

Outside the Lines but on the Page

Perspectives on Writing in an Individualized, Writing-Intensive Baccalaureate Degree Program

Sally Nereson

*For 1991-92 CISW Grant Recipients
Archibald Leyasmeyer and Kent Warren*

**Technical Report Series
No. 6 ♦ 1994**

Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Series Editor

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THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES OF WRITING

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Preface

The program for Individualized Learning at the University of Minnesota offers students a unique opportunity to cross the boundaries of the traditional disciplinary structures in most post-secondary education. Students in the program are likely to be self-directed, bring a large measure of experiential learning, and be highly motivated about reaching their educational goals. Students enrolled in the Program for Individualized Learning (PIL) write a great deal from degree plans to major projects. Thus, PIL has been an excellent site for studying undergraduate writing.

For the 1991-92 academic year, Kent Warren, Director of PIL, and Archibald Leyasmeyer, Faculty Director of PIL, proposed to examine the expectations of and attitudes toward student writing on the part of faculty members and program staff. They also wanted to hear what students perceived as expectations about their writing and how they negotiated those expectations. Sally Nereson joined the project as a research assistant. As the following report shows, they discovered and uncovered valuable information about the important role of perceptions and expectations in student writing. To find the breadth of attitudes and expectations, the researchers surveyed members of each constituent group of PIL. The discussion and appendices chart the range of those responses. To give depth to the survey information, Nereson interviewed a number of students, faculty members, and program staff associated with PIL. She has included many portions of these conversations to let us hear their individual voices. The resulting picture shows the delicate negotiation that student writers-and all writers-must employ to meet audience expectations while maintaining personal voice, creativity, and ownership. The project shows the range of criteria that readers and writers have for what they consider good writing; it also shows where readers and writers agree on what is important in writing. Nereson

offers us an opportunity to see the ambiguous role of perceptions and attitudes about writing in the production of writing.

“Outside the Lines but on the Page” is one of fifty-seven research projects funded by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing to date. The Center annually funds research projects by University of Minnesota faculty to study the following undergraduate writing in the following areas:

- characteristics of writing across the University’s curriculum;
- status reports on students’ writing ability at the University;
- the connections between writing and learning in all fields;
- the characteristics of writing beyond the academy;
- the effects of ethnicity, race, class, and gender on writing; and
- curricular reform through writing.

We make informal reports on the findings of the research projects available in the form of technical reports. More elaborate reports and extended discussions of Center grant recipients’ work are available through our monograph series. A list of publications is included at the back of this report.

One of our goals is to disseminate the results of these research projects as broadly as possible within the University community as well as on a national level. We encourage discussion of the implications of Warren, Leyasmeyer, and Nereson’s findings. We invite you to contact the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing for information about other publications or Center activities.

Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Series Editor

Mark Olson, Editor

May 1994

Contents

Program Description	1
Methodology	2
Discussion of Survey Data	3
Preamble to Discussion of Interview Data Interviews with PIL	8
Interviews with Faculty	10
Interviews with Students	12
Curricular Outcome	15

Appendix A

Information about the Program for Individualized Learning

Appendix B

Student and Faculty Survey Questionnaires

Questionnaire response charts

Outside the Lines but on the Page

In the 1991-92 academic year, the Program for Individualized Learning (PIL) sought to find out how students felt about and managed the considerable writing demands of the program. PIL's staff was also interested in how the faculty who work with PIL students felt about student writing and what suggestions they might have as to how the program might help students approach the writing demands. This report describes a research effort funded by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing to examine the perspectives of students, faculty, and program staff on student writing.

Program Description

The Program for Individualized Learning offers students opportunities that they would not have in more traditional degree programs, and students can approach these opportunities in a number of potentially innovative ways. As the program's director has remarked, "We'll let students do just about anything they want as long as they do it very well."

Students in this program design their own degree plans. They are required to fulfill depth and breadth requirements similar to the major and distribution requirements of other undergraduate programs. One key distinction between PIL and other degree programs is that students in PIL are encouraged to incorporate prior learning and outside-the-classroom projects in their degree programs. Thus, they are likely to have highly individualized programs based in part on their own experiences and contacts they've made that lead to independent projects outside the University. So while they can and do choose from the menu of courses available at the University, students can fulfill many of their degree requirements with independent projects and courses from other institutions.

Students in PIL prepare a graduation dossier, which contains the following:

- A degree plan in which they describe how they plan to satisfy a matrix of learning objectives. This document is, on average, 35 pages long.
- A major project. This project may take one of several forms (analytic paper, an art show, a recital), but all students write a paper that describes and analyzes the learning achieved in the project. These papers are generally anywhere from 15 (in cases where the paper is augmenting a performance of some type) to 50 pages long. Some students have written book length manuscripts.
- A 25-35 page “Statement of Readiness,” in which students are asked to do the following: “[C]hronicle [their] learning and development, demonstrate command of [their] field of study, reflect on [their] style of learning, discuss both the cognitive and affective dimensions of [their] learning, and consider [their] future learning goals” (*The PIL Student Handbook 6:5*).
- Transcripts (University transcripts for course work and narrative transcripts for other projects).
- A four to six page introduction which, the handbook reminds, “will create the first impressions of the dossier ...make sure that it is written in clear, straightforward prose” (6:3).

The average time in the program is about two and a half years, and in 1991-92 there were about 160 active students. (See Appendix A for more information about the Program for Individualized Learning.)

Methodology

PIL's broad goal was to better understand its students' writing abilities and learning styles, with an eye toward developing new systems for delivering writing instruction and assistance. Research methods were selected to help us respond to questions such as:

- What are the roles of writing experience and preparation in developing writing skills?
- What are the patterns of writing problems and abilities demonstrated by students in this program?
- What strategies/writing processes do these writers use and where did they acquire them?
- What do the students feel has helped or would help them improve their writing skills?
- How do students respond to editorial assistance from program advisors and faculty?

I also felt it was important to look at student writing from the perspectives of the advisors and faculty who serve as area specialists, as well as the students. I collected data through the following devices in order to round out the picture of writing in PIL in particular and in the academic context more generally:

Survey questionnaires on writing (specifically, perspectives on what characteristics of writing are “preferred” in student work) were sent to the advisors, faculty who serve as Area Specialists for students in PIL, and all students currently in the program. The student version asks students to assess faculty preferences for student writing as well as the student's own preferences—what they'd like to see in their own writing. (See Appendix B for examples of each version of the questionnaire.)

