

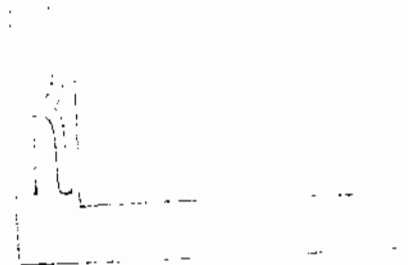


# The University of Georgia

Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

May 25, 2011

Dr. Linda Noble  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs  
University System of Georgia  
270 Washington Street, SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-1450



Dear Dr. Noble and Members of the Regents Excellence Awards Committee

I am pleased to nominate the First-Year Composition Program (FYC) in the University of Georgia's Department of English for the USG BOR Department Program Teaching Excellence award. The FYC plays a key role in undergraduate education, annually introducing 4,500 to 5,500 students a year to college-level academic writing. As no other single instructional program touches as many students at such a critical time in their college career, the University is fortunate to have this responsibility fulfilled in exemplary fashion by FYC.

Over the past 14 years and through the work of four department heads, a dedicated staff, under the leadership of FYC director Professor Christy Desmet, has crafted and refined a program that runs smoothly and exceeds expectations. Its strength and excellence manifest the now finely honed interlocking elements of its grading rubric, its comprehensive approach to instructor training, its portfolio capstone for students, its self-developed electronic writing environment known as "emma", and the commitment and collaboration of those involved with it.

These elements are detailed in the accompanying portfolio, but I would pause over its home-grown application "emma" in particular. First envisioned a decade ago, "emma" is the rare instance, through a fortuitous and lasting conjunction of talents, of a computer application made by those who teach. It is continually improved through the feedback of those who teach and learn using it. The program is evidence of the dedication to teaching and can-do spirit that pervade FYC, and the fact that it is now being adopted at other institutions attests to its success. This program made it possible for FYC to adopt process writing, with its emphasis on peer review and revision that would be otherwise logistically impossible, and the capstone student portfolio that five years ago replaced the three-hour final exam.

These developments, with the instructor training and the rubric that accompany them, are all programmatic and beyond the credit of any one individual. They are also, as you will see, vivid examples of teaching excellence that prompts this nomination of FYC for the BOR Excellence in Teaching Awards for Departments Programs.

Respectfully,

Jere W. Morehead  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

## First-year Composition Program at the University of Georgia

Prof. Christy Desmet, Director  
Dr. Deborah Church Miller, Associate Director  
Dr. Erin Presley, Assistant Director  
Beth Beggs, UGA Writing Center Director  
Dr. Ron Balthazor, Lead <emma> Developer  
Jane Barroso, Administrative Assistant  
<http://www.english.uga.edu/fyc>

Between 1998, when the University of Georgia moved to the semester system, and 2011, the First-year Composition Program (FYC) has undergone a comprehensive curricular revision and become well-known nationally for its innovative development of electronic writing pedagogy, use of electronic portfolios, teacher training, and assessment practices.

### **Curriculum Development and FYC Program Rubric**

The move to semesters allowed the FYC program to review and update all of its courses and policies. In 2002-2003, program administrators and an ad hoc committee of teachers rewrote the program goals or learning outcomes to reflect national disciplinary standards, as outlined by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (<http://wpacouncil.org/>).

With program goals newly clarified and documented in the *First-year Composition Guide* issued to all students and instructors, we reviewed our grading practices. An ad hoc committee of administrators, Instructors, and Teaching Assistants met during Spring 2004 to construct a unique, program-wide Grading Rubric that combines the best of analytic trait scoring with the best of holistic grading practices and allows teachers to adapt the standard Rubric to their individual pedagogy. (See Exhibit 1 from the Evidence of Excellence section of this document.) We revised the sections in the *First-year Composition Guide* on “How Teachers Grade” and “What Grades Mean” to help students and teachers use the rubric to “speak a common language.” Because the rubric is designed not only to justify grades but also to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses, it is crucial to improving student writing through revision.

In subsequent years, the FYC Program has concentrated on reviewing and revising the general curricula for its three courses (ENGL 1101, 1102, and 1102M—multicultural). In Spring 2009, an ad hoc committee reviewed the texts for all courses and made new selections. Another volunteer committee met without pay during the summer of 2009 to construct sample syllabi keyed to the new texts, which are posted on the FYC website.

Over the past decade the FYC Program has actively developed courses with innovative pedagogy and joined campus-wide learning initiatives. As Director, Christy Desmet was a founding member of the committee that created the UGA Learning Communities and continues to serve on the Advisory Board. In each Learning Community (LC), students take a large lecture class appropriate to the community’s theme, an FYC class also designed to fit the theme and

complement other courses in the LC, and a First-year seminar run by a senior faculty member. Teachers in FYC also use Reacting to the Past pedagogy, design special topics classes on subjects ranging from anime to the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and Charles Darwin, and create multi-modal writing projects such as the development of a video-biography for the capstone portfolio.

### **<emma> and Writing Pedagogy**

Since 2001, the development of <emma> (Electronic Markup and Management Application) by teachers in the FYC Program and Department of English has changed completely the teaching of writing in the program. <emma> is an electronic writing environment that supports all stages of the writing process, from research and drafting, through peer and instructor review, to revision and finally, the publication of capstone electronic portfolios. The application has been developed, reviewed through teacher surveys and usability studies, and refined to fit student and program needs.

