it, my instructor and classmates responded well. So why is it out of the canon?

During my first semester at my current position, I had the opportunity to work with a literature major taking a Writing Research Papers class for the second time. After she did not submit her first assignment, a two-page analysis of a journal article, she came into my office to talk about her nervousness about writing and how it was inhibiting her from writing, which was why she had failed the course the first time. I mentioned my research to her and offered her resources I had found on writing anxiety, including the Counseling Center on campus. Unfortunately, she did not take advantage of the resources and ultimately did not pass the course. The irony in this scenario is that she actually writes very well, which tells me that even exemplary writers are prone to this phenomenon. It also tells me that writing anxiety is still prevalent among college students today, despite the fact that we say, “Oh yeah, with social media, students are writing all the time.”

Despite this prevalence, research has been sparse since the 1970s and 1980s. During these decades, several studies were conducted on writing anxiety, and several solutions were offered implicitly, particularly in Mike Rose’s germinal “Rigid Rules” piece, in which he implied that anxious writing students might need “affectively oriented” counseling in addition to formal instruction about writing<sup>2</sup>. However, given that I still see writing-anxious students today, and empirical studies are still being conducted about self-efficacy (albeit sparsely), I implore our field to recreate a space to address the issues of writing anxiety and self-efficacy, as they still impact our students’ abilities to write.

A more current piece was entitled “Pain and Pleasure in Short Essay Writing: Factors

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<sup>2</sup> Mike Rose. “Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist Analysis of Writer’s Block.” *College Composition and Communication* 31, no. 4 (December 1980): 389-401.

Predicting University Students' Writing Anxiety and Writing Self-Efficacy," in which the authors found among 127 college students that students with lower levels of writing anxiety have with higher GPAs are less inclined to enjoy leisure writing, and those who are more inclined to enjoy leisure writing have higher writing self-efficacy, which the studies they cited showed were negatively correlated with writing anxiety<sup>3</sup>.

An even more recent piece attempted to correlate self-efficacy and writing performance with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In 2013, Rapassak Hetthong and Adisa Teo problematized that there were few studies that "looked into self-efficacy in EFL writing and into the students' self-efficacy at a micro-skill level"<sup>4</sup>, and so they sought to investigate whether EFL students' overall writing self-efficacy and writing performance were correlated. They asked 51 English majors at a Thai university to write a 150-word argumentative paragraph and complete a self-efficacy questionnaire. Through examining the questionnaire and paragraphs, the researchers concluded that that writing self-efficacy was able to predict students' overall writing performance (162), and their teaching implications were

- 1) make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct;
- 2) design tasks that are within the students' ability;
- 3) teach students learning techniques;
- 4) provide students with positive feedback; and
- 5) encourage students to try harder.

While I have not yet conducted empirical research about how faculty teach writing, I know that when I talk to the faculty in my department (most of whom are literature specialists)

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<sup>3</sup> Christy Teranishi Martinez, Ned Kock, and Jeffrey Cass. "Pain and Pleasure in Short Essay Writing: Factors Predicting University Students' Writing Anxiety and Writing Self- Efficacy." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54, no. 5 (2011): 351-360.

<sup>4</sup> Rapassak Hetthong and Adisa Teo. "Does Writing Self-Efficacy Correlate With and Predict Writing Performance?" *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* 2, no. 1 (January 2013): 157-167.

about student writing, the conversation revolves around communicating meaning effectively through rhetorical strategies, and the literature faculty lament about how they wish students were summarizing less and arguing more. However, before I sound like I'm criticizing my colleagues, I also must confess that as much as I advocate for building students' self-efficacy and confidence in their writing, I do have to evaluate on content, and to a lesser extent, grammar. And I sigh inwardly when I see students summarizing and not arguing, despite what I'm now viewing as feeble attempts to build students' confidence in their writing abilities. So I have a burning question about how composition departments can help institutions encourage departments to not only encourage students to develop their writing abilities by learning about concepts like rhetorical modes, genres, discursive expectations, and audience, but also how about to build their confidence. My teaching philosophy is structured like a pyramid, with the first layer consisting of student self-efficacy. While the faculty I've talked to seem to agree that students need to build their confidence in writing and overcome their anxiety (many, including composition faculty, confess that they themselves would benefit from the same type of instruction), the focus seems to be on content. My hope is that faculty can become aware of how they can overcome their own hang-ups so they can help their students work on theirs. There is a measure by which Daly-Miller scores can be interpreted in Appendix B.