Interviews with PIL academic advisors, the program director, and the faculty director, Faculty (Area Specialists) who routinely work with PIL students; and PIL students. Transcript of PIL advisors' sessions in which they're going over written work with students, and of information sessions in which students articulate their reasons for exploring this academic option. Advisors also taped their assessments of student applications.

Review of documents such as the *PIL Student Handbook*, many student dossiers, survey data and papers written by former and current PIL staff, and narrative transcripts prepared by University faculty and community faculty.

In this situation, not only is the topic somewhat tricky to study because of the number of contextual variables that have to be carefully examined (“[W]riting behavior, like any complex behavior, is tremendously variable and can play itself out in different ways, given different settings, tasks, materials, constraints, and moods.” Rose 237), and the somewhat private nature of the activity itself (“[S]o much of the writing process either resists reliable observation or remains altogether inaccessible to it” Brannon 13), but the ways of getting at it are mitigated by the researcher's values and interests combined with those of the program staff. Here you have a researcher who is allied more closely with humanists than, say, behaviorists or cognitivists. This alliance affects not only the selection of methods and interpretative strategies to use, but the way they are used. For example, interviews with those who read PIL students' writing as well as the writers themselves are considered crucial because I view writing as an interactive process in which a text's meaning is jointly constructed by the reader and the writer. Relying on what particular readers and writers say about their perspective on writing brings up questions about

generalizability at the same time that it enriches the increasing body of openly subjective data being collected through ethnographic and other qualitative methods.

While each of the devices described above has its own particular limitations, using them in combination—what’s known as triangulating—allows the researcher to gather plenty of data to sift through in search of point of interest and intersection. I have kept in mind that when I change the way I gather information, I change the nature of the information itself. This is the type of control that is built into qualitative research methodologies; it’s subtler than (and, I feel, preferable to) the controls used in many experimental studies. As Merriam aptly expresses it: “Valid knowledge is not that discovered by controlling for confounding variables; rather, it is that which emerges from the shared experiences of those involved in the phenomenon under investigation” (147).

Discussion of Survey Data

The survey data are simultaneously illuminating and frustrating, as is often the case with information acquired via questionnaire. Many of the responses beg for reconstruction of the questionnaire at the most and person-to-person follow-up at the least. Yet they do give a sense of what people feel are the important features of academic writing. (See Appendix B for surveys.)

We sent the “Writing Survey” to 147 faculty who have worked or are now working with PIL students; 62 faculty responded. In addition to indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with the importance of each of seventeen items (with an option to add an eighteenth item), respondents identified the five items they saw as most important. In the order of popularity, those items are:

1. Clearly developed ideas

2. Demonstration of knowledge of subject
3. Transitions between ideas
4. Good grammar
5. Thesis statement

Compare this to the PIL advisors' top three below. (To compile this list, I identified items that at least two of the four advisors marked as most important)

1. Clearly developed ideas
2. A fluent writing style
3. Student's personal voice

Sixty-two students also completed and returned the survey. The students were asked to give their perceptions of what professors and advisors would pick as the top five important elements:

1. Clearly developed ideas
2. Demonstration of knowledge of subject
3. Good grammar
4. Correct spelling
5. Good punctuation

In contrast, the students chose the following as the top five items that they themselves prefer that their writing include:

1. Demonstration of knowledge of subject
2. Clearly developed ideas
3. A fluent writing style

4. Evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool
5. Student's personal voice

First let's look at the items that rated high across respondent groups; then we'll turn our attention to the items that differed. These data seem to indicate that students would be pretty good at adjusting their writing to faculty preferences since they're pretty accurate in their assessment of what faculty consider important. The students also indicated their level of agreement with the statement, "I adjust my writing to the preferences of the faculty and advisors I'm working with." Fourteen agreed slightly, 26 agreed, and 10 agreed strongly. Five students disagreed and three strongly disagreed.

But let's take a closer look at the two items that came in high on everyone's lists: Clearly developed ideas and demonstration of knowledge of subject. There's a good possibility that the ideas students feel they've developed clearly don't come across to faculty as clearly developed. What are the characteristics of clearly developed ideas? Is it possible to convey clearly developed ideas without a fluent writing style and a good command of the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation)?

Similarly, students may feel they've demonstrated thorough knowledge of a subject, while faculty finds the demonstration lacking. Is it possible to demonstrate knowledge of a subject adequately without using outside sources, writing fluently, etc.? In fact, a faculty respondent commented in the margin by this item, "Sloppy presentation undercuts the effectiveness of the presentation and makes me think that the writer does not respect the process and/or the subject matter."

So clearly there is a need to define the range of traits present in a text, which presents clearly developed ideas, and demonstrated knowledge of subject matter. The social interactionist view of writing suggests that these traits and the devices used to achieve them are jointly arrived at by readers and writers in particular contexts such as disciplines. Again, this is why it's important to ask both sides of this transaction how they view writing.

Not surprisingly, faculty who wrote in an additional item (#18) identified that item as one they strongly agreed with. Here is a sample of those items:

- Applying research to existing disciplinary theory
- Defining the problem/issue
- Attention to the purpose and focus of given project
- Innovation
- Attention to audience
- Appropriate vocabulary
- Imagination, creativity
- Critical thinking
- Evidence of enthusiasm about topic
- Self -reflectivity on form/assumptions/rhetoric
- Overall Structure, coherence, unity
- Good organization and clear writing

Here are items the students added as desirable from professors' and advisors' points of view:

- Conventional style

- Original or progressive ideas
- Parallel sentences
- Creative thinking
- Self-expression, originality
- Professionalism
- High readability.
- Cartoons
- Enthusiasm

One student added “individuality” to item 18, but then rated it a 1, implying that professors and advisors do not like to see it. (On the side of the questionnaire asking what students prefer to see in their own writing this student added, “the right to be an individual who is not part of an academic assembly line.” He or she rated individuality 5+.)

How might the survey results change if we included some of these items on the inventory? Some of them might usurp the top scorers. Also, while it’s possible for all of these items to exist in the same document, how often do they, really? Even if we could get a number of readers to agree on how to define such things as innovation, “appropriate” vocabulary, original or progressive ideas, or enthusiasm, the presence of those characteristics doesn’t ensure a successful text unless they are joined by fluent writing, critical thinking, etc. Thus the inventory, while useful for prioritizing and comparing opinions of these groups, also serves to point out the rather daunting number of characteristics present in a well-written text and the difficulty in defining them for even one context.

Other Questions Addressed in the Survey

Objectivity: When asked about “objectivity,” all but nine faculty respondents and six students agreed to some degree that it was a desirable trait. But it would be interesting to find out the various definitions of “objectivity” and how they feel it’s best exhibited.

Evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool: Three faculty respondents left this blank and wrote in the margin that they didn’t know what it meant. Most of the other respondents (across groups) agreed to some degree that it was desirable. How exactly do you show that you’re using writing as an exploratory learning tool?

Preamble to Discussion of Interview Data

Interviewing, while not as controlled a method as the questionnaire in terms of circumscribing the possible responses, has its own problems as a method. It’s an acceptable way of gathering, in this case, people’s impressions on what shapes and influences their own writing and their feelings about writing more generally. But again, generalizability is an issue because of the limited size and relative heterogeneity of the sample, as well as the way interviewees were selected. That being noted, the responses still enlarge what we know about how people perceive writing.

What follows is a brief discussion of the selection process used for the student and faculty interviews.

Selecting Students to Interview

All PIL students received a letter inviting them to participate in this writing research project (or at least call for more information). About ten percent of the students indicated an

interest. All were interviewed. So this process relied on self-selection; as might be expected, people who have some degree of interest in writing volunteered to be interviewed.

Students were not expected to represent the typical PIL student or the typical adult returning to school or the typical anything, and we ended up with a wonderful array of students who, though by no means homogeneous, do have a few things in common:

- They are coming back to school after several years in work environments of one kind or another.
- They've experienced success with their writing in other (mostly professional) contexts.
- They're particularly articulate. (They are the [perhaps lazy] interviewer's dream-people who are able to get from the broadest, sometimes ineptly framed questions to well-stated, keen observations of their own behavior and perspectives.)

Selecting Faculty to Interview

PIL advisors provided names of faculty from a variety of disciplines who had recently worked with or were currently working with PIL students. From that list of 40-some, I randomly selected about a dozen from as many different departments. Ultimately, I interviewed faculty from Management, American Studies, Theater Arts, Vocational Training and Development, Speech Communication, Health Sciences (Nursing), and Engineering.

Again, interviewees weren't expected to represent the perspectives on writing of all of the professors in their disciplines, yet certain issues came up consistently. One might argue that similar responses to questions are more a result of the pattern and delivery of the questions than of similar perspectives among academics, but the questions were mostly open-ended and the

responses are nonetheless useful in getting a more complete sense of how people working with students in this environment evaluate writing.

Last Bit of Preamble

It's true that excerpting from interview transcripts involves removing each answer "both from its setting in the organized discourse of the interview and from the life setting of the respondent" (Mishler, 23). However, given that their original contexts are already artifice-saturated, it's a short step to dropping them inside the frames created for them here. (The original contexts are accessible on audiotape and in full transcripts.)

Although the interview discussion is divided into three categories (PIL Staff, Faculty, and Students), comments from these three groups of people often overlap and will, in fact, be interjected topically when appropriate.

Interviews with PIL Staff

When this research project began in the fall of 1991, the staff consisted of four advisors and the program director, who also advises a number of students. By the summer of 1992, the program was down to two advisors and the program director. Though the advisors have a history of working closely with students on successive drafts of the various required papers (in addition to helping the students with other aspects of the program), concessions to limited resources must be made. For instance, though students like working one-on-one with advisors on their writing and find the advisors, sometimes extensive editing very helpful, it's not practical to count on continued one-on-one writing tutorials as a strategy for developing writing skills.

However, knowing what PIL advisors look for in student writing and how they go about helping students with the considerable writing demands of the program suggests other directions we might take. Ideally, these directions would not only benefit the students, but decrease the time

the advisors need to spend editing student work. (It's not that the advisors don't enjoy or aren't highly practiced in working with students on writing, but that there's finite number of hours in a day.)

PIL advisors are, as one of the faculty interviewees described them, very student-oriented. This comes through not only in the program's structure, which encourages regular contact if not very close work between advisors and students, but in students' remarks about their advisors. From one student:

The program has far exceeded anything I could have imagined in terms of my own growth and in terms of the advisor I have. She has become more than an advisor. A friend, a comrade, she's encouraging, supportive, also very honest I came in extremely diffuse. She has gently and firmly helped me to focus.

And the advisors' remarks about students and student writing:

We don't want to admit people who we know are going to fail, for their own sake, but others we look at and say, they may have trouble most other ways they could go, but they may have a chance with us because they need the kind of personal contact and hand-holding....

One thing about the scholarly university, a student isn't allowed to ramble around in the feelings area. But I'm comfortable with that So all I can do is caution the student that it's okay by me, but as they encounter other readers.... that's kind of a dilemma. I kind of think the feelings enhance a document.

This second quote echoes the questionnaire results: PIL advisors value a student's personal voice and a fluent writing style, as do their students. The fluent writing style is seen as something that, while it would be great if students brought it with them, can be worked on during a student's time in the program. In fact, even PIL's application process allows students to revise

(with an advisor's help) and resubmit applications. This is because, as the program director describes it:

We get people at every stage of educational development. . . . [Y]ou never know the kind of experience people are going to have. A good example is a woman who had never been to college. She handed in an app[lication] that really concentrated on visual presentation rather than what she said. And how would she know? She's never been to college. She's competent, she's started her own company, but she doesn't know these rules. We're aware that people don't know the rules, and giving them feedback on their applications is a way of training them.

The idea that students deserve help in learning the university's rules and academic ways of perceiving and writing informed the development of an upper division composition course to help students navigate among different discourse communities. (The decision and the course are discussed in more detail under "Curricular Outcome," below.)

Sometimes students admitted to the program on the strength of edited applications continue to need or, in any event, rely heavily on their advisors' editing. Most of the advisors could easily identify students they had worked with, or were currently working with, whose work required extensive and repeated editing for various reasons. For example, here are some of the advisors' comments on the PIL application review form for a student whose first application had received advisor critique:

Doesn't seem to have significantly improved his essay after critique. Worrisome.

He needs to keep at his writing in many ways.

I reluctantly vote to admit, but he will have a tough time, I believe.

This student was admitted; the advisor who worked with him characterized her editing as "extensive" and commented:

By the end, I believe his dossier was more than acceptable, but he's a learning disabled student who developed problematic coping strategies (relying heavily on words he knew he could spell, for example).

The advisors, having watched students struggle with the program's writing demands and in some cases having struggled along with them, agree that writing skills are very important to a student's success in the program, second only to motivation. They don't necessarily feel that it is their job to bring average writers up to extraordinary, but they do feel that most of the students can improve from the level at which they started. Mainly, the advisors want to be clear with students about what's expected:

I just want them to have acceptable academic writing. When I ask people to produce an acceptable scholarly paper, I've started to ask them what they hear when I say that I don't think we can automatically assume that people understand the difference between academic writing and the writing they do out in the world.

