

# 2011 Gallaudet Senior Writing Assessment Project Report

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*June 2011*

## Summary

In Spring 2011, 158 academic writing samples from 155 of the 298 registered undergraduate seniors at Gallaudet University were scored anonymously by trained faculty readers using the five scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008). Each writing sample was scored separately by two readers, yielding a total of 316 ratings. Mean ratings (and the percentage of ratings receiving a score of 3 or better) on each scale are as follows: 1) Assignment Formatting & Citing, 3.0 (61.2%); English Conventions: 3.2 (74.7%); 3) Critical Thinking: 3.0 (63.6%); 4) Organization of Ideas: 2.8 (56.9%); 5) Author's Persona, Tone, Audience Awareness: 3.2 (76.3%). The data from this study can be used as baseline data for institutional reporting, for establishing target writing performance levels for undergraduate students, and for assessing program improvement over time. Data from this assessment were compared with data in two other studies (Rach 2009; Pancost, 2009) that used the Gallaudet Writing Rubric. In general, the comparison showed that Gallaudet undergraduates are writing better than in the past, and are improving in writing performance as they progress through the new curriculum established in 2007. Problems with the data comparisons included small group sizes in some analyses, differences in rating procedures, and inconsistency in writing sample types. Based on the experience and results of this study, several recommendations for using the data and for improving curriculum and assessment are offered. In particular, a need is seen for expansion of writing opportunities for students in major programs.

## Background

### Call for this study

The Gallaudet University Mission Statement (2007; Appendix I) declares, in part,

“Gallaudet University, federally chartered in 1864, is a bilingual, diverse, multicultural institution of higher education that ensures the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard of hearing individuals through American Sign Language and English. Gallaudet maintains a proud tradition of research and scholarly activity and prepares its graduates for career opportunities in a highly competitive, technological, and rapidly changing world.”

Undergraduate Student Learning Outcome 1 (2007; Appendix II) states, in part,

“Students will use American Sign Language (ASL) and written English to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of settings.”

On its website the Office of Academic Quality states,

“The Gallaudet University community recognizes the need to adopt an assessment process that advances evidence-based decisions about teaching, learning, bilingualism, diversity, campus life, academic support and administrative services. Fostered by a concern for student academic growth and personal development, the assessment process at Gallaudet aspires to employ data-driven decision-making to continuously increase student achievement and institutional effectiveness” (*Assessment of Student Learning*, Office of Academic Quality, 2010;

[http://www.gallaudet.edu/Office\\_of\\_Academic\\_Quality/Assessment\\_of\\_Student\\_Learning\\_Outcomes.html](http://www.gallaudet.edu/Office_of_Academic_Quality/Assessment_of_Student_Learning_Outcomes.html))

As the quotes above attest, written English is an important goal of a Gallaudet education, and assessment of learning goals is an important step in improving the institutional effectiveness. Though Gallaudet has assessed the writing skills of its undergraduates enrolled in basic writing courses for many years, it has little data on the writing skills of its upper class students. In 2009, the Office of Academic Quality determined that the writing skills of seniors should be formally assessed.

## Goals

This report of the 2011 Senior Writing Assessment Project is designed to accomplish four goals:

1. Provide baseline data about the writing performance of Gallaudet seniors in 2011 that can be used for institutional reporting and program improvement.
2. Provide data that can be used by appropriate groups to establish target writing performance levels for Gallaudet undergraduates.
3. Describe the change in Gallaudet student writing performance as they progress through the undergraduate curriculum.
4. Based on experience with and findings from the 2011 Senior Assessment and similar studies, recommend improvements to future assessments.

## Previous Studies

Four previous studies have contributed to the development of the 2011 Senior Writing Assessment Project and inform its results and recommendations.

### 1993 English Skills Assessment Review Project

The English Skills Assessment Review Project (ESARP) reviewed undergraduate literacy programs, assessment measures, and student skills at the time. The Project’s report (Coye, Kelly, Landish & Traxler, 1993; see Annex 1) found widespread dissatisfaction with all of these and recommended dramatic changes. Some of the recommendations have been implemented in the creation of new writing assessments, including the Gallaudet Writing Scale (1994) and the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2007, 2008), and in curricular changes, such as the Writing Enhanced Course (WEC) requirement, implemented in 2006, and the General Studies program, implemented in 2007. Some of the recommendations, such as the call for sustained literacy development across and through the entire curriculum, have not yet been completed, and are echoed in the recommendations at the end of this report. Because the ESARP report contains data that is useful to ongoing discussions of writing assessment and curricular change but has not been easily available, it is annexed to this report.

## 1997 Senior Assessment Project

In response to the recommendations of the ESARP and of the Council on Undergraduate Education Subcommittee on University Literacy Standards (Oliva, Andersen, Baer, Bahan, Brinks, Coye, Mather, Mather, McGaughran, Mouny, Palmer, Rach, Vold, Weinstock & Wood, 1997; see Annex 2), a study of the reading, writing, and ASL skills of Gallaudet undergraduate seniors was undertaken. Though the results were not published, this investigator identified 24 students whose writing had been rated in both their freshman and senior years using the Gallaudet Writing Scale (GWS). Results showed that the writing performance of only 3 of the 24 students improved between their freshman and senior years. Scores for 13 of the students remained the same, and for 8 students, writing performance scores declined.

## 2007 GSR Cohort Writing Assessment Study

In 2007 a new General Studies program (GSR) was established and new assessments—including the Gallaudet Writing Scale—were created. GSR Assessment Coordinator Dr. Leslie Rach tracked the writing performance of the 2007 freshman cohort as they progressed through the new curriculum, which requires substantive student writing projects in virtually every course. Rach (2009; see Annex 3) found significant improvement in student writing performance between 2007 and 2009 on all five scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008).