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## Appendix A<sup>5</sup>

### Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Instrument

#### TABLE I

**Items and One Factor Loadings - Final Items Directions:** Below are a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are uncertain, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with the statement.

While some of these statements may seem repetitious, take your time and try to be as honest as possible. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 1. I avoid writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 4. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a  
composition
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for  
evaluation and publication
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 10. I like to write my ideas down
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 11. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in  
writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 12. I like to have my friends read what I have written

<sup>5</sup> John A. Daly and Michael D. Miller. "The Empirical Development of an Instrument to Measure Writing Apprehension." *Research on the Teaching of English* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1975): 242-249.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 13. I'm nervous about writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 14. People seem to enjoy what I write
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 15. I enjoy writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 16. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 17. Writing is a lot of fun
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 22. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly
- \_\_\_\_\_ (-) 23. It's easy for me to write good compositions
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 24. I don't think I write as well as most other people
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated
- \_\_\_\_\_ (+) 26. I'm no good at writing

## Appendix B<sup>6</sup>

### The Daly-Miller Test

#### How to Calculate and Read Your Score

To determine your score, first, add together all point values for positive statements (PSV) only. Second, add together all point values for negative statements (NSV) only. Then place those scores into the following formula to discover your Writing Apprehension (WA) score:

$$WA = 78 + PSV - NSV$$

PSV questions = 1; 4; 5; 7; 8; 13; 16; 18; 21; 22; 24; 25; 26

NSV questions = 2; 3; 6; 9; 10; 11; 12; 14; 15; 17; 19; 20; 23

Writing Apprehension scores may range from 26 to 130. The following general observations may

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<sup>6</sup> "The Daly-Miller Test: How to Calculate and Read Your Score." Csus.edu. Web. 30 January 2016.  
[http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/daly\\_miller\\_scoring.htm](http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/daly_miller_scoring.htm)



be made about scores in certain ranges, and only general observations, but note that the further a score is from the mean of 78, the more likely the description of a range of scores will apply.

### **Range 60-96:**

**Most students who score in this range do not experience a significantly unusual level of writing apprehension.** However, the closer the score to the limits of this range--that is, scores close to 60 and 96--the more apt you are to experience feelings or behaviors characteristic of the next range of scores. A score of 78 places you as a writer on the mean, which is the middle point between two extremes, or conditions recorded in a large sample of students. The closer you are to the mean, the better. Nonetheless, you should be alert to the fact that you may manifest signs of writing apprehension in performing certain writing tasks or in writing with varying purposes for different types of audiences. While you may not experience harmful apprehension while writing an expository essay, for example, you may experience excessive apprehension writing a placement essay for faceless evaluators or in writing an in-class essay exam for a history professor.

### **Range 97-130:**

**A score in this range indicates that you have a low level of writing apprehension.** The higher your score in this range, the more troublesome your lack of apprehension. You may not be motivated to listen or read carefully your assignments, to pay attention to due dates, to remember criteria for evaluation, or to act upon recommendations that might improve subsequent drafts of your essays. You do not fear writing or evaluation of writing, but you may not be adequately motivated to work on your writing.

### **Range 26-59:**

**A score in this range indicates you have a high level of writing apprehension.** The lower your score in this range, the more severe your anxiety. You are nervous about writing and fearful of evaluation. In fact, research shows that those who score extremely low in this range will not take a course, select a major, or accept a job they know involves writing.

### **How to Understand Your Score**

If your score indicates either low or high levels of writing apprehension, then look closely on the questionnaire to see if you can determine which component(s) of the writing process you need to more closely monitor. Most problems of this kind fall into three main categories:

- \* evaluation apprehension,
- \* stress apprehension, and
- \* product apprehension.

When these specific components of writing apprehension are cross-referenced with your scoring level information, you will receive further insight into your particular attitudes toward writing and toward the evaluation of your writing.

Student writers who experience evaluation apprehension expect to do poorly in composition courses even before the courses begin. You feel as though the teacher will give you a poor grade because you cannot express your ideas clearly. As a result, you often claim to be nervous about writing, dislike showing or talking about your writing even to friends, and do not like seeing your ideas expressed in writing. If you are evaluation apprehensive you believe other students more clearly and, as a result, receive higher grades than you do.