This fits with an observation from one of the faculty interviewees:

These students have been able to go out and get some valuable experiences and come back with those experiences which, while valuable in the workplace, aren't as valuable as ways of communicating here [in the university].

Clearly, students need to get a sense of the conventions and standards attached to academic writing and how those conventions differ from the rules in other writing contexts.

As with some of the faculty and, I think, readers in general, the advisors identify sentence-level errors with weak writing, describing themselves as feeling frustrated as readers because of the errors. One of the advisors noticed that when she didn't feel engaged as a reader, she started focusing more on flaws: "[A]ll of a sudden editing, grammar, sentence structure, all those things started to matter more.... I zero in on sentence structure, when what I really want to do is help them rethink it." A faculty interviewee noted, "I often get so lost in the mechanics that I can't see the ideas."

So the challenge here is to develop strategies that are consistent with PIL's philosophy that students shouldn't be rejected from the program or abandoned in the middle of it just because they haven't instantly developed facility with the rules and conventions of their new academic discourse(s).

At the same time, the advisors' time is increasingly limited and most of the faculty, as we'll see below, also has little time-and in some cases, inclination—to work on improving students' writing skills.

Interviews with Faculty

Many of the faculty interviewees, while they have definite ideas of what they consider to be good writing, were careful to note, with varying degrees of vehemence, that they are not writing experts:

I'm not privy to the array of writing strategies that are available, but, having said that, I'm more than willing to speculate....

[M]y expertise is in another area. Whatever they're getting on writing from me is just happenstance to my idiosyncratic approach to student performance.

I'm a lousy writer, so I'm more tolerant toward other lousy writers.... My writing style, having gone through the perverse experience of getting a Ph.D., is terribly dull. D-U-L-L.

Exclamation mark, exclamation mark.

On the other hand, most faculty advisors are confident in their ability to edit student work:

I have an undergraduate degree in English and I've written a number of books on writing, and I have very high expectations. ...I have a reputation for giving lots of feedback....

When they get [a paper] back it's totally edited.

I'm a much better editor than I am a writer.

I'm a hard editor. I'm hard on myself, too: I'll edit myself over and over.

A couple of other notes, before looking at those elements of writing that faculty feel are important in student writing:

- Based on this small sampling, it appears that writing across the curriculum is alive and well at the University of Minnesota: All of the faculty interviewed require a lot of writing from their students in several aspects of their courses, from essay exams in which students write about their knowledge to field projects in which students write about how they're applying key concepts.
- All of the faculty except one, when asked to compare the writing of PIL students to the writing of the undergraduates in their disciplines, felt that the PIL students' writing was anywhere from good, solid "B" work to exceptional. Interestingly, the one professor who felt that PIL students' writing was not as good as the average undergraduate's felt that their writing was, in fact, a lot worse. For this reason, he felt it was very time-consuming to work with PIL students, and he now restricts himself to working with one PIL student at a time.
- The faculty interviewed perceives their role in helping students with writing somewhat differently. Some are clearly very interested in working on writing issues

with students (despite the fact that none of the interviewees were from the English, Composition, or Rhetoric Departments where concern with writing would be more of a given), while some, even if they concede that it's hard to separate content from delivery/form, see themselves as focusing on content. One came up with this apt analogy:

I'm not a conditioning person. Come take tennis from me and I expect you to be able to move for an hour and be in good shape. I don't expect the person who teaches aerobics or nutrition to be able to teach you how to serve. I'll teach you how to serve, but I ain't gonna get your body in shape.

In terms of what they like (or can't stand) to see in student writing, the faculty interviewed echoed many of the same preferences as the larger group of faculty who responded to the questionnaire. But, of course, one of the big advantages of the interview format is that it allows for elaboration such as the following: .

Primarily, I'm looking for clarity and persuasiveness. Is your argument clear and persuasive? If it's interesting, my God, that's frosting on the cake.... So, first clarity. No, first, is it proper. Is there a subject, predicate, that sort of thing. Then is it clear. Then is it convincing?

Students don't know how to organize information.

Most of the student writing that I read, they're factually correct, but they are expressively hard to follow or understand.

In addition, the faculty interviewees remarked on an issue that the questionnaire didn't address sufficiently. The way a document is put together, its format, is important to all of the faculty interviewed. They mentioned concerns with white space, headings, and subheadings. Some of their comments:

A well-presented document with mediocre content would get a better grade from me than a handwritten document by Ernest Hemingway.... If I have trouble reading it, I just get frustrated and irritated and don't take the time to wrestle with it.

I'm a firm believer that a good idea badly presented is a bad idea.

I need to know where I am at all times. That takes form in both the physical format... the physical format keeps me organized, and the intellectual content of the writing keeps me organized.

Oh yeah, image. Orderly, neat. As I get older and have more difficulty reading, I like to have more spaces.

Format would seem to be easier to "teach" than more elusive elements such as clearly developed ideas or fluent writing style. Making the organization of clear thoughts visible with headings and other formatting devices is certainly a positive objective. But how much point is there in formatting pages of ideas that aren't well developed or fluently expressed in the first place?

Interviews with Students

When talking about PIL students, one faculty interviewee remarked, "I think it takes a very special person to be successful in PIL.... I think writing's a stopper. In PIL, you're almost talking graduate-level work." And another faculty member said, "These students are rich in ideas and rich in experience relative to their more traditional counterparts. If you can help them write, they ought to be able to come up with some pretty great stuff."

Many PIL students do come up with some "pretty great stuff," although the level of greatness is, as usual, open to subjective judgment Even when faculty and PIL advisors agree on

what constitutes a strong paper, the students are sometimes their own toughest critics. One student, for example, completely rewrote his “Statement of Readiness,” a piece he had worked on extensively, because, while two of the PIL advisors and his faculty advisor said it was fine, it didn’t meet his own standards. He attributes some of his perfectionism to his former job, which required a lot of writing:

[At my former job] there was almost a dictatorial standard of excellence and achievement ...an imposed standard. I was required to be a perfectionist... So all of a sudden I’m writing academic papers again, looking at these unbelievably complicated questions and having to figure it out on my own, not settling for anything less than what I think I can do, because I couldn’t at [my former job]. I couldn’t settle for anything less.

Other students in the program say they have attempted to relax their perfectionism, mostly in recognition of the time constraints:

I still have a tendency, when I write papers, to make it more difficult for myself. Probably because my expectations are still higher than they need to be for what I’m doing. Most of the papers I write, I turn in fl1’st drafts, so they could be better... but they’re more than adequate, so I’ve gotten very expedient in my attitude.