## 2009 Pilot Writing Assessment

A pilot program for assessing the writing of senior students in major capstone courses was conducted in the Spring of 2009 and results were reported (Pancost, 2009, see Annex 3). The pilot program tested the application of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008) to the assessment of the disciplinary writing of upper class undergraduates and developed procedures for recruitment, scoring, and analysis, many of which were used in the 2011 senior assessment. Writing samples from a total of 18 Gallaudet students were included in Pancost's (2009) analyses.

## 2011 Senior Writing Assessment Project

### Procedures

Based on the procedures and results of Pancost's 2009 pilot assessment, an expanded assessment was planned for Spring 2010, to include all seniors enrolled in capstone courses. Because there were too few capstone courses offered in that semester, the assessment was redesigned for implementation in Spring 2011.

In Fall 2010, all undergraduate major programs were asked to begin collecting one writing sample from each of the seniors with a declared major in their program. The writing sample could be of any type or length, produced for a grade in any major-level course during Fall 2010 or Spring 2011. Departments were also asked to provide one faculty member to serve as a reader for every five major student writing samples it submitted.

Writing samples were transmitted electronically to the investigator. To ensure anonymity, the investigator deleted student names, department and course data, and any other identifying information, and gave each writing sample a unique code number. To make samples more consistent and easier to read, all papers were reformatted to use identical margins, type face, and font size. One copy of each writing sample was printed.

Faculty readers were given a two-hour training on how to use the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008; see Annex 4) reliably. Readers completed their ratings on a separate sheet of paper for each writing sample, adding their initials to the writing sample and to the rubric sheet so that their responses could be tracked. All results were entered by hand into an Excel database.

The Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008) is composed of five scales: 1) Assignment formatting and citing; 2) Written English conventions; 3) Critical thinking; 4) Organization of ideas; 5) Author's persona & tone, and audience awareness. Each scale is scored from 1 to 5, with 1 representing pre-college skills and 5 representing exemplary skills. Scale 1 was altered

slightly to strike out references to prompt instructions, because readers had access only to the writing samples, not to the prompts to which the samples responded.

If the scores on any one scale by the two readers varied by more than one scale point, the writing sample was scored by a third reader. If replacing all of the scores of one of the first two readers with the scores of the third reader would make the scores less discrepant, the results from the more discrepant reader were discarded and replaced by the scores from the third reader. If replacement would not make the scores less discrepant, the scores of the original two readers were kept and the scores from the third reader discarded.

## Results

### Participation

A total of 298 Gallaudet seniors were eligible to participate in this assessment. Because some seniors have more than one declared major, there was a potential total of 336 writing samples. 158 writing samples (47.0% of 336) were scored from 155 (52% of 298) of the senior students. The number of students, writing samples and readers from each major program is displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Numbers of seniors, writing samples scored, and faculty readers from each undergraduate major program.

Department of Instruction	Major Program	Total Seniors in Major	Writing Samples Scored	Faculty Readers Provided
Business	Accounting	8	2	0
	Business Administration	20	4	
	Information Technology	5	0	
	Computer Information Systems	1	0	
ASL & Deaf Studies	ASL	14	1	1
	Deaf Studies	18	6	
Art	Art	1	0	0
	Art History	3	3	
	Digital Media	6	2	
	Graphic Design	9	4	
	Photography	7	3	
	Studio Art	3	0	
Biology	Biology	10	8	1
Chemistry & Physics	Chemistry	3	3	0
Communication Studies	Communication Studies	29	20	2
Mathematics & Computer Science	Computer Science	1	0	0
	Mathematics	9	6	
Education	Education	21	17	0
English	English	5	3	0
Family & Child Studies	Family & Child Studies	14	1	0
Foreign Languages & Cultures	French	1	0	1
	Spanish	2	2	
History & Government	Government	9	7	0

	History	9	7	
International Studies	International Studies	4	1	0
Interpretation	Interpretation	23	6	0
Philosophy & Religion	Philosophy	1	1	1
Physical Education & Recreation	Physical Education	15	6	2
	Recreation	11	5	
Psychology	Psychology	33	23	5
Self-Directed Major	Self Directed Major	3	2	0
Social Work	Social Work	19	7	3
Sociology	Sociology	9	6	1
Theatre	Theatre	10	2	0

### Performance of 2011 Seniors

Because each writing sample was scored by two separate readers, a maximum of 316 scores were included in the analysis for each scale. Readers were not able to score some scales on some papers, however, because the writing sample type or performance was too different from the expectations of the rubric to score appropriately. For example, some papers included no citations, so they could not be scored on scale 1. If readers could not score an item, they entered the score as zero. All zeros were considered missing data and excluded from the salient analyses. 46 (28%) of the writing samples required a third reader. The complete results are reported in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Complete results of 2011 seniors on the five scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008).

Rubric Scale	Performance Level										Totals		
	Pre-College Skills 1		Emerging Skills 2		Developing Skills 3		Mastering Skills 4		Exemplary Skills 5				
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING	46	17.5%	57	21.7%	61	23.2%	54	20.5%	46	17.5%	263	100%	3.0
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	16	5.1%	63	19.9%	118	37.3%	74	23.4%	44	13.9%	316	100%	3.2
CRITICAL THINKING	16	5.1%	98	31.3%	112	35.8%	59	18.9%	28	9.0%	313	100%	3.0
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	24	7.7%	110	35.4%	101	32.5%	50	16.1%	26	8.4%	311	100%	2.8
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	19	6.0%	56	17.7%	123	38.9%	82	26.0%	36	11.4%	316	100%	3.2

### Cut Point Levels

The last column in the table above summarizes the results on each scale as a mean, the same technique used by Rach (2009) and Pancost (2009). Because the scales on the Gallaudet Writing Rubric are ordinal and designed to describe student attainment of certain salient levels of performance, however, a more useful way to capture group performance is to set cut points and report the data as percentage of the group that performed at or above that score. The table below displays the percentage of the ratings at or above three potential cut point levels for the 2011 seniors on each scale.

Table 3. Percentage of ratings at or above three performance levels on each scale of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008), by 2011 seniors.