The most important feature of <emma> is the way it supports process writing and instructor/peer feedback. Students submit multiple drafts through the <emma> portal and readers use <emma>'s Peer Review functions to comment on those drafts. (See an example in Exhibit 3c from the Evidence of Excellence section of this document.) Students revise and then re-upload their essays for final grading. Besides simplifying document submission and exchange, review, and revision, <emma> helps students literally see the features of their prose and so gain insight into their writing processes. The web interface displays longer comments as marginalia, but also allows students and teachers to mark economically key issues, ranging from critical thinking to grammatical errors; the web interface links these markings to the *The St. Martin's Handbook*, illustrating the comment by a mouse-over, but also allowing writers to "click through" to a fuller description of the issue in the electronic handbook. Custom-made templates allow teachers to shape the application to their students' needs. (For an example of how such a template works, see the <emma> Template for the Program Grading Rubric in Exhibit 2 from the Evidence of Excellence section of this document.)

The FYC Program provides extensive technical and pedagogical support to all teachers and students through the <emma> Lab and computer classrooms. Computer-support Teaching Assistants help students with technical issues and with their essays and portfolios; they also provide in-class <emma> orientations and workshops for teachers who wish them and help to develop new pedagogical uses for <emma> in the writing classroom. <emma> is used at other schools and colleges, including Millsaps College, the University of Mississippi, Virginia Military Institute, Georgia Tech, and UT Dallas, among others. The largest pilot is at Indiana University, which currently runs 20-30 <emma> sections of FYC each semester.

### **Electronic Portfolios**

Perhaps the most important curricular change for the UGA First-year Composition Program has been the move to electronic portfolios for summative assessment of student work. FYC portfolios satisfy the major requirements for writing assessment listed by the "CCCC Committee on Assessment Position Statement," which recommends that students in composition courses:

- should demonstrate their accomplishment and development through more than one sample that is revised at least once;
- be assessed on materials drawn directly from the course curriculum;
- clearly understand the methods and purposes of the assessment;
- and have their writing evaluated by more than one reader.

FYC portfolios accomplish all of these goals. Students have an opportunity to revise their work multiple times for “publication” in the portfolio. Assessment is based directly on work done for the course; students not only present their revised essays, but also create exhibits demonstrating for readers their composing/revision and peer review processes. Thus, the portfolio highlights both best practices and best products of individual students. (See a description of the portfolio in Exhibit 3a from the Evidence of Excellence section in this document.) Teachers introduce the electronic portfolio early on in the class, so that students can take charge of their learning for the semester. The portfolios are also assessed by two readers, the teacher of record and another teacher.

Another advantage is that electronic portfolio assessment encourages *reflection*, or a meta-cognitive awareness about the processes of writing, which helps to demystify the supposedly “subjective” process of assessing writing quality. Another is the medium itself, since web “publication,” like peer review, gives students an audience beyond the teacher and offers opportunities for multi-media work. (Two samples from award-winning portfolios are included in Exhibit 3b-c from the Evidence of Excellence section of this document.)

### **Teacher Training**

The FYC Program has an extensive training program and ongoing support for its composition instructors. Prior to entering the classroom, new teachers apprentice with an experienced instructor, where they observe, learn to grade papers, write lesson plans, and do some classroom teaching. Each year, the FYC Program conducts a week-long orientation for all new teachers and instructors. New teachers also take a three-hour practicum with the Director in their first semester of classroom teaching; entering T.A.’s with previous teaching experience attend the first hour.

In the Composition Pedagogy Practicum, T.A.’s work together to construct lesson plans, in-class exercises, and assignments; they experiment with new technologies and reflect regularly on their practice. Experienced teachers volunteer their time to make presentations on selected topics. The students’ work is shared through the Practicum’s <em>class, and by the end of the semester, they have constructed their first teaching portfolio. The Practicum is extremely important to the FYC Program’s ethos, for it establishes a supportive community of peers who have direct access to the FYC administration. Many hands lighten the workload; sharing resources encourages cooperation and collaboration; and the intellectual and affective support the Practicum offers help to make teaching composition a positive experience for all concerned.

### **Program Assessment and Research**

The substantial and ever-expanding database of <emma> documents makes possible large-scale program assessment. As part of the prestigious Inter/National Coalition of Electronic Portfolio Research, the FYC Program has engaged in two major assessment projects. The first studies the efficacy of revision in student essays; the second assesses key learning outcomes in the capstone electronic portfolios. Both of these initiatives are discussed fully in Exhibit 4a-b from the Evidence of Excellence section of this document.

### **Placement Initiative**

In 2009-2010, the FYC Program began its most recent effort, to replace an indirect placement measure (a multiple-choice test) with a more authentic, direct assessment of student writing under “real-world” conditions. Modeled on the IMOAT Project at MIT, the placement initiative asks students to write their placement essays not in crowded lecture halls during orientation, but at home over a series of days. The placement essays involve readings and are modeled on the kinds of assignments used in English 1101; trained raters evaluate the essays holistically in an online medium. So far, we have built the application for submission and rating and piloted the placement project with a small number of classes over one academic year.