### **Questions which you should examine to help you determine if you are evaluation**

**apprehensive are 2, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, and 25.**

Those student writers who encounter stress apprehension experience fear early in the writing process, sometimes even before they have written anything. You often procrastinate and report that you do not look forward to beginning a piece of writing, even one required for a course. You experience writer's block. Your hands may cramp soon after you begin a timed writing exercise. Once you are able to begin writing, you claim to run into great difficulty organizing your thoughts.

**Questions which you should examine to help you determine if you are stress apprehensive are 1, 3, 7, 10, 15, 21, and 26.**

For those students who experience product apprehension, the problem does not exist at a particular stage in the writing process (as with evaluation apprehension) or with a particular skill such as invention (as in stress apprehension). Rather, product apprehensives claim that expressing ideas through writing is a waste of time. Such student writers do not clearly envision an audience or a purpose for academic writing. If you are one of these writers you tend to compose a single draft only, yet you feel uneasy about submitting an essay for a grade.

**Questions corresponding to product apprehension are 6, 8, and 17.**

Diagnosing your writing process problems will not automatically alleviate them, of course. But the information gleaned from the Daly-Miller questionnaire allows you to anticipate your particular needs and to devise strategies for reducing stress that often inhibits the development of cognitive skills.

## *Articles:*

### **UDL: A Systematic Approach to Supporting Diverse Learners**

*By Mark Hofer, PhD, FacultyFocus.Com*

Advances in neuroscience and digital imaging give us an unprecedented understanding of how individuals access, process, and respond to information. Previously we may have had an intuitive understanding that our students learned differently. Now functional MRI scans demonstrate this in living color. However, simply recognizing learner diversity is one thing; navigating this challenge in the classroom is quite another. How can we possibly hope to present content, structure learning experiences, and devise assessments that will be appropriate and effective for students with different learning strengths and challenges? Fortunately, researchers have developed a framework based in neuroscience that can help.

#### **Universal Design for Learning**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) offers a functional framework to understand and address this variability in our courses. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) outlines three principles that when systematically applied in the classroom help support diverse learners.

First, faculty can provide students with **multiple means of representing content**. Too often we rely on a narrow range of course materials that may present unnecessary barriers for some students. In addition to textbooks and lectures, we can provide students with a range of additional ways to represent important concepts and ideas in

our courses. Both proprietary and open educational resources (OER) like videos, animations, simulations, and learning objects can provide helpful complementary entry points to concepts. Even using a variety of visuals, including concept maps and graphic organizers, in a lecture can assist students who have barriers related to auditory processing.

The second principle encourages faculty to provide students with **multiple means of action and expression**. In addition to class readings, lectures, and discussions, students can also engage in simulations, role-play, service learning, and case studies to build their knowledge. In terms of expressing knowledge, many of us rely on papers, exams, and different forms of written work to gauge our students' learning. While written work is clearly important in virtually any academic discipline, students can also demonstrate knowledge by creating a film, designing an exhibit or model, directing a skit or play, or engaging in service learning. In some cases, these nontraditional opportunities for action and expression can help you better assess what students understand from your course.

The third principle often works in concert with the other two—faculty should provide **multiple means of engagement** in learning. In order to engage students intellectually in the course content, we can identify ways to stimulate interest in the content and devise ways to support students' metacognitive processes. We can stimulate interest by designing learning experiences that are authentic, challenging, and novel. By beginning with a surprising fact, quote, or discrepant event, we can ignite curiosity. We can also inject humor and stories in our lectures and discussion. We can provide students with modeling and supports for challenging analytical work in the form of guided inquiry and problem-based learning.

### **Implementing UDL – A Practical Approach**

In theory, one could strive to address all three UDL principles in each class session. This seems daunting and may not be sustainable long term. Rather, we can take a longer view. We can map out a range of strategies to represent the content over the course of the semester. If, for example, introducing a topic requires a heavy dose of lecture, we may want to consider an alternative learning activity—perhaps using a case study—in the next class. In terms of offering multiple means of expression, we can consider providing three different types of major assignments in the course (e.g., a paper, a model, and a film) that would appeal to different learners.