Rubric Scales	Cut Point Levels		
	2 or above	3 or above	4 or above
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING	82.9%	61.2%	38.0%
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	94.6%	74.7%	37.3%
CRITICAL THINKING	94.9%	63.6%	27.8%
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	92.3%	56.9%	24.4%
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	94.0%	76.3%	37.3%

### Comparison with Results in Previous Studies

The performance of three groups of Gallaudet students on the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008) have been reported in previous studies (Pancost 2009; Rach 2009) Results from the previous studies and this study are compared in the table below. A cut point of 3 or better is used to represent the achievement level of each group.

Table 4. Performance of student writers from three assessment studies on the five scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric, displayed as percentage of each group that received a rating of 3 or better.

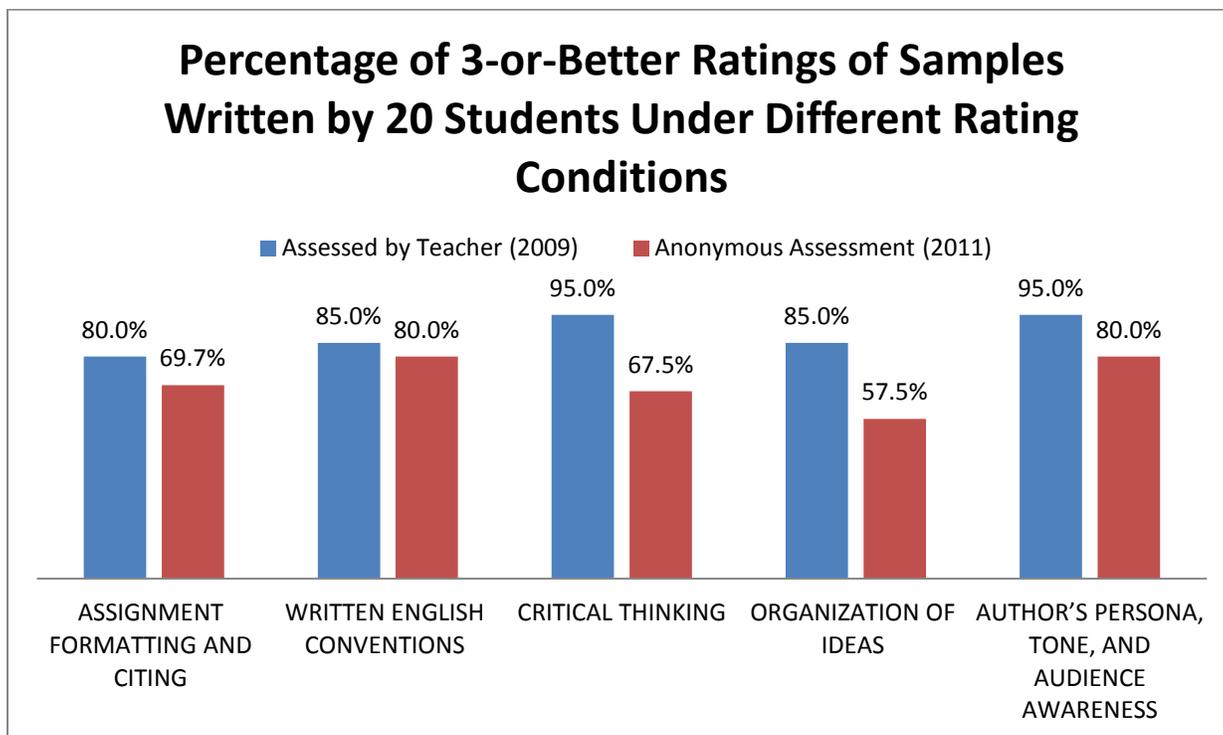
Rubric Scales	Assessment Studies				
	GSR 2007 Cohort Study (Rach, 2009)		Pilot Senior Capstone Assessment (Pancost, 2009; N=18)	2011 Senior Writing Assessment	
	Fall 2007 (N=138)	Fall 2009 (N=52)			
	%	%	%	%	N
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING	42.8%	73.1%	72.2%	61.2%	263
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	45.7%	80.8%	61.1%	74.7%	316
CRITICAL THINKING	38.4%	86.5%	38.9%	63.6%	313
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	46.4%	90.4%	33.3%	56.9%	311
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	46.4%	90.4%	72.2%	76.3%	316

The data in Table 4 show substantial--even dramatically--better performance on all five scales by the Fall 2009 group (column three) over the Fall 2007 group (column two) in Rach's study. Comparing the performance of the 2009 seniors in Pancost's study (column four) with the performance of the 2011 seniors in the current study (column five), we see that the current seniors outperformed the past seniors on four out of five scales.

## Effects of Rating Procedure: Teacher-Assessment and Anonymous Assessment

Early reviewers of this data noted that there was an unexpected drop in performance between the Fall 2009 group reported by Rach and the 2011 seniors. They also speculated that the drop may be due in part to the difference in rating procedures used in the 2009 and 2010 assessments. Whereas the 2011 senior papers were rated anonymously by two different faculty, papers from the Fall 2009 students were rated once by their own teachers. To probe this possible source of rating bias, a separate analysis of all 20 students whose writing was scored in both the 2009 and 2011 assessments was conducted, to see if the same drop occurred with this subgroup as with the larger group. Rach reported one rating of each writing sample for the 2009 group; two ratings are included for each of the writing samples in the 2011 assessment. Scores of zero on any scale was considered missing data and deleted from the analysis.