And the following from a different student in a session with an advisor who is suggesting revisions:

It’s very hard for me to just dash this stuff off, which is kind of what’s happening, rather than being a real perfectionist about it How can you do that in 50 pages, frankly, in the life I lead. If I were a professional writer, maybe. But it’s very interesting in that, yes, I could rework these things and they would be totally different But I’m not gonna do that.

Another student interviewee expressed a knowledge of and a resistance to the type of writing required of her in this context She is formerly a successful banker and wrote a great deal in her job; she is in PIL to finish her degree, which focuses on children’ s literature. In the exchange below, my questions/prompts are bracketed.

I've been less and less willing to adapt my way of thinking to the professor's. I'm aware of what my rebellion is going to bring, and there have been a couple of papers that I've done in the last year where I expressed myself totally. ...That was risky, and the comments on the paper... it's very painful for me to read the comments. I felt totally misunderstood. ...I made a choice to do that, but it's still painful.

[You could have chosen to do it the way it was prescribed?]

I can't do that anymore.

[But you have the writing ability, the versatility to do it]

Oh, without question.

Even though the classes I'm taking are requiring logical thought, I'm finding it too restrictive. Logical thought is too restrictive for me, so I'm choosing to take the consequences. I can't deny my nature anymore....

Again, these students don't necessarily typify students in PIL, and they are dealing with very individual writing issues as a result of their previous experiences and evolving mindsets.

But these interviewees help us explore how students respond to editorial assistance from program advisors and faculty, and how previous writing experience carries over to writing in the program. They also show us a range of how people can position themselves with respect to writing.

The student interviewees, each of whom wrote anywhere from a fair amount to extensively in their various careers, also talked a lot about the differences they perceived between academic writing and writing for other purposes. They experienced different challenges in making the transition. Some felt they were more successful at it than others, but they all felt that knowing how to make adjustments was important even if, in the case of the student above, they elected not to make certain adjustments to please their academic audiences.

In addition to writing in expository forms of writing among multiple disciplines for people inside and outside the university (usually instructors who are defined as “community faculty”), PIL students have the opportunity to write in narrative forms as well. The “Statement of Readiness” (described in the “Program Description” section above) asks students to reflect on their learning, and the result often takes on a tone, style, and structure considerably different from that of the major project and other papers/projects. For many students, even those who find the other papers relatively easy to write, this is a completely new and especially challenging sort of expression. As one student says about the “Statement”:

I will probably angst over it...it's something I want to take very seriously because a lot of people I respect very much are going to read it and I want it to be good in the sense that, to some extent it's creative writing.... That's the one thing that will be as good as I can make it. It will be rewritten and edited several times.... You have the opportunity to have your personality show through far more than in any other paper you do here. It's more stressful to write it because it's more personal.

Each of the students interviewed felt that the amount and variety of writing required in PIL ultimately benefited them a great deal:

It's given a new dimension to the way I write and the way I think. To me, writing is a way of thinking. So my ways of thinking have been broadened because I've been doing different kinds of writing. I think being able to pull my life experience together for the degree pulled together fifteen years of professional work. I did that basically through writing about it. That was an essential learning experience for me-having to write about it I'd never had to... find a voice for all of this. When you're working you just work every day and there's rarely time to reflect-and rarely do you do it in writing, so I've learned a great deal.

It would be useful to interview students who were not able to complete the program, students for whom writing did prove to be “a stopper.” There are, of course, a number of reasons why students in any program don't complete their degrees, so it would be tricky to identify students who really left solely because of the writing demands. It's true that testimonials from

successful students (such as the two above) do not accurately represent the range of writing abilities and experiences of PIL students, much less any other student population, but they do shed some light on student attitudes about writing and on the strategies they use to meet the considerable and varied demands of this program.

Curricular Outcome

If one views research findings as social forces, optimally such findings should “interact with the context from which they were drawn and to which they are applied” (Merriam, 148). The main “finding” in this case is not a particularly surprising one: There’s certainly overlap in what faculty, advisors, and students feel are characteristics of good writing; but there are different views as to what constitutes achieving those characteristics and how much room there is in doing so, given not only the broader requirements of the institution but the narrower and more various requirements of different disciplines. Then, too, there are students who are more concerned with satisfying their own notions of good writing, regardless of how those notions match up with their academic or faculty advisors, notions of good writing. Even in disciplines where the rules for written communication seem particularly stringent, there’s a range of what’s considered good writing. The trick is to determine that range in various writing contexts—academic and nonacademic—and use strategies to make adjustments to get somewhere inside that range or negotiate paths on which to stray outside that range—outside the lines, but on the page.

Awareness of these writing issues may help students manage the variety of writing tasks required by PIL. As a result of the study, we designed an experimental composition course with the objective of exploring the writing issues raised in the study through the students’ own writing in progress. The course, which emphasizes strategies for communicating effectively among

discourse communities with varying standards and conventions (hence its title: “Navigating Among the Disciplines”) is being offered winter and spring quarters in 1993 and again in spring quarter 1994.

At this point, the course is planned as follows: It will meet once a week for two and a half hours. Each session will include discussion of a particular characteristic of writing (via assigned readings), some in-class writing, and, in at least a couple of the meetings, a guest speaker—either a faculty member who is willing to discuss what he or she looks for in student work or someone from a nonacademic setting who will compare the writing he or she did at this institution to the writing he or she does professionally.

The readings will be chosen to illustrate a particular form of writing within a particular discipline, with some articles discussing the forms of writing themselves. In addition, participants will focus on a “highly desirable” characteristic of writing (as identified through the questionnaire or a variation of it designed specifically for the course) during each class meeting. For example, we’ll look at what’s involved in demonstrating “clearly developed ideas” in the various discourse communities the participants write for.

Students in PIL are working on papers in their areas of study as well as papers reflecting on their personal growth as they work on their individualized degrees (the “Statement of Readiness”). Ideally, students will work with these pieces throughout the course, periodically exchanging drafts with peers in order to interact with issues of persona (or “multiple selves”), audience (or “multiple audiences”), etc. The “course-specific” writing will involve keeping a journal in which, for example, students look at their own literacy histories, the discourse

communities they interact in (and want to interact in), and how the various strategies we examine in class work for them.

We will also discuss and remain aware of the various components at work in any teaching-learning transaction, as identified by Brookfield: “[A]vailable resources, the political ethos of the institution, the educator’s personal philosophy of training or education, the expectations of [students], and the different personalities of instructors, participants, administrators, and ancillary staff...” (198).

