



## The Institute for Learning and Teaching

The Institute for Learning and Teaching | 801 Oval Drive | Fort Collins, CO 80523-1052 | (970) 491-2032 | <http://tilt.colostate.edu>

### Graduate Teaching Certificate Program

## Workshop/Seminar Review Form

Date: February 15, 2010

Workshop/Seminar Title: MIT – Department of English & Psychology: How Can We Best Help Student Writers in Core Courses Outside of English?

Presenter/Facilitator: Sue Doe, Department of English &

Karla Gingerich, Department of Psychology

Attendee's Name: Kristen Morris

**1. Explain the central topic and purpose of the workshop/seminar. What are the presenter/facilitator's goals for this workshop?**

The goals of this seminar were to address factors contributing to undergraduate student writing and improve instructional writing strategies. The professors shared findings from classroom data to supplement their claims that grades and feedback from individual GTA graders were highly variable had the most effect on improving writing scores.

**2. What information in the workshop/seminar was most valuable to you?**

In order to address the 'grader effect' phenomenon, the researchers suggest assigning more informal papers in the classroom to provide multiple forms of writing examples for each student, have the graders focus more on the concepts the students are trying to convey, and not on the grammatical level of writing, and give more focus to training graders. Grader training may include using inter-grader reliability tactics, where graders go through exercises to calibrate their grading and achieve consistency. The researchers

also suggest having multiple people grade the same writing until all people doing the grading can agree on a proper grade for the student work. The information presented in this seminar was very interesting because the Department of Design and Merchandising does not have any formal grader 'calibration' system for GTAs. Because of the subjectivity of the GTA graders, I was very interested to see how the researchers were coping with the 'grader effect'.

**3. How will you connect that information to your own pedagogical endeavors?**

I will take the information presented in this seminar and utilize their suggestions when working TA's who have the responsibility of grading. One policy I have with my graders, which is not standard across the department, is that they grade the projects first, and then I review their comments to ensure they are consistent/fair. If we did not have this policy, the grading variability would be too high and I would not feel comfortable with this type of grading system. However, this process is arduous and extends the time between assignment submission and feedback to the students. I think a level of consistency can be achieved early in the semester by conducting a grading workshop where examples of student work are paired with a rubric to make explicit correct grades to be assigned. The graders could check each-others scores and comments to achieve a level of reliability. I believe a grader 'calibration' policy and training would be very beneficial across all departments throughout the university.

**4. After attending this workshop/seminar, what additional information would you like to seek about this subject?**

After this seminar, I would be curious if the researchers are implementing any new strategies for addressing the 'grader effect' discussed in the seminar, and I am curious to see their results. I am curious which strategy is making the most impact on reducing grader variability.