Figure 1



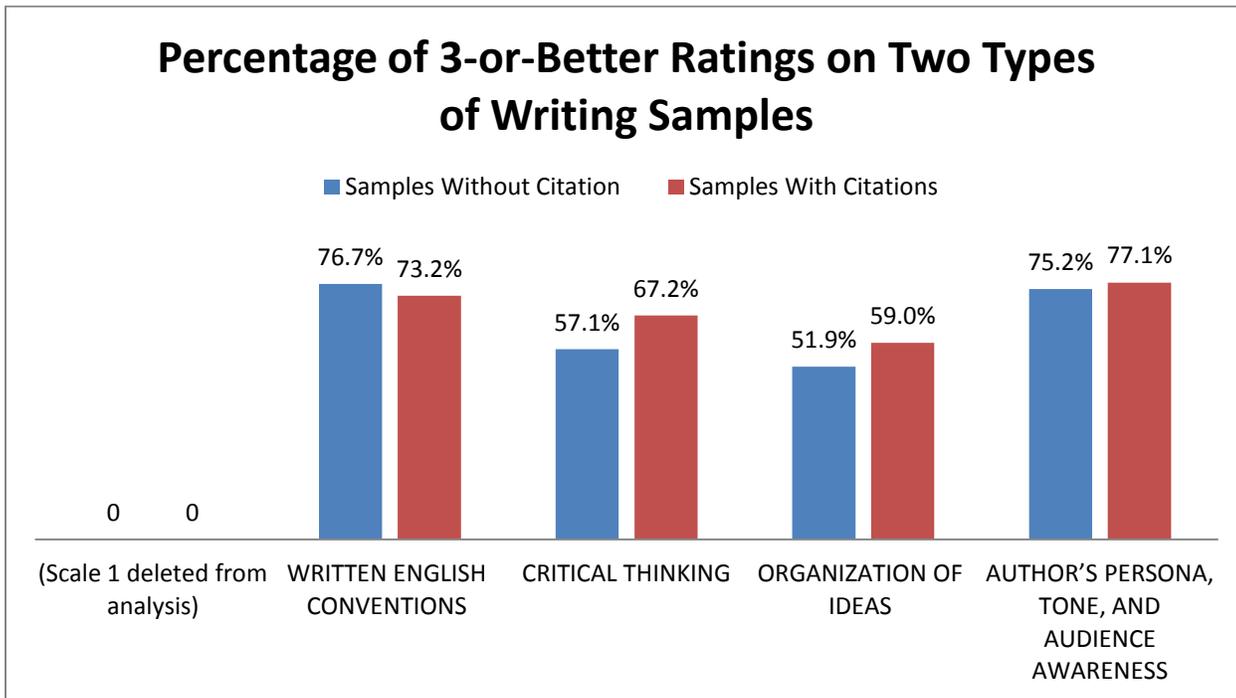
Like the whole group, the writing of the subgroup of 20 students who completed both assessments received higher scores on all five scales in 2009 than in 2011. This result is consistent with the claim that variations in rating procedures can result in substantially different performance ratings. Other reasons for the drop can be hypothesized, such as: the types of writing samples evaluated in 2009—as part of the GSR program—were designed to fit well the expectations of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric, whereas the 2011 set included several types of writing that did not fit the rubric well; student writing skills may have dropped between 2009 and 2011; differences in the kind of support available to writers (GSR courses require drafting, prompt feedback, and other forms of support); and there may be lower expectations for writers in some major programs; and students may have greater difficulty in applying writing skills to disciplinary writing. Most of these hypotheses cannot be investigated within available data. However, it is possible to probe the effect of writing sample type by comparing papers that used citations with those that did not.

## Effects of Writing Sample Type: Papers With and Without Citations

Faculty raters found the first scale of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008)—Assignment Formatting and Citing—to be the most challenging scale to score. The scale is designed for academic work that includes citations, but some of the samples rated in this study did not include them. Readers were asked to score this scale anyway if it were at all possible, and to score the paper as zero if it were not possible. To probe the importance of writing type—that is, papers with

citations vs. papers without them—each writing sample was inspected for a reference list, bibliography, or in text citations and coded appropriately. There are 133 ratings for writing samples without citations, and 183 ratings for samples that include citations. The results are displayed in Figure 2 below. For obvious reasons, results on the first scale—Assignment Formatting and Citing—would be meaningless, and were deleted from the analysis. As in other analyses in this study, performance levels are reported on each scale as the percentage of the group that received ratings of 3 or better.