It’s too early to assess the results of such a course on student writing in the program, but we are optimistic that participants will come away with a larger, richer sense of what’s involved in making meaning in various contexts as well as specific strategies to improve their own writing. Although the course’s initial design revolves around the needs of students in PIL, it could easily be adapted for other groups of students. Any student in any major could benefit from a better understanding of how writing functions in varied environments.

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Appendix A

Information about the Program for Individualized Learning

Program for Individualized Learning University of Minnesota 1990-92

Admission

Students who seek out the Program for Individualized Learning often are those who challenge the boundaries of traditional programs, who have substantial experiential learning, who want to set their own educational priorities, and who prefer a self-directed learning style.

Accepting the challenges of our individualized degree program takes special qualities. You need to have a strong sense of your educational goals, the ability to think independently, good writing skills, and self-motivation.

Our application for admission attempts to assess these qualities while it also asks you to think through your objectives. Applications are accepted throughout the year; deadlines for each quarter fall approximately six weeks before the start of classes.

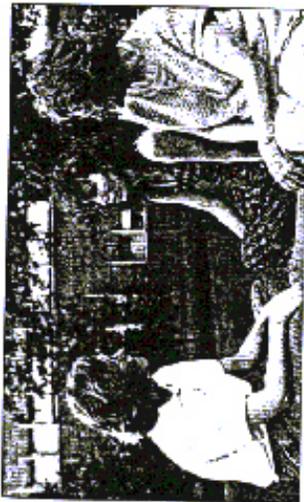
If you are ready to think about education in new ways, we encourage you to investigate PIL. For more information about the Program for Individualized Learning, read the *University College Bulletin*. Then, if you think the program might satisfy your needs, arrange to attend one of our information meetings. These small, informal sessions are scheduled two or three times a week to give prospective students an opportunity to find out more about our program and other individualized and alternative degree options.

For More Information

To request a *University College Bulletin* or to sign up for an information meeting, contact our office:

Program for Individualized Learning
University of Minnesota
201 Westbank Hall
77 Pleasant Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612/624-4020

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, handicap, age, veteran status, or sexual orientation.



Students

PIL students are typically older than the average undergraduate and often have extensive professional experience and knowledge. Their average age is 36, with a range from 19 to 69. Most work full or part time and have family and community responsibilities.

Graduates generally report a high level of satisfaction with their PIL degree programs. A recent survey of PIL graduates found that over 40 percent have gone on to graduate or professional school, and 73 percent are employed in positions related to their undergraduate field of study. Fully 75 percent indicated they were "very satisfied" with their degree program and another 21 percent were "satisfied".

Some commented on their PIL experience:

To finish one's degree as I did...in my own time together with a job, and with such close, helpful supervision...it itself was a satisfying experience. The end result was a feeling of self-awareness as well as a stronger awareness of the world around me.

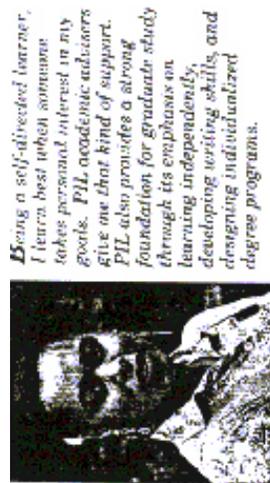
PIL helped me develop broader methods of thinking and analyzing situations

I was and still am grateful that PIL existed as an option for a person like me. I had been in and out of college and in a few different jobs. It was great that I could put that all together into a coherent degree plan.

Research techniques and writing skills developed in PIL were important when I applied to graduate school.

I feel better about myself for having the self-discipline to work my way through the PIL program. It gave me a real feeling that I could do anything I really set my mind to. It also made me hungry for more knowledge.





Being a self-directed learner, I learn best when someone takes personal interest in my work. PIL academic advisors give me that kind of support. PIL also provides a strong foundation for graduate study through its emphasis on learning independently, developing writing skills, and designing individualized degree programs.

— Constance Warren, B.S. candidate in Behavioral Genetics

An Individualized Degree

The Program for Individualized Learning (PIL) was created to help intellectually independent, self-motivated learners achieve their personal educational goals. This University College program serves students whose educational objectives cannot be met by existing degree programs. It provides a friendly, supportive atmosphere more typical of a small college than a large university.

Founded in 1971 as the University Without Walls, PIL offers you the opportunity to design an individualized bachelor of arts (B.A.) or bachelor of science (B.S.) degree program that draws upon the extensive resources of the University of Minnesota, as well as upon learning experiences in other settings.

PIL combines flexibility with insistence on high academic quality. In designing your program, you may blend several disciplines, cross college boundaries, or focus on a specialized area of study. Close collaboration with a faculty adviser and a PIL academic adviser ensures that your program is academically sound. Recent degree titles include Environmental Studies and Public Policy, American Social Movements, Theoretical Physics, and Psychology with an Emphasis on Families and Children.

Program Structure

The framework for developing an individualized program within PIL is composed of a set of graduation criteria. In your area, you develop familiarity with the field's basic literature and vocabulary, knowledge of its main theories and methods of investigation, and awareness of its place in society.

In the liberal arts, you complete learning in the social sciences, humanities, arts, and science and technology. Your studies also incorporate knowledge of other cultures, understanding of historical and geographic perspectives, familiarity with primary texts, and skill in written and spoken English.

After admission, you move through three stages. First, you prepare your degree plan, describing your area of study and proposed learning activities. Once your plan is approved, you carry out these activities. Your educational experience in PIL concludes with a graduation process that asks you to demonstrate the learning you have gained and to reflect on its meaning.



One moment I was taking courses on campus and through correspondence, preparing to take my securities license exam, and studying Chinese. The next moment I found myself in Taiwan working for a local investment house. The theories I had learned in the classrooms were sometimes reinforced, sometimes discarded, but always more alive.

— Craig Harry, B.S. candidate in Investment Analysis with Emphasis on Asia



To me, the Celts have always been an enigma and their influence on Western civilization has long fascinated me. Through PIL, I can gain the knowledge I seek about the Celts and earn a degree in the process. PIL lets me design my own degree program and meet my personal and family obligations while learning in my own way and at my own pace.

— Fran Prusauner, B.A. candidate in Celtic Heritage

Learning Activities

Typically, PIL students create degree plans that mix learning from the past with new educational activities. You may take courses from the University and transfer credits from other accredited institutions. You may work with University faculty on independent study projects or seek assistance and evaluations from community experts. Independent projects may be based on work-related efforts, community service, internships, international travel and study, intercultural experiences, or other learning activities.