Alternatively, we can provide students with multiple options for a final project from which they can choose. In any of these ways, we can vary our activities and materials for teaching and learning over time. Consequently, we are more likely to reach and appeal to a broad range of learners.

Fortunately, CAST provides higher education faculty with a range of resources to support integrating UDL in our practice. They have developed a portal called UDL on Campus (<http://udloncampus.cast.org>), where they provide resources on assessment options, policies and legal information, strategies for selecting media and technology, advice on course planning, and descriptions and examples of teaching strategies.

Implementing UDL strategies may seem like significant extra work in terms of both planning and implementation. To some extent this is true. Why then might we consider this extra commitment? First, UDL-based approaches to teaching and learning have been shown to benefit students with different learning styles and preferences. Second, it challenges us to rethink some of our assumptions and typical approaches to teaching our courses. I have found the creative challenge in this process to be rejuvenating and exciting. I hope you will too.

*Mark Hofer is professor of educational technology and the associate dean for teacher education and professional services at the College of William & Mary. You can follow him on Twitter @markhofer and at [www.luminaris.link](http://www.luminaris.link).*

# Nine Ways to Improve Class Discussions

*By Maryellen Weimer, PhD, FacultyFocus.Com*

I once heard class discussions described as “transient instructional events.” They pass through the class, the course, and the educational experiences of students with few lingering effects. Ideas are batted around, often with forced participation; students don’t take notes; and then the discussion ends—it runs out of steam or the class runs out of time. If asked a few days later about the exchange, most students would be hard-pressed to remember anything beyond what they themselves might have said, if that. So this post offers some simple suggestions for increasing the impact of the discussions that occur in our courses.

- 1. Be more focused and for less time** – It’s easy to forget that students are newcomers to academic discourse. Academics can go on about a topic of interest for days; hours, if it’s a department meeting. Students aren’t used to exchanges that include points, counterpoints, and connections to previous points with references to research, related resources, and previous experience. Early on, students do better with short discussions—focused and specific. Think 10 minutes, maybe 15.
- 2. Use better hooks to launch the discussion** – Usually discussion starts with a question. That works if it’s a powerful question—one immediately recognized as a “good question.” Prompts of that caliber require thoughtful preparation; they don’t usually pop into our minds the moment we need them. But questions aren’t the only option. A pithy quotation, a short scenario that requires content application, a hypothetical case or situation, a synopsis of a relevant current event—all of these can jump-start a discussion.
- 3. Pause** – Stop the discussion and ask students to think about what’s been said so far, or ask them to write down what struck them as a key idea, a new insight, a question still unanswered, or maybe where they think the discussion should go next. Think short pauses, 30 seconds, maybe a minute.
- 4. Have note takers** – Ask whether there are two or three students who’d be willing to take notes during the discussion. Then post their notes on the course website or otherwise distribute them. This should count as class participation! It gives introverts a way to contribute comfortably. You might encourage some extrovert who has tendency to over-participate to make your day by volunteering to quietly take copious notes, which he or she could use to summarize the discussion when it ends.
- 5. Talk less or not at all** – Too many classroom discussions are still dominated by teacher talk. You will talk less if you assign yourself a recorder role. You’ll key in on the essence of comments, record the examples, and list the questions. You’ll be listening closely and will probably hear more than you usually do because you aren’t thinking about what to say next. Or you can function as the discussion facilitator. Recognize those who are volunteering. Encourage others to speak. Point out good comments that merit response. Ask what questions the conversation is raising. Challenge those with different views to share them. Do everything you can to make it a good student discussion.
- 6. End with something definitive** – Return to the hook that launched the discussion. Ask some students to write a one-sentence summary of the discussion. Ask other students to list the questions the discussion has answered. And ask a third group to identify unanswered questions that emerged during the

discussion. Finally, use what students have written to help them bring closure to the discussion.

7. **Use the discussion** – Keep referring to it! “Remember that discussion we had about X? What did we conclude?” Refer to individual comments made during the discussion. “Paula had an interesting insight about Y. Who remembers what she said? Does it relate to this topic?” And if you really want students to listen up and take discussions seriously, use a comment made in the discussion as the frame for a short essay question on the next exam or quiz.
8. **Invite students to suggest discussion topics** – If the suggestion is good, reward the student with a few bonus points and ask him or her to launch the discussion by explaining why it’s a topic that merits discussion.
9. **Discuss discussions** – Briefly is fine. “Why do teachers use them? What keeps everyone listening? How do they help us learn?” Or do a debriefing of a discussion that just occurred. “So, the discussion we just had, say we’d like to improve it. What would you recommend?”