Figure 2

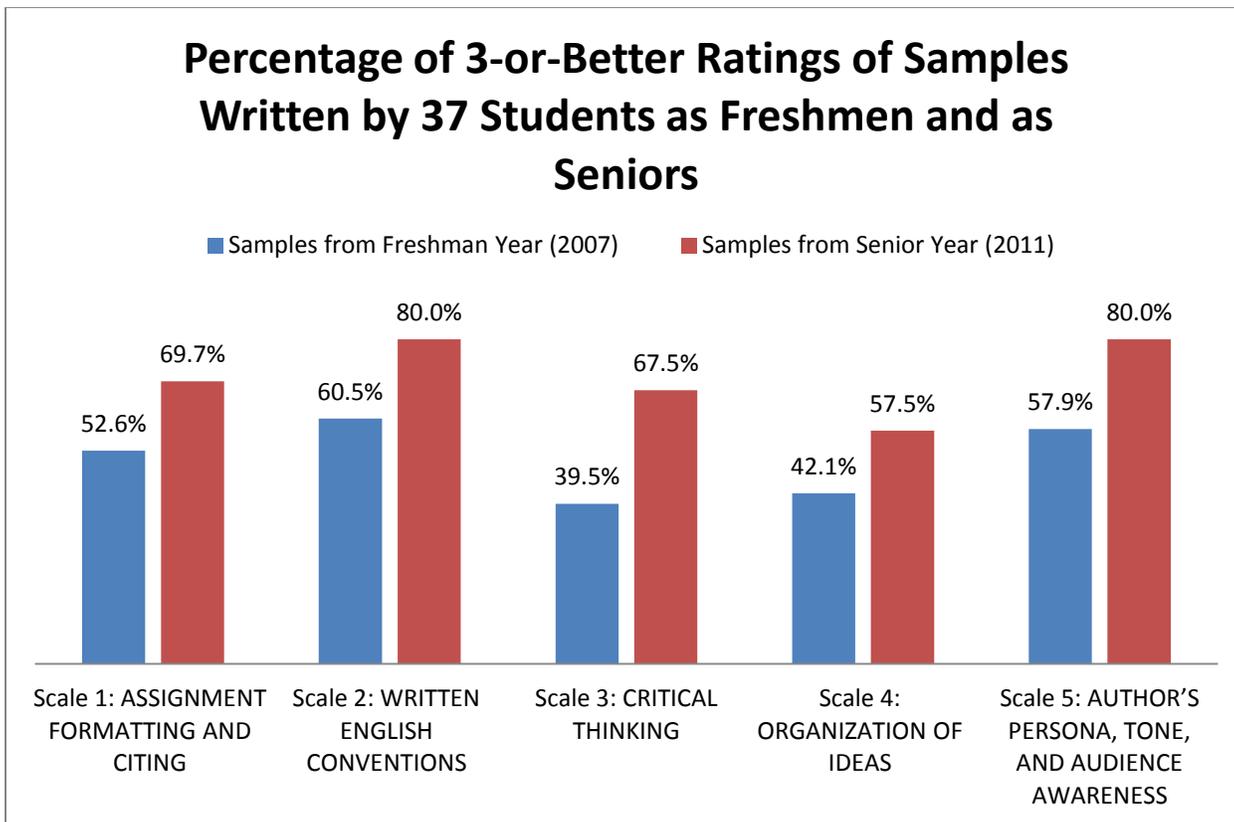


The writing samples with citations outperformed writing samples without citations on three out of four scales. These results are consistent with the claim that writing sample type may influence performance rating. Results on the Written English Conventions scale, however, show samples without citations outperformed those with citations. All of these results are intriguing and should be probed in future assessments.

### Evidence of Improvement

Rach's (2009) study showed that the students who entered the GSR program in Fall 2007 increased their writing performance substantially by Fall 2009. Performance by the 2011 seniors was higher on all scales than the 2007 freshman reported by Rach, but not as high as the results she reported for the 2009 (sophomore and junior) group. As noted above, differences in rating procedures and writing sample types may be contributing to that drop. To probe whether the writing performance of students in the GSR 2007 cohort improved between their freshman and senior years, a separate analysis of the 37 students whose writing was rated in both assessments was conducted. The results are displayed in the table below, represented as the percentage of the group in each assessment that achieved a performance level of 3 or better. As in all other analyses in this report, one rating was available for the samples in the 2009 assessment, and two ratings were included for each sample in the 2011 analysis. Ratings of zero were excluded from the analysis.

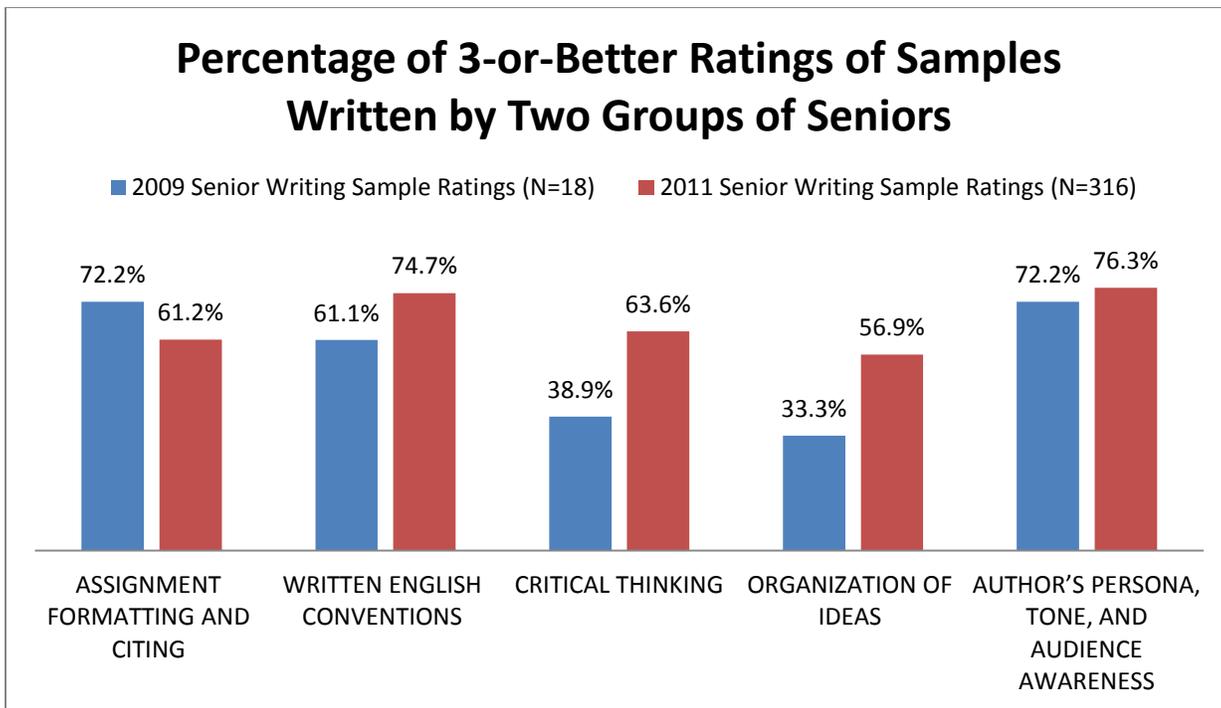
Figure 3



The results in Figure 3 show a substantial increase in performance between the freshman and senior years for these 37 students, on all five of the scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008). It is consistent with the increase reported by Rach (2009). Caution is urged in extrapolating from these results, however, due to the small group size.

A second way to infer improvement over time from available data is to compare the performance of the 18 seniors in the 2009 Pilot Capstone Assessment (Pancost 2009) with the performance of the 2011 seniors. The Pilot Assessment and the 2011 Senior Assessment used identical rating procedures, making their results more comparable. Results are displayed in the Figure 4 below.