### **Re-visioning the Writing Center**

The end of the Regents’ Exam for UGA has meant that beginning in 2010-2011, we have been able to rethink completely the mission of the UGA Writing Center. We have expanded from the Park Hall hub to outposts in the Science Library and Miller Learning Center; we have restructured services and created a new tutor-training manual; we have conducted online tutoring pilots with the UGA at the Gwinnett and Griffin campuses. We have also developed FYC workshops for creating portfolios: one two-day session held in a residence hall was attended by 120 students. With the advent of the new First-year Odyssey Program for the university’s QEP (Quality Enhancement Program), we are planning further writing-across-curriculum initiatives.

## First-year Composition at UGA Fact Sheet

The FYC Program at UGA:

- Serves between 4,500 and 5,500 students per year (5,404 in FY2011);
- Is composed of around 80 to 90 Teaching Assistants, Faculty, Lecturers, and Instructors;
- Schedules and runs 240-275 sections of FYC per academic year (255 in FY2011).

The FYC Program offers the following special services to FYC students:

- Comprehensive directed self-placement;
- Special FYC sections tailored to the needs of ESOL students;
- Sections of English 1102 that satisfy the Franklin College multicultural requirement;
- Innovative Learning Communities and Special Topics classes;
- A select number of online courses reflecting best practices in online education;
- Supplementary tutoring and classroom workshops through the UGA Writing Center.

The FYC Program offers the following services, through the Writing Center, to the UGA community as a whole:

- Tutoring and specially designed workshops for students and classes at all levels across campus;
- Online tutoring pilot program for the UGA at Gwinnett and Griffin campuses;
- Special programs in the Writing Center such as ESOL conversation groups.

The FYC Program assures program consistency and teacher quality through:

- a program curriculum that promotes common goals and practices, but also fosters individual innovation;
- a comprehensive teacher-preparation program and ongoing pedagogical support;
- regular, collaborative review of texts, course syllabi, and writing pedagogy;
- systematic program assessment and research;
- support and mentorship for Teaching Assistants who participate in university-wide Teaching Programs.

The FYC Program promotes best-practices in computers and writing technology through <em>emma</em> (Electronic Markup and Management Application), a writing environment that supports:

- Invention and revision;
- Peer and instructor review;
- Electronic portfolio publication for individual and program assessment.

## Evidence of Success in the FYC Program

### Student Retention

Between 1998 and 2011, the University of Georgia FYC Program has included as part of its regular program assessment a complete tracking of students who fail or drop their FYC courses and the reasons for those failures and withdrawals. These numbers are consistently very low; although complete statistics are reported in the FYC Annual Reports ([http://www.english.uga.edu/newsite/fyc/annual\\_reports.html](http://www.english.uga.edu/newsite/fyc/annual_reports.html)), the results for 2009-2010 are representative of the program's record as a whole:

Numbers		Percentage of FYC Population
Fall 2009	WP: 103	2.90%
	WF: 11	.30%
	C-/D/F: 38	1.06%
Spring 2010	WP: 121	5.45%
	WF: 12	.54%
	C-/D/F: 34	1.53%

There are very few failures and few unproductive credit hours in FYC, suggesting a generally strong system of placement and a successful pedagogy; we feel that success and retention are particularly important for courses in Area A (Essential Skills) of the USG Core Curriculum.

### Student Success

The FYC Program offers each year several student awards for excellent essays (Donald E. Barnett Awards) and portfolios (Michael G. Moran Awards); winners receive a monetary award and are published on the Program website and in the *First-year Composition Guide*, where they serve as inspirational models for incoming students. Two examples of innovative ENGL 1101 portfolios are included in Exhibit 3 from the Evidence of Excellence section of this document; they show student work that is "Distinctive"—meeting the highest standards for critical thinking and writerly craft while offering thoughtful variations on the genres of academic discourse and taking full advantage of the electronic medium. Furthermore, Bonnie Sillay's (2001-2002) Barnett essay, "Life is Not a Paragraph," was reprinted in *The St. Martin's Handbook* as an example of an excellent FYC essay analyzing literature, gaining national recognition for both the student and program.

### **Teacher Success**

The FYC Program takes as its mission the training of writing teachers as well as instruction of First-year students. For this reason, awards won by teachers in the program are indicative of its general quality. Every year, 6-7 FYC Teaching Assistants win the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, which recognizes excellence in undergraduate teaching. Furthermore, between 1998 and 2011 a Teaching Assistant from the First-year Composition Program has won 7 times the prestigious Excellence in Teaching Award (limited to five T.A.'s across the entire university); we have won more of these awards than any other program or department in the university. Three Teaching Assistants have won the *Kairos/Lore* Award for Excellence in Teaching at the annual Computers and Writing conference; one T.A. has won the national Patricia Cross Future Leader Award; and numerous T.A.'s have participated in the T.A. Mentor/Future Leader Programs at the University of Georgia.

### **Administrative Success**

A final mission of the FYC Program is to train future faculty members and Writing Program Administrators. The placement rate for the Program's Assistant Directors into teaching and administrative positions has been 100%. Status of graduating T.A.'s who have served in this role between 1998 and 2011 are:

- Kathy Houff, Instructor, Temple University;
- Deborah Miller, Academic Professional and Associate Director of FYC, University of Georgia;
- Alexis Hart, tenured Associate Professor in Rhetoric at the Virginia Military Institute;
- Robert Cummings, tenured Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Writing and Rhetoric, University of Mississippi;
- Anita DeRouen, tenure-track Assistant Professor and Director of Writing at Millsaps College;
- Wesley Venus, tenure-track Assistant Professor at Gordon College;
- Erin Presley, tenure-track Assistant Professor at Eastern Kentucky University in 2011-2012.