Faculty Advisers

As a PIL student, you work closely with an area specialist who helps you develop and complete your degree plan. Faculty from throughout the University work with PIL students as area specialists and as advisers on independent study projects. Students may also contact faculty from other institutions and experts from the community for help with projects.

Area specialists currently come from 44 departments and 11 colleges, ranging from the College of Liberal Arts to the College of Veterinary Medicine. Working with PIL students gives these faculty members an opportunity to experiment with creative approaches to education and help develop innovative curricula.

Academic Advisers

Every PIL student has an academic adviser from our staff who provides guidance from admission to graduation. Your adviser helps you develop educational goals, design learning strategies, and identify University and community resources. In addition, academic advisers teach learning skills such as degree planning, independent project design, and reflective analysis.



Appendix B
Student and Faculty Survey Questionnaires
Questionnaires Response Charts

Student Survey

Program for Individualized Learning

Writing Survey

This survey asks you to consider two separate perspectives in relation to the writing you do in college: 1) that of the faculty and advisors you work with, and 2) your own. As you complete the survey, please think in terms of what's true of *most* of the writing you do in the Program for Individualized Learning.

Use this scale to circle the number that best reflects your response:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 0 = Does Not Apply | 3 = Slightly Agree |
| 1 = Strongly Disagree | 4 = Agree |
| 2 = Disagree | 5 = Strongly Agree |

When they read student writing, *professors and advisors* prefer to see . . .

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. correct spelling | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. clearly developed ideas | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. the use of outside sources | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. good grammar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. objectivity | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. students drawing from their own experience | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. proper format | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. many quotations | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. students' personal voice | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. thesis statements | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. the inclusion of students' beliefs and values | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. good punctuation | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. transitions between ideas | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. student opinions | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. a fluent writing style | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. demonstration of knowledge of subject | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. other: _____ | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please highlight the five items on the list you think *professors and advisors* see as most important.

Use this scale to circle the number that best reflects your response:

- 0 = Does Not Apply
 1 = Strongly Disagree
 2 = Disagree
 3 = Slightly Agree
 4 = Agree
 5 = Strongly Agree

When I write in the Program for Individualized Learning, I would prefer that my writing included...

1. a fluent writing style	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. good punctuation	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. my own opinions	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. objectivity	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. good grammar	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. use of outside sources	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. evidence of my using writing as an exploratory learning tool	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. many quotations	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. thesis statements	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. my own personal voice	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. demonstration of my knowledge of a subject	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. transitions between ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. my own experience	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. correct spelling	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. a discussion of my beliefs and values	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. clearly developed ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. proper format	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. other: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5

Please highlight the five items on the list that are most important to you.

Please circle the response that best fits the following statement: I adjust my writing to the preferences of the faculty and advisors I'm working with.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Thank you for your help. Please return this survey to Sally Nereson at the PIL Office (201 Westbrook) by **January 31, 1992.**

Student Survey Side 1
Writing Survey Returns, Results and Comments

When they read student writing, professors and advisors prefer to see...

#	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. correct spelling	0/0	0/0	0/0	3/0	18/1	41/21
2. clearly developed ideas	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	18/10	45/34
3. the use of outside sources	1(?)/0	0/0	0/0	16/1	28/6	18/8
4. good grammar	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	27/5	33/22
5. objectivity	1/0	0/0	9/0	20/2	23/4	9/4
6. students drawing from their own experience	0/0	4/0	6/0	17/0	20/5	15/8
7. proper format	2/0	0/0	1/0	17/1	30/9	14/9
8. many quotations	2/0	3/0	21/0	31/1	5/0	1/0
9. students' personal voice	0/0	4/0	12/0	17/0	21/0	8/1
10. thesis statement	4/0	2/0	1/0	22/1	22/2	12/4
11. the inclusion of students' beliefs and values	0/0	8/0	12/0	18/0	18/3	6/4
12. good punctuation	0/0	0/0	0/0	6/0	26/1	31/14
13. evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool	0/0	1/0	7/0	19/1	19/4	16/9
14. transitions between ideas	0/0	0/0	1/0	14/1	31/6	17/6
15. student opinions	0/0	2/0	18/0	25/0	14/0	3/0
16. a fluent writing style	1/0	1/0	0/0	9/0	27/6	24/9
17. demonstration of knowledge of subject	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	14/5	47/32
18. other	0/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	6/1	3/2

Items listed for the "other" category:

- individuality
- conventional style
- original ideas or progressive ideas
- parallel sentences
- creative thinking

self-expression, originality
 professionalism
 industry specific language
 very readable
 cartoons
 enthusiasm

Other comments written in margins:

1. correct spelling
 Only in my final draft.
2. clearly developed ideas
 Not student's ideas, there must be scientific proof.
12. good punctuation
 Only in my final draft
14. transitions between ideas
 Other academic ideas, not your own
16. a fluent writing style
 Be dry.

Other comments:

The name PIL should be changed to PAL. Program for Academic (formalistic, conventional) Learning. Individuality is not encouraged.

In my experience there is a difference between advisers and professors.

There is not necessarily a category that includes professors and advisors.

Student Survey Side 2
Writing Survey Returns, Results and Comments

When I write in the Program for Individualized Learning, I would prefer that my writing included...

#	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. correct spelling	0/0	0/0	0/0	14/0	26/1	33/5
2. clearly developed ideas	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	14/7	50/40
3. the use of outside sources	0/0	1/0	2/0	11/0	35/2	15/7
4. good grammar	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	27/1	34/13
5. objectivity	1/0	1/0	4/0	14/0	23/2	20/7
6. students drawing from their own experience	0/0	1/0	3/0	14/0	25/1	20/5
7. proper format	1/0	1/0	2/0	14/0	26/0	18/5
8. many quotations	0/0	10/0	16/0	29/0	8/0	1/0
9. students' personal voice	0/0	3/0	6/0	15/0	19/2	21/15
10. thesis statement	3/0	2/0	6/1	20/0	18/0	10/4
11. the inclusion of students' beliefs and values	2/0	3/0	5/0	22/0	21/3	10/6
12. * good punctuation	0/0	0/0	0/0	4/0	28/0	30/4
13. evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool	2/0	1/0	1/0	11/0	21/7	27/22
14. transitions between ideas	0/0	0/0	1/0	8/0	26/5	27/10
15. student opinions	0/0	1/0	3/0	15/0	25/1	17/5
16. a fluent writing style	0/0	0/0	0/0	6/1	14/7	44/33
17. demonstration of knowledge of subject	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	9/4	54/44
18. other	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	8/3
19. I adjust my writing to the preferences of the faculty and advisors I'm working with	0/0	3/0	5/0	14/0	26/0	10/0