Figure 4



The 2011 seniors outperformed the 2009 seniors on four of the five scales. The results on the first scale—Assignment Formatting and Citing—may indicate that the writing sample type from the 2009 group may have been more compatible with this scale than the writing samples from the 2011 seniors. The 2009 seniors all were enrolled in capstone courses that required a formal writing assignment; it may be that the careful use of citations and formatting were emphasized in those courses. Overall, it appears that the 2011 seniors are writing at a higher level than the 2009 seniors. The reader is cautioned, however, that the very small number of 2009 writing samples undermines our ability to draw meaningful conclusions from this analysis.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

This study was conducted to accomplish four goals, which we will use to frame the conclusions and recommendations for future action.

### Goal 1: Provide baseline data about the writing performance of Gallaudet seniors in 2011 that can be used for institutional reporting and program improvement.

The data displayed in Table 1 details the distribution of performance ratings of 158 writing samples by 155 Gallaudet seniors in 2011, on the five scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008). It is the first time that the University has collected and rated such a large number of authentic academic papers written by Gallaudet seniors. The writing samples were academic papers written for a grade in a major-level course, and the rating was performed anonymously by trained faculty raters.

Recommendation 1.1: Use the results displayed in Table 2 for reporting inside and outside the University on the perceptions of writing performance by Gallaudet seniors in 2011.

Recommendation 1.2: Use the results in Tables 2 and 3 as baseline datasets to compare with results from future writing assessments at the University.

## **Goal 2: Provide data that can be used by appropriate groups to establish target writing performance levels for Gallaudet undergraduates.**

The data displayed in Table 3 shows the percentages of samples rated at various cut-points. Cut-points (for example, “3 or better”) is an appropriate way to organize data on ordinal scales such as those used on the Gallaudet Writing Rubric, and they are particularly appropriate as indicators of levels of performance.

Recommendation 2.1: The Council on Undergraduate Education and other appropriate groups should review the data presented in Table 2 and 3 as they begin their discussion of appropriate targets for student achievement of Undergraduate Student Learning Outcome 1.

Recommendation 2.2: Ensure that cut points and results from program assessment studies are used for program assessment and improvement only. Do not use this data to determine high stakes decisions about individual students, such as grades, acceptance to academic programs, or progress to graduation. High stakes decisions should be left to individual instructors and academic programs, and made based on a broader view of student competencies and achievement.

## **Goal 3: Describe the change in Gallaudet student writing performance as students progress through the undergraduate curriculum.**

The design of the new General Studies program established in 2007 incorporated a controversial concept: that the writing skills of Gallaudet undergraduates could be improved by increasing the amount of writing across the curriculum, while decreasing the number of required English courses. There is growing evidence that the concept and design are working. Rach’s (2009) study shows substantial improvement in student writing performance between 2007 and 2009. The 2011 seniors in this study outperformed the 2009 seniors in Pancost’s (2009) study on four of the five scales of the Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008). The writing samples from the 37 seniors in 2011 who were also assessed in Rach’s (2009) study showed substantial improvement on all five scales between their freshman and senior years.

Recommendation 3.1: Reinforce and expand the emphasis on substantive academic writing in courses across the curriculum, particularly at the major program level.

Recommendation 3.2: Conduct assessments designed specifically to establish the impact of writing across the curriculum on student writing performance.

Due to small group sizes and

## **Goal 4: Based experience and findings of the 2011 Senior Assessment and similar studies, recommend improvements to future assessments.**

Several problems arose during analysis which undermine confidence in the results. Differences in the rating procedures and writing sample types appear to have led to different results. Small group sizes in some analyses limit our ability to rely on results.

An assessment limitation that Gallaudet has faced over the years has been that data on student writing performance are archived only as numerical scale results. When scales change, the performance of current students cannot be meaningfully compared to the performance of past students.

Recommendation 4.1: Collect and assess the writing of all undergraduate students at selected points in their undergraduate careers. The goal is complete data on 100% of students.

Recommendation 4.2: Create an assessment portfolio system to archive examples of student work, including but not limited to written work—from across the curriculum and at each level of a student’s progress to

graduation--as well as assessment results. The portfolio would be used for assessment of all five undergraduate learning outcomes and appropriate major program learning outcomes, and to guide student learning.

Recommendation 4.3: Maintain all 158 writing samples from the 2011 seniors in a permanent archive to be used for program review in the future.

Recommendation 4.4: Ensure that writing used for program assessment matches well with the rubrics used to assess them. Work with major and other upper level programs to ensure that appropriate types of writing are being required and submitted for assessment.

## Annex 1: English Skills Assessment Review Project Report



Annex 3: Results from Rach's (2009) study of the GSR 2007 Cohort

# Gallaudet University Mission and Goals

## Mission Statement

Gallaudet University, federally chartered in 1864, is a bilingual, diverse, multicultural institution of higher education that ensures the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard of hearing individuals through American Sign Language and English. Gallaudet maintains a proud tradition of research and scholarly activity and prepares its graduates for career opportunities in a highly competitive, technological, and rapidly changing world.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees November 2007*

## Vision Statement

Gallaudet University will build upon its rich history as the world's premier higher education institution serving deaf and hard of hearing people to become the university of first choice for the most qualified, diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing students in the world, as well as hearing students pursuing careers related to deaf and hard of hearing people. Gallaudet will empower its graduates with the knowledge and practical skills vital to achieving personal and professional success in the changing local and global communities in which they live and work. Gallaudet will also strive to become the leading international resource for research, innovation and outreach related to deaf and hard of hearing people.