## Evidence of Excellence in the University of Georgia First-year Composition Program

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**1. Program Grading Rubric:** This unique rubric establishes a clear description of the characteristics of different grade levels in FYC, giving students and teachers a shared vocabulary for discussing writing. The rubric also scaffolds the skill sets needed to progress from one level of achievement to another, so that students can learn how to direct their revision processes and improve their writing. The UGA FYC Grading Rubric has been presented at national conferences and adopted by other campuses (e.g., University of Mississippi). Developed by teachers in FYC, the Rubric provides evidence of a ***collective faculty effort to improve teaching and student learning***; used by teachers program-wide, the Rubric also ***articulates clearly how quality is defined, promoted, and assessed by the program***.

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Paper # \_\_\_\_\_ Special Assignment Requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter a pertinent quote here. Teachers can self-select.

Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Center \_\_\_\_\_

## Competent/Credible/Complete

If you meet these first three standards, you are writing competently and you will earn a grade of "C." (70-79)

### 1 Unity

- Contains a center of gravity, a unifying and controlling purpose, a thesis or claim, which is maintained throughout the paper
- Organizes writing around a thesis or according to the organizational requirements of the particular assignment (e.g., summary, narrative, argument, analysis, description, etc.)

### 2 Evidence/Development

- Develops appropriate, logical, and relevant supporting detail and/or evidence
- Includes more specific, concrete evidence (or details) than opinion or abstract, general commentary

### 3 Presentation and Design

- Follows SMH guidelines for standard English grammar, punctuation, usage, and documentation
- Meets your teacher's (or the MLA's) and the First-year Composition program's requirements for length and/or format

## Skillful/Persuasive

If you meet all of the competency standards above and, in addition, achieve coherence and exhibit audience awareness, you are writing skillfully and you will earn a grade of "B." (80-89)

### 4 Coherence

- Uses words and sentences, rhythm and phrasing, variations and transitions, concreteness and specificity to *reveal and emphasize the relationship* between evidence and thesis
- Explains how, why, or in what way evidence/detail supports point/claim/thesis/topic/ideas
- Incorporates evidence from outside sources smoothly, appropriately, and responsibly

### 5 Audience Awareness

- Demonstrates a sense that the writer knows what s/he is doing and is addressing real people
- Reflects a respect for values that influence ethos (e.g., common ground, trustworthiness, careful research)

## Distinctive

If you meet all of the competency standards, achieve coherence and exhibit audience awareness, and, in addition, demonstrate a mastery of one or more features of superior writing, you are writing distinctively and you will earn a grade of "A." (90-100)

### 6 Distinction

- Your writing stands out because of one or more of the following characteristics: complexity, originality, seamless coherence, extraordinary control, sophistication in thought, recognizable voice, compelling purpose, imagination, insight, thoroughness, and/or depth.

Essay Grade \_\_\_\_\_ +/- Points for special assignment requirements \_\_\_\_\_ = Final Grade

## Ineffective

If your paper does not meet competency standards, either because you have minor problems in all three competence areas (1-3 above) or major problems in one or two competence areas, you will earn a grade of "D." (60-69) or "F." (<60) and you should schedule a conference with your teacher

**2. Writing Pedagogy with <emma>**: This unique electronic writing environment collects, organizes, and displays documents to support process pedagogy and to help students reflect

intelligently on their own and others' writing. Developed by and for instructors in UGA's FYC Program, <emma> is another *collective faculty effort to improve teaching and student learning that enables faculty to use innovative and effective forms of pedagogy and technology.*

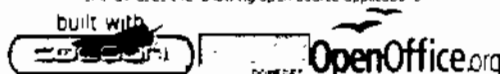


- <emma> Home
- Jane Austen ▾
- Manage Course
- Course Home
- Projects**
- Materials
- My Documents
- Class Docs by Name
- Allen, Elisabeth
- Brady, Rand
- Brown, Erin
- Brownlee, Melissa
- Byrd, Crista
- Cason, Caroline
- Clark, Rache
- Crist, Carolyn