## *Announcements:*

### **General Education and Assessment: From My Work to Our Work**

February 18, 2016 to February 20, 2016

New Orleans Marriott

555 Canal Street

New Orleans, LA 70130

In order to develop high-quality general education pathways that are effective for all students—especially for those students from traditionally underserved groups—we need to build, enrich, and support greater collaboration among educators of all sorts. AAC&U's 2016 conference on General Education and Assessment—"From My Work to Our Work"—is designed to examine research, evidence, and models for effective general education programs and courses that work for all students. With focused attention on equity, the meeting will examine effective general education teaching and learning methods, campus cultures that value and support general education, integrative general education frameworks, and transparent approaches to assessment.

A change in perspective from "my work" to "our work" requires rethinking the curriculum and cocurriculum and re-envisioning the nature of faculty roles. Participants will consider how communities of practice, and other forms of inclusion and collaboration, can support the development and sustaining of effective general education programs. They will learn how to redesign general education programs to extend from cornerstone to capstone and how to scaffold high-impact practices and—through connections among general education, majors, and co-

curricular programs—empower all students with the knowledge and skills required for their professional, personal, and social lives in a pluralistic democracy. Participants will also have an opportunity to learn about how AAC&U's new phase of work in its Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative—the [LEAP Challenge](#)—can support general education redesign efforts.

Essential to any effective general education program in the twenty-first century will be opportunities for students and educators alike to work intentionally and collaboratively with and from diverse peers. This is essential to AAC&U's commitment to "making excellence inclusive." As AAC&U's Board of Directors' Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence observes, "Making excellence inclusive is a fundamentally democratic ideal. It expresses our confidence in the liberating power of education. Without inclusion, there is no true excellence." Join us at this year's meeting to explore how general education and more effective forms of assessment can help us truly make excellence inclusive and empower all our students for future success and well-being.

We invite you to review the Call for Proposals and to join us next February in New Orleans to lend your expertise and voice to these most important conversations. Questions may be directed to Glenn Poole at [poole@aacu.org](mailto:poole@aacu.org) at (202) 387-3760 (202) 387-3760 ext. 404.

## **2016 Institute on General Education and Assessment**

### **June 4, 2016 to June 8, 2016**

### **Boston University**

### **Boston, MA**

#### **About the Institute**

The Institute on General Education and Assessment continues to provide campus teams with opportunities to refine and advance general education programs and their assessment. The rapidly changing composition and circumstances of our students and faculty compels all of us to expand our cultural understandings, organizational constructs, digital creativity, and pedagogical approaches in order to create learning communities that meet the needs and support success for all our students. During the Institute, teams explore intentional, well-defined, and meaningfully assessed models of general education; processes of redesign; and the implementation of highly effective practices aligned with the Essential Learning Outcomes. Drawing on many years of campus work, the Institute is framed around a set of Principles and Guidelines for redesigning and evaluating general education programs, curricula, and pedagogy through which students can develop the 21st-century knowledge and skills necessary for work, life, and responsible citizenship. AAC&U's recently announced Centennial LEAP Challenge has direct implications for revitalizing general education and assessment through its call to make student signature work central for all students across the curriculum and as a means to expand student identity, agency and equity. Admission to the Institute is competitive and limited. All regionally accredited two-

year and four-year institutions are encouraged and eligible to apply.

### **Who Should Attend**

The Institute on General Education and Assessment is designed for any campus, system, or group of campuses engaged in redesigning general education for students. Campuses can be at any stage in the process of rethinking general education approaches and issues emerging from their respective needs and circumstances. Campus teams should include a senior academic officer and faculty members working on general education committees or teaching general education courses. Team members can include student affairs professionals and also assessment and curriculum specialists with active roles in advancing student learning on campus.

Questions may be directed to Glenn Poole at [poole@aacu.org](mailto:poole@aacu.org) at (202) 387-3760 (202) 387-3760 ext. 404.