Gallaudet will achieve these outcomes through:

- A bilingual learning environment, featuring American Sign Language and English, that provides full access for all students to learning and communication
- A commitment to excellence in learning and student service
- A world-class campus in the nation's capital
- Creation of a virtual campus that expands Gallaudet's reach to a broader audience of visual learners
- An environment in which research can grow, develop, and improve the lives and knowledge of all deaf and hard of hearing people worldwide

*Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 2009*

## Appendix II: Gallaudet Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes

1. **Language & Communication**—Students will use American Sign Language (ASL) and written English to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of settings.
  - 1.1. Demonstrate competence in academic ASL:
    - Select and use appropriate register for the setting and participants (which includes signing space, articulation of signs, sign choice).
    - Use appropriate syntax, facial grammar, transitions, eye gaze (for engagement and for turn taking), and pace.
  - 1.2. Demonstrate competence in academic writing:
    - Choose appropriate words, phrases, and sentence and paragraph structure for the audience and purpose.
    - Demonstrate adequate command of mechanical conventions, including English grammar.
  - 1.3. Demonstrate competence in receptive communication, comprehending written and signed material.
  - 1.4. Present content coherently, which involves clarifying points, bringing together information in a well-organized way, and drawing logical connections among ideas.
  - 1.5. Express ideas and information effectively in a variety of formats, including one-on-one, group settings, and through appropriate use of media.
2. **Critical Thinking**—Students will summarize, synthesize, and critically analyze ideas from multiple sources in order to draw well-supported conclusions and solve problems.
  - 2.1. Select relevant and varied sources of information, and accurately state their key points and supporting details.
  - 2.2. Bring together ideas, comparing, contrasting, and building on them to arrive at reasonable conclusions.
  - 2.3. Evaluate the logic of arguments and strength of evidence, using deductive and inductive methods.
  - 2.4. Provide cogent reasons in support of one's opinions, while taking possible objections seriously.
  - 2.5. Use critical thinking skills to analyze complex issues, make informed decisions and solve real-life problems, modifying one's approach as needed based on the requirements of particular situations.
3. **Identity & Culture**—Students will understand themselves, complex social identities, including deaf identities, and the interrelations within and among diverse cultures and groups.
  - 3.1. Demonstrate an understanding of self, including one's multiple social identities and the factors that contribute to one's well-being.
  - 3.2. Compare and contrast the perspectives of multiple cultures, including deaf cultures, on various issues and practices
  - 3.3. Show awareness of the range of diversity and universality in human history, societies, and ways of life
  - 3.4. Analyze the interrelations within and among communities and cultures, including deaf communities, attending to the interconnectedness of global and local concerns
  - 3.5. Operate with civility in a complex social world
4. **Knowledge & Inquiry**—Students will apply knowledge, modes of inquiry, and technological competence from a variety of disciplines in order to understand human experience and the natural world.
  - 4.1. Demonstrate competence in the fundamental concepts, methods, and technologies used in various fields of study, including scientific methods, quantitative reasoning, and interpretive frameworks.
  - 4.2. Apply the modes of inquiry of several disciplines to address issues and questions, comparing and contrasting these approaches.
  - 4.3. Demonstrate substantial knowledge of at least one field of study, i.e., one's major, while being able to discuss how this field fits into the larger picture of human knowledge.
  - 4.4. Derive meaning from multiple avenues of experience.
  - 4.5. Resolve complex problems by integrating knowledge of various types and employing multiple systems and tools.
5. **Ethics & Social Responsibility**—Students will make reasoned ethical judgments, showing awareness of multiple value systems and taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They will apply these judgments, using collaboration and leadership skills, to promote social justice in their local, national, and global communities.
  - 5.1. Support ethical judgments with clear, cogent reasons.
  - 5.2. Describe how differences in values, beliefs, and priorities can lead to different conclusions about what is right or wrong.
  - 5.3. Assess the consequences of actions.
  - 5.4. Demonstrate intellectual honesty, respect and integrity.
  - 5.5. Work effectively in teams, including those of diverse composition.
  - 5.6. Participate actively in promoting social justice both locally and globally.
  - 5.7. Meet the professional standards of the academic community and one's major field.

## Assessing Graduating Seniors' Literacy

Pilot Assessment

Spring 2009

### **Background:**

The first goal of the Strategic Plan is to

Maintain and strengthen Gallaudet's unique position as a place in which higher education, research, and scholarly pursuits of all kinds are conducted in an inclusive environment where the ASL/English bilingual communication abilities and potential of deaf students are fully realized.

And the first objective is to

Raise levels of fluency and literacy in English and ASL that will permit direct communication in academic settings.

In order to meet both the goal and the objective, the Academic Quality Committee of the Academic Affairs Management Team, chaired by the Executive Director, Office of Academic Quality and Planning, has used the five part rubric (copy attached), developed by the faculty teaching General Studies, to assess writing samples from major capstone courses. (A capstone course is an upper division class, typically at the end of the student's program, designed to help students integrate their knowledge). The rubric measures the following:

1. assignment formatting,
2. written English conventions,
3. critical thinking (analysis, synthesis and integration),
4. organization of ideas,
5. author's persona and tone.

### **Method:**

1. Undergraduate programs which offer capstone courses were asked to submit three writing samples: one paper representing strong student writing, one representing average student writing, and one paper representing weak student writing in that course. Six programs submitted a total of 17 papers (one paper was submitted by two different programs). Each program made its selection based upon whatever criteria it wished.
2. Then the papers were evaluated using the Gallaudet University General Studies Requirement Writing Rubric (attached). This rubric was developed in 2007 and refined in 2008. It is used both to evaluate students in GSR courses for grades, to inform pedagogy in GSR courses, and to measure student literacy across the undergraduate curriculum.
3. Each paper was evaluated by two trained readers. If their scores differed by more than one point on any two standards, a third reading was done. Inter-rater reliability was excellent: only three papers needed a third reading.