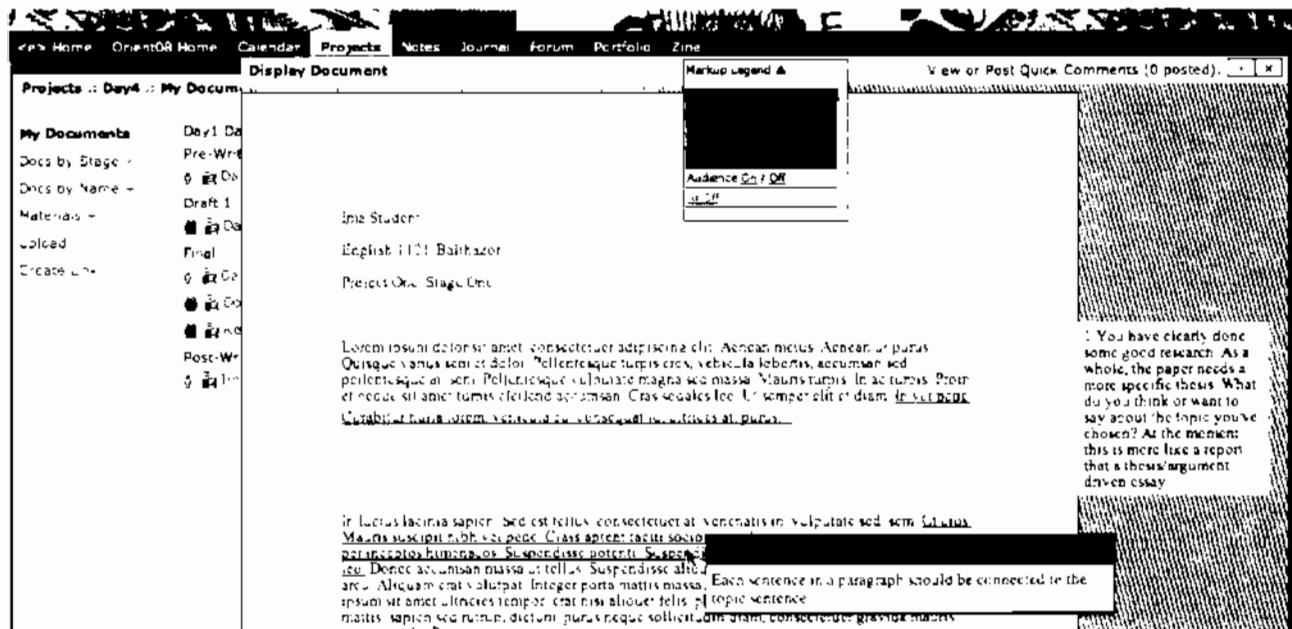
**Projects :: Final Essay :: Class Documents by Name** Notes on this page

Short Essay One	Short Essay Two	Final Essay	
Allen, Elisabeth			
Pre-Write			
		Final Paper - Annotated Bibliography	Download 10:51 AM 2009-0
Draft 1			
		Final Essay - Peer Review Draft	Download 10:11 AM 2009-0
Draft 2			
		Peer Review Allen	by Savannah Harg
		Peer Review Allen	by Katherine Wyke
Final			
		Final Paper	Download 05:04 AM 2009-0

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 <emma> uses the following open source applications



<emma>'s simple web interface and organizational structure encourage multiple drafts and frequent revision, two cornerstones of best practices in writing pedagogy.



Custom-made templates, such as the just-presented Commenting Template keyed to the Program Grading Rubric, help students literally see and thus to understand their writing processes and products. The sample comments here, which are related to Unity, are colored red, which in the Rubric indicates a “C” level of achievement; mouse-overs give more information and allow students to “click through” to the appropriate section of *The St. Martin’s Handbook*. Color coding helps students understand the status of their essays; markup and mouse-overs, plus the Rubric, show them what they need to improve; marginal comments enable direct conversations between writers and both the instructor and peer reviewers.

<emma> is the product of a 10-year collaboration between FYC teachers and software developers. Teachers create and share with one other pedagogical aids such as the commenting template shown above; they also share readings, assignments, and lesson plans through the central FYC <emma> class. Experienced Instructors have on their own initiative designed an <emma> archive of Multi-cultural Literature resources and of Multimodal Composing resources for the benefit of students and less experienced teachers. By putting classroom teachers in control of program pedagogy, <emma> promotes ***individual and collective faculty efforts to improve teaching and student learning*** by using ***innovative technology***.

**3. FYC Electronic Portfolios:** A key feature of FYC pedagogy, electronic portfolios created through <emma> are the capstone project for all FYC courses. Electronic portfolio pedagogy focuses on both writing processes (revision and peer review) and products (revised essays), offering students formative feedback for revision and providing opportunities for reflection and meta-cognition (Introductory Reflective Essay). Electronic portfolios give students the opportunity to revise and re-conceive their work throughout the semester, and by drawing on everyday practices such as drafting, revision, and peer review, reward students for their daily work in the course as well as for their final products. Best of all, electronic portfolios encourage creativity and innovative use of the web interface. FYC students have produced artwork, cartoons, audio files, and videos as part of their final portfolios, using multimedia to support and enhance more traditional pieces of writing. Award-winning portfolios and essays are printed in the *FYC Guide* and posted on the Program website ([www.english.uga.edu/fyc](http://www.english.uga.edu/fyc)), illustrating ***how quality is defined, promoted, and assessed in the program*** and making ***a strong link between good teaching and recognition for excellence*** from both teachers and students.

### 3a. Description of Electronic Portfolios in First-year Composition

As stated in the *FYC Guide*, students in First-year Composition write a minimum of three essays and, as a capstone project, construct an electronic portfolio that contains the following items:

- **Biography of the portfolio author and image;**
- **Introductory Reflective Essay (IRE):** This is an introductory “letter,” “memo,” or essay that serves as a guide to readers of the portfolio and explains its exhibits;

- **Two of the three essays written for the class**, thoroughly revised, edited, and polished. These pieces provide evidence of the author’s best critical thinking, argumentative strategies, prose style, and editing skills;
- **Exhibit of the author’s composing/revision processes:** This exhibit may present a shorter piece of writing or even a portion of a paper (e.g., the thesis statement) or demonstrate the development of a piece of writing through several drafts;
- **Exhibit of the author’s peer review process:** This exhibit introduces the author’s work in reviewing or responding to the work of other writers. As above, the exhibit may focus on one essay or one portion of an essay, but should reflect generally on the author’s understanding of peer review;
- **One “wild card” submission.** This may be any piece of “writing,” broadly construed, that completes the portfolio’s overall portrait of the author.