Items listed for the "other" category:

respect for materials and sources
 the right to be an individual that is not part of an academic assembly line!
 original ideas if or when I have any or progressive ideas in general
 independent thinking
 creative thinking
 originality
 professionalism
 appropriate style for subject matter
 industry specific language

Other comments written in margins:

5. objectivity
 depends on purpose of writing

15. student opinions
 depends on purpose of writing

16. a fluent writing style
 includes many of these

17. demonstration of knowledge of subject

These two (industry specific language and number 17) are related and inseparable

19. I adjust my writing to the preferences of the faculty and advisors I'm working with
 I am learning to do this now that I understand what PIL wants. I am squelching all my individuality, creativity, and theories so
 that I can finish PIL, arise, and be me again.
 am willing to but haven't found that the need arose
 One must consider one's audience when writing—I would also adjust my voice were it for my peers, strangers, young folks,
 old folks, etc.

The professors/advisors prefer an academically correct style vs. the business/professional style I work with daily.
 Writing for your audience.

Other comments:

In all fairness, let me say that I need to improve the academic level of some projects.

Do you mean what I think is important in writing? For PIL?

Most of what I write is technical in nature.

Faculty and Advisor Survey

Program for Individualized Learning

Writing Survey

This survey asks you to consider your perspectives in relation to the student writing you review. Please think in terms of what's true of *most* of the writing you see from those students whom you work with through the Program for Individualized Learning, and feel free to add remarks in the margins.

Use this scale to circle the number that best reflects your response:

0 = Does Not Apply	3 = Slightly Agree
1 = Strongly Disagree	4 = Agree
2 = Disagree	5 = Strongly Agree

When you read student writing, you prefer to see . . .

1. correct spelling	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. clearly developed ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. the use of outside sources	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. good grammar	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. objectivity	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. students drawing from their own experience	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. proper format	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. many quotations	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. students' personal voice	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. thesis statements	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. the inclusion of students' beliefs and values	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. good punctuation	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. transitions between ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. student opinions	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. a fluent writing style	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. demonstration of knowledge of subject	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. other: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5

Please highlight the five items on the list you see as most important.

Please return this survey to Sally Nereson, 201 Wesbrook Hall, by *January 17, 1992*. Thanks.

FAC
 Writing Survey Returns, Results and Comments
 Number of surveys sent: 147 Number returned: 62?

Note: The first number indicates how many faculty circled that item. The second figure indicates the number of faculty highlighting that item as one the five most important on the list.

When you read student writing you prefer to see...

#	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. correct spelling	0/0	0/0	2/0	8/0	19/0	34/7
2. clearly developed ideas	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	8/4	56/40
3. the use of outside sources	5/0	0/0	2/0	10/0	27/2	18/6
4. good grammar	1/0	1(?)0	1/0	4/1	22/1	33/15
5. objectivity	7/0	0/0	2/0	11/0	19/1	19/9
6. students drawing from their own experiences	3/0	0/0	6/0	13/0	21/4	18/5
7. proper format	1/0	0/0	3/0	18/0	28/0	14/5
8. many quotations	2/0	5/0	26/0	25/0	4/0	0/0
9. students' personal voice	4/0	4/0	6/0	14/1	23/1	12/3
10. thesis statement	3/0	0/0	4/0	14/0	21/1	17/12
11. the inclusion of students' beliefs and values	2/0	2/0	5/0	21/1	21/4	9/2
12. good punctuation	1/0	0/0	2/1	14/0	19/0	26/8
13. evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool	4/0	2/0	2/0	12/0	20/4	18/7
14. transitions between ideas	0/0	0/0	0/0	7/1	26/4	28/17
15. student opinions	1/0	1/0	6/0	28/0	17/0	8/2
16. fluent writing style	0/0	0/0	2/0	12/1	32/5	18/7
17. demonstration of knowledge of subject	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	18/7	44/27
18. other	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/2	11/4

Items lists for the "other" category:

Applying research to existing disciplinary theory (commented "How could you leave out this essential?")

Defining the problem/issue
 Attention to the purpose and focus of given project.
 Innovativeness
 Attention to audience
 Appropriate vocabulary
 Imagination, creativity
 Critical thinking
 Evidence of enthusiasm about topic
 Self-reflectivity on form/assumptions/rhetoric
 Overall structure, coherence, unity
 Organization
 Awareness of putative audience
 Good organization and clear writing
 Evidence that they have some familiarity with the design literature

Other comment written in margins:

1. correct spelling
Particularly with ubiquity of word processing.
2. clearly developed ideas
No comments
3. the use of outside sources
May not apply, can't easily define through key matter.
Depends on nature of paper.
Depends
4. good grammar
May not apply, can't easily define through key matter.
5. objectivity
I'd prefer to call it "neutrality"
May not apply, can't easily define through key matter.
Depends upon the subject.
Yes, when reviewing other's works, but no when interpreting those works.
Depends on the type of writing.
Depends

6. students drawing from their own experience
They don't have much in my field.
When appropriate
Depends
Especially interesting
7. proper format
According to programs guidelines
Depends on nature of paper.
8. many quotations
Prefer paraphrase
An easy way of including sources without necessarily understanding the subject.
9. students' personal voice
Depends
Depends on the type of writing
Depends
10. thesis statement
Depends on the type of writing
11. the inclusion of students' beliefs and values
Depends on the beliefs, but rated values as a 4
Identified as such if possible
Student opinions, drawing from own experience
Depends on the type of writing
Depends
Unless called for
12. good punctuation
May not apply, can't easily define through key matter
Is this separate from good grammar?
The meaning must be clear
13. evidence of students using writing as an exploratory learning tool
Not sure what this means (didn't rate)
At this stage of their career and for technical writing this should not be evident

14. transitions between ideas
No comments
15. student opinions
Unless informed they are pretty awful
Depends on the type of writing
Depends
16. a fluent writing style
As can be expected, this will vary
17. demonstration of knowledge of subject
Sloppy presentation undercuts the effectiveness of the presentation and makes me think that the writer does not respect the process and/or the subject matter.
Depends on the type of writing
18. other
Subjectivity rated as a 4

Other comments:

Not enough information to answer form (did not complete the form at all)
I have only recently become involved with PIL, and have not reviewed any writing samples of PIL students; the above are for students generally.
Other use of Macintosh to facilitate revision process.