**Results:**

1. Each program received the results for its students.
2. The Provost and the Deans of the College of Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Technologies, the Graduate School and Professional Programs, and Academic Quality received all the results.
3. The following are average scores for each criterion in the rubric for the strong, average, and weak students:

	<i>ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING.</i>	<i>WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS</i>	<i>CRITICAL THINKING</i>	<i>ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS</i>	<i>AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS</i>
Strongest	3.5	4	3	3	3.67
Average	2.17	2.83	2	2	2.67
Weakest	2.17	2.83	2	2	2.67

4. The following shows the range of scores for each level paper:

Strong Papers (N=6)					
	Pre-College Skills 1	Emerging Skills 2	Developing Skills 3	Mastering Skills 4	Exemplary Skills 5
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING.	1	0	2	2	1
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	0	2	0	2	2
CRITICAL THINKING	0	3	2	1	0
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	0	3	2	1	0
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	0	2	0	2	2

Average Papers (N=6)					
	Pre-College Skills 1	Emerging Skills 2	Developing Skills 3	Mastering Skills 4	Exemplary Skills 5
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING.	2	0	2	1	1
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	1	1	2	0	2
CRITICAL THINKING	1	2	2	1	0
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	1	3	1	1	0
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	0	1	3	0	2

Weak Papers (N=6)					
	Pre-College Skills 1	Emerging Skills 2	Developing Skills 3	Mastering Skills 4	Exemplary Skills 5
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING.	1	1	2	2	0
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	0	3	2	1	0
CRITICAL THINKING	0	5	1	0	0
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	2	3	1	0	0
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	0	2	2	2	0

All Papers (N=18)					
	Pre-College Skills 1	Emerging Skills 2	Developing Skills 3	Mastering Skills 4	Exemplary Skills 5
ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING.	4	1	6	5	2
WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS	1	6	4	3	4
CRITICAL THINKING	1	10	5	2	0
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	3	9	4	2	0
AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS	0	5	5	4	4

### Observations:

1. It is unwise to try to draw too many conclusions from what amounts to a pilot effort at assessing student writing. It seems to fair to say, however, that in general too few students have attained better than developing skills and, moreover, in terms of critical thinking and organization, these papers are especially weak. On the other hand, given the difficulties Deaf student have learning to write, it is gratifying that in 11 of these papers, the writers were able to communicate the meaning clearly.
2. Too few departments submitted writing samples.

### Recommendations:

1. That by January 1, 2010, each department
  - a. Articulate clear writing goals for its majors
  - b. Develop a rubric for measuring attainment those goals
  - c. Offer a capstone course NLT spring 2011 where each major will demonstrate that mastery through in a formal writing assignment
  - d. Submit writing samples for evaluation NLT spring 2011.
2. That all submitted writing samples be research papers, with footnotes & bibliographies.
3. That for spring, 2010, each department make papers available at the end of finals & that time be scheduled the week for the beginning of class for scoring the papers.

## Appendix III: Gallaudet Writing Rubric (2008) altered for 2011 Senior Assessment

	Pre-College Skills <b>1</b>	Emerging Skills <b>2</b>	Developing Skills <b>3</b>	Mastering Skills <b>4</b>	Exemplary Skills <b>5</b>
<b>ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING AND CITING.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> No regard for citing of sources. <del>Does not follow prompt directions.</del>	<input type="checkbox"/> Attempt to cite some sources but does so incorrectly. <del>Follows prompt directions minimally.</del>	<input type="checkbox"/> Attempt to cite most sources in assigned style, some cited incorrectly. <del>Follows prompt directions.</del>	<input type="checkbox"/> All sources cited in assigned style. Basics done correctly. <del>Follows prompt directions.</del>	<input type="checkbox"/> All sources cited; all citations done correctly in assigned style. <del>Follows prompt directions.</del>
<b>WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVENTIONS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive sentence structure and grammatical errors completely distract and impede meaning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Many sentence structure and grammatical errors that often distract and obscure meaning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sentence structure and grammatical errors may distract, but meaning is mostly clear.	<input type="checkbox"/> Most sentences are correct; may have some sentence structure or grammatical errors that do not distract from meaning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are correct and convey meaning fluidly.
<b>CRITICAL THINKING</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> No central point. No support for points. No analysis, synthesis, integration, or interpretation of ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/> Displays a central point, although not clearly developed. Weak or irrelevant support for central point. No synthesis, integration, or interpretation of ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/> Central point is adequately developed and clearly stated. Information and ideas are synthesized or integrated properly but perhaps superficially. Information is interpreted correctly most of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Central point is stated clearly. Information and ideas are synthesized or integrated properly and with depth of development. Information is interpreted correctly throughout.	<input type="checkbox"/> Central point is impressively stated. Information is synthesized, integrated, and interpreted in ways that contribute to a distinguished written work.
<b>ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction is illogical or missing. Structure within and between paragraphs is missing. Conclusion is illogical or missing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction is weak; transitions within and between paragraphs are weakly articulated; structure of paragraphs and paper is emerging; conclusion is weak.	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction is logical and helps articulate the overall plan for the paper. Transitions between and within paragraphs is logical; structure of paragraphs and paper follows logical plan; conclusion may be weak by simply repeating ideas from the paper.	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction articulates the overall plan for the paper. Transitions between and within paragraphs contribute to a smooth flow of ideas; structure of paragraphs and paper are logical; conclusion is logical and does more than repeat ideas from the paper.	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction uniquely articulates the overall plan for the paper. Transitions between and within paragraphs contribute to a smooth flow of ideas; structure of paragraphs and paper are logical; conclusion contributes to strength of paper by offering unique ideas not repeated from the paper.
<b>AUTHOR'S PERSONA, TONE, AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Word choice is often incorrect for the intended audience. No evidence of audience considerations in sentence structure.	<input type="checkbox"/> Word choice and sentence structure may be inappropriate for audience.	<input type="checkbox"/> Word choice is often correct although paper may have occasional word choice errors. Sentence structure may not be varied or show awareness of the audience.	<input type="checkbox"/> Word choice is appropriate; sentence structure is consistent and appropriate for the intended audience.	<input type="checkbox"/> Word choice reflects flexibility of vocabulary and usage for intended audience. Sentence structure is varied and appropriate for the intended audience and reflects flexibility.