### 3b. Charlotte Byram’s Michael G. Moran Portfolio for English 1101 (2008-2009)

Pictured below are samples from two Michael G. Moran Portfolio winners for English 1101, nominated by teachers from among all those evaluated and selected by a committee of fellow teachers. Talented cartoonist Charlotte Byram (2008-2009) juxtaposes lively prose with witty illustrations in her Introductory Reflective Essay. Represented here are the artistic image from the author’s biography and an account of editing her own prose from the IRE; the cat weeps while the dog eats her paper, illustrating Charlotte’s own reluctance to “throw” away any of her writing, even when she knows it needs editing.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document with a circular photograph of a dog on the left and a cartoon illustration on the right. The cartoon depicts a dog eating a piece of paper while a cat weeps. The text in the document is partially obscured by the cartoon and appears to be a reflective essay about editing. The document interface includes a menu bar at the top (File, Edit, View, Insert, Format, Tools, Data, Window, Help) and a status bar at the bottom (Page: 1, Default, etc.).

### 3c. Brittany Scott's Michael G. Moran Portfolio for English 1101 (2010-2011)

Brittany Scott constructs her portfolio as an ongoing narrative about her encounters with writing and literature over the semester; her Introductory Reflective Essay is written as a diary with multiple entries chronicling that relationship. She balances careful attention to visual detail with a charmingly ironic authorial voice to demonstrate, rather than merely assert, that her work in English 1101 has met program goals.

#### Entry 2: The Not So Sweet

*Dear Diary*

*He's gone as I know him—already. I walked in my first college English class today and received the syllabus. It was missing something, something major. There were no assigned readings on the syllabus—no poems, no plays, no novels. This means no JOHN DONNE, NO SHAKESPEARE, NO TONI MORRISON. This means NO LOVE. I thought you had a deal. How could he do this to me? He knew how much he meant to me. He knew that all I needed to stay sane was him. And yet, he's gone. My feelings are over, he's leaving me. I feel as if I am drowning inside a lost love.*

*But I can't quit yet. I am going to search for my love because I know where ever he is, he is singing to me, the way I long for him. I searched for him in my writing. Our first writing assignments, as an essay in which we had to analyze a picture. I thought this was easy. I could simply analyze Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Again—I was wrong. My teacher actually wanted me to analyze an *in* film or picture, *no* metaphor intended. I left class for the next few weeks with my head hanging low. I felt like I was losing the one thing I had ever found. I felt myself falling out of love with the only thing I had ever loved so passionately, and so true.*

Brittany's Peer Review Exhibit uses the full capabilities of the online medium to give a vivid narrative and pictorial record of working with her classmate "August Mayhem." Brittany demonstrates not only her skill in commenting on a peer's draft, but a mature ability to work collaboratively with a teammate over the course of a semester. Together, these electronic portfolios not only reward students for good work, but also serve as models for future writers, so that the students themselves contribute to the FYC Program's ***on-going and data-driven process for reviewing and reshaping curricula*** and ***achieving academic excellence***.

Brittany's extensive account of the Peer Review process shows how the two students work together on Draft 2 of "August"'s essay. In the first section (coded red), Brittany works with the author to figure out what she wants to discuss about her chosen magazine cover: "In her essay, August was to explain how the image attracts readers and creates controversy regarding stereotypes."

## SHARING THE LOVE

August Mayhem is an overall mature, profound writer. Her well-rounded knowledge always guide her to writing provocative essays. However, she is a process writer. Her knowledge many times leave her thoughts scattered and jumbled. The content is always present, however, the knowledge is not always there-driven. Therefore, her papers begin off as thoughts, on top of thoughts, on top of things, of uncertainties. My main job as her peer editor is to make sure August begins her paper and that the paper evolves into an essay with a theoretical thesis. This takes a complete understanding of August's intention and the subject she is writing about. Therefore, **the first step of my peer revision is calling August to see exactly what she is trying to prove in her essay.** Next, I assist her in **organizing her thoughts to build a thesis-driven essay.**

... particularly checking for the most common mistakes:

### THE PHONE CALL



The conversation usually takes place for the same reason each time. I call her because while attempting to edit her first draft, I realized she had not uploaded it to Emma yet. When we get on the phone, I will ask her what she wants to write about and she will tell me her idea. For this particular example, she wanted to write an analytical essay on the cover of a VOGUE magazine. I was familiar with the magazine, so I could help her brainstorm. Also, August had a strong foundation of information in history and fashion. Therefore, a picture like the one to the right was of her comfort zone. By the end of the conversation, August and I had developed a descriptive purpose for her paper. In her essay, August was to explain how the image attracts readers and creates controversy regarding stereotypes.



In the next stage of Draft 2, Brittany critiques August's thesis paragraph (coded in blue), then makes specific wording changes (these show up in red). Finally, she gives advice for proofreading the draft (this appears in green). Throughout, Brittany shows a strong understanding of the writing process, working first on the level of invention (thesis), then organization, and finally style and proofreading.

## ORGANIZATION OF THOUGHTS: *Organization of thoughts* (draft 2)

**DRAFT 2:** This VOGUE cover features Gisele Bündchen and LeBron James for the "Shape Issue". The photo was taken by Annie Leibovitz, who is known for her beautiful but and controversial work. This image displays both of these sides by mixing the expected and unexpected, and bringing politics through fashion. It is an elegantly posed and vibrant image animating the topics of the issue and making the reader want to delve into the fashion, while also stirring up controversy by depicting stereotypes.

**A PIECE OF MY HEART:** Overall, August's ideas were present and intriguing. However, as an introduction, this paragraph must engage the reader and introduce the subject in a manner that allows the audience to build expectations for the rest of the essay. I told August she needs to implement my side comments and add needed sentences to increase the fluency of her paragraph. She must also include more background information to explain the controversial idea she is referring to in the thesis. In regards to being coherent, August should make sure she relates her arguments to the VOGUE'S audience; she should add a detail explaining how the audience would react to the controversy the cover creates.

**DRAFT 2:** When VOGUE came out with their annual "Shape Issue" in 2008, they chose basketball player LeBron James and supermodel Gisele Bündchen for the cover. The two seems to be the perfect fit for the issue focusing on model physique and athletic bodies, as they are among the most successful and well known in their respective careers. However, the pair's stance stirred up the fashion and political world over its similarities to old King Kong images. The photo was taken by Annie Leibovitz, who is known for her beautiful and controversial work. This image displays both of these sides by mixing the expected and unexpected, and bringing together politics and fashion. The cover goes beyond just shape. It is an elegantly posed and vibrant image animating the topics of the issue and making the reader want to delve into the fashion, while also stirring up controversy by depicting stereotypes, and making the reader take a second look at their view on these issues.

**A PIECE OF MY HEART:**



**4. Program Assessment and Curricular Revision:** <emma> provides a rich, ongoing source of data about student writing that permits the program to construct *methods of assessment of student learning and achievement that go beyond student evaluations* and *to use assessment results to inform teaching practices, and curriculum development and revision*.

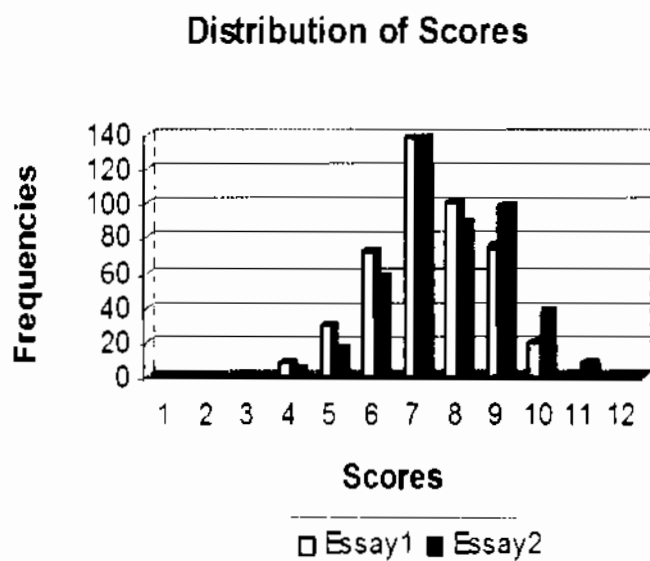
The FYC Program does ongoing program assessment through two large-scale initiatives. The first is the Revision Project conducted under the auspices of the prestigious Inter/National Coalition of Electronic Portfolio Research. The second is a direct assessment of capstone electronic portfolios, conducted in collaboration with the UGA Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

#### 4a. Revision Study

Between 2005 and 2008, the FYC Program conducted an extended study of revision in FYC essays. Using a statistically significant sample of 500 essays, trained raters evaluated blindly and holistically “before” essays (submitted in the course of the semester for a grade) and “after” essays (submitted as part of the portfolio). The results of the macro-study were that on a 6-point scale, ratings:

- Improved for more than 46% of subjects;
- Stayed the same for 28%;
- Declined for 26%.

The distribution of scores (a maximum of 12 points for two readers) shows that students in the middle portion of the scale made the greatest gains.



We then conducted a micro-study of 20 students from the original sample, focusing on how very successful and very unsuccessful revisers worked. We found that although contemporary composition pedagogy focuses on global revision, the most successful revisers in our group actually made a large number of small, but important meaning-altering changes over

the course of repeated revisions. In light of this information, we altered the way we teach revision to put less emphasis on global revision and to focus sequentially on revision issues through a larger number of iterations; the ease of uploading each document in <emma> makes this a simple process. Statistics gathered through <emma> show a sharp rise in the average number of documents submitted per student between 2006 and 2009, at the very least suggesting that students are now doing more drafts and revisions.

While we have been able already to **use assessment results** of student revision **to inform teaching practices, and curriculum development and revision**, the project is still ongoing; our next project is to study the effect of the electronic portfolio as a context on the quality of student revision. This will allow us to coach students to revise more effectively for the capstone portfolio.

#### 4b. Electronic Portfolio Assessment

In 2009-2010, the FYC Program partnered with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to assess directly FYC electronic portfolios; we developed a rubric based on FYC Program Goals and the USG BOR Learning Outcomes in General Education for Written Communication, and the <emma> development team created a streamlined interface for collecting the data. As a part of grading student portfolios at the end of each semester, each teacher rates every portfolio on 6 learning outcomes according to a 4-point scale. The criteria are: writing process; revision process; critical thinking; sense of voice; audience and genre; and conventions and documentation.

We have studied the data for 6 semesters now. In general, FYC students have scored well on all six measures, averaging around 2.68-3.17 out of 4 points. From the chart below, it is evident that students score more highly in English 1102 than in 1101 and that they score highest in Writing Process and lowest in Conventions and Documentation. This assessment piece allows us not only to chart general trends in improvement and to compare achievement in learning outcomes across the program's two-course sequence, but also to chart micro-

trends—for instance, the influence a simple change of textbook might have on learning outcomes.

Term	Course #	# of Rat s	Writing Proces s	Revisio n Proces s	Critical Thinking	Sense of Voice	Audience/ Genre	Conve ntions/ Docum entatio n	Grade
200808	1101	1659	2.73	2.78	2.61	2.96	2.61	2.53	83.38
200902	1101	224	2.7	2.77	2.66	3.05	2.76	2.62	80.16
200908	1101	2093	2.97	2.9	2.99	3.09	2.94	2.79	86.05
201002	1101	363	2.84	2.74	2.89	2.97	2.8	2.55	80.51
201008	1101	1550	2.5	2.75	2.68	2.97	2.61	2.63	84.08
201102	1101	156	2.96	2.91	3.16	3.18	3	2.83	83.85
		6044	2.84	2.81	2.93	3.04	2.85	2.68	82.84
200808	1102	2313	3.06	2.9	3.05	3.11	2.98	2.56	86.53
200902	1102	2644	3	2.97	3.1	3.13	3	2.82	86.48
200908	1102	1524	3.04	2.95	3.1	3.14	3	2.53	86.29
201002	1102	1710	3	2.92	3.08	3.17	2.95	2.78	86.82
201008	1102	1838	3.01	2.97	3.1	3.13	3.02	2.85	84.62
201102	1102	1451	2.99	2.91	3.05	3.1	2.95	2.78	84.95
		11560	3.02	2.94	3.06	3.13	2.96	2.84	86.28
200808		4055	2.92	2.84	2.93	3.03	2.89	2.75	84.09
200902		3049	2.97	2.95	3.08	3.13	2.98	2.98	84.98
200908		3839	3	2.92	3.04	3.11	2.96	2.5	86.11
201002		2238	2.97	2.89	3.03	3.1	2.92	2.75	83.86
201008		3578	2.91	2.88	2.96	3.06	2.85	2.76	84.55
201102		1723	2.99	2.91	3.06	3.12	2.96	2.73	84.68
		18532	2.96	2.9	3.02	3.09	2.94	2.79	84.53

Aggregate numbers tell only so much, however; we are now engaged in a micro-study of individual electronic portfolios in order to understand the role the portfolio context plays in our assessment numbers and to refine further our portfolio pedagogy. With <emma> and electronic portfolios as the basis of FYC pedagogy, our program engages students, teachers, and administrators in a productive feedback loop that allows us continually to innovate, assess, and revise the writing curriculum for First-year Composition.

**S. Selected First-year Composition Publications:** Members of the program have edited two composition textbooks; these texts and peer-reviewed publications resulting from FYC projects—including <emma>, electronic portfolios, online writing pedagogy, learning communities, and a study conducted with UGA Librarians concerning student citation behavior—offer further evidence of a *collective faculty effort to improve teaching and student learning* through research and *innovative technology*.

### 5a. Scholarly Essays and Articles

Desmet, Christy, Deborah Church Miller, June Griffin, Robert Cummings, and Ron Balthazor.

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Barratt, Caroline Cason, Kristin Nielsen, Christy Desmet, and Ron Balthazor. "Collaboration is Key: Librarians and Composition Instructors Analyze Student Research and Writing," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 9.1 (2009): 37-56.

Desmet, Christy, Deborah Church Miller, June Griffin, Ron Balthazor, and Robert E. Cummings. "Reflection, Revision, and Assessment in First-year Composition." *Journal of General Education* 57.1 (2008): 15-30.

Desmet, Christy, June Griffin, Sharon D. McCoy, Marcus Fechheimer, and Joe Crim. "University of Georgia." *Exploring the Evidence: Initiatives in the First Year*. Ed. Wendy G. Troxel and Marc Cutright. Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 2008. 139-44.

Desmet, Christy, Robert Cummings, Alexis Hart, and William Finlay. "Pedagogical Performances in the Online Writing Class." *Role Play: Essays on Distance Education*. Ed. Marcia Dickson and Jonathan Alexander. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2006. 21-45.

Desmet, Christy, Ron Balthazor, Robert Cummings, Alexis Hart, and Angela Mitchell. "Writing (with) XML." *Readerly/Writerly Texts* 11.1/2 and 12.1/2 (2005): 29-46.

Desmet, Christy, Ron Balthazor, Robert Cummings, Alexis Hart, and Angela Mitchell. "<emma>: Re-forming Composition with XML." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 20, supplement 1 (2005): 25-46.

Desmet, Christy, William Finlay, and Lorraine Evans. "Is It the Technology or the Teacher? A Comparison of Online and Traditional English Composition Classes." *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 31.2 (2004): 163-80.

### **5b. Composition Textbooks**

Desmet, Christy, D. Alexis Hart, and Deborah Church Miller, eds. *Prentice Hall Literature Portfolios*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006.

Desmet, Christy, Deborah Church Miller, and Kathy Houff Speak, eds. *Argument: A Prentice Hall Packet Reader*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004.