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THE HIGH SCHOOL/POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION TRANSITION

Challenge Paper Prepared by

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The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

I. The Context

Before proceeding to address the subject of the HS/PSE transition, I would like to provide readers with a brief contextual statement. I am a Professor of English, and last academic year I taught first-year English to a lecture class of 130 students; in a third hour tutorial I had 17 students with whom I met one hour a week, whose essays and tests I personally marked, with whom I met one hour a week. I had not taught and marked for a first-year group in over twenty years (and I found the experience shocking) since for 21 years I was a senior university administrator: from 1974-82 as Chair of English, from 1982-86 as Dean of Arts, and from 1986-1995 as Provost and Vice-President Academic, all at this institution. I bring that background to this important subject. However, hesitant to rely solely on my own experience and impressions, I have in preparing this paper consulted with colleagues who have extensive first-year teaching experience in the Departments of Classical Studies, History, Mathematics, Chemistry, and English, and also with the Dean of Education. In addition, I have had access to two relevant documents recently produced at Western: a study by our Office of Institutional Planning and Budgeting (IPB) of the "Grade Drop" (that is, the difference between OAC averages and first-year university grades at Western from 1994-94 to 1996-97 – see Appendix A); and I have also looked at a recent survey by Western's University Student's Council on professorial perceptions of the quality of the writing skills of undergraduate students (see Appendix C). Finally, I have information concerning the results of a standard first-year test (40 questions remaining constant over the period from 1978-96) which has been administered in Chemistry 20 to assess incoming students' knowledge of basic high-school chemistry. While the following comments do not pretend to be based totally on statistical evidence, they do reflect some such analysis (the IPB document) and they also reflect judgments which are firmly held by a wide cross-section of the professoriate, including myself.

II. Public Expectation: Basic Goals of University Education

It is extremely difficult to assess public expectations concerning university education. And, of course, there is no necessary correlation between the expectations of the public and those of elected politicians. Ideally, however, one would hope that the public should expect universities to graduate young women and men who are able to think coherently and logically, and to express themselves verbally, and in writing, clearly and correctly. Such graduands should also possess skills in basic numeracy, and electronic communication. Universities should *not* be expected to provide specific job *training*, except (and then only in part) in those areas designated as "professional" Schools or Faculties. But, particularly in the Arts and Social Sciences, universities do provide job *preparation* in that they offer the means for students to achieve intellectual growth and maturity which, in turn, will enable those students to undertake responsible employment upon completion of their degrees.

III. Identification of Issues

Basically, and briefly put, universities are hard pressed to fulfill these goals because, for the most part, the students entering our first year are ill-prepared to undertake university studies.

Many (a majority, in my view) do not possess rudimentary skills in reading, writing, or thinking, although I am told that those who choose courses in Mathematics are numerate. My personal experience of this past year clearly indicates, however, that one cannot assume even a moderate degree of literacy from those who *elect* to study first-year English, presumably because they think, or have been led to believe, that they are at least proficient in this subject. And universities themselves are either unable or unwilling to address the issues related to the problems of poor high-school preparation. More on the latter two points below.

IV. Factors Affecting the Non-Achievement of the Goals

A. At the Secondary School Level

At the HS level, there seems to be no consistent curriculum from school to school, and the curriculum that is in place is too loose and inconsistently taught, even in the OACs. Most students, consequently, receive poor preparation in the basics (reading, writing, mathematics), they develop poor work habits, and they possess neither powers of critical thinking nor learning skills.

Those who are more familiar with the HS system than I tell me that there are two major factors which contribute to this situation: first, many subjects such as English increasingly are not taught by subject specialists; secondly, there remains in the school system far too much emphasis, at least in Ontario, on catering to the students' sense of self-esteem *a la* the Hall-Denis Report. Finally, there is the matter of grade inflation. As indicated in Appendix A, the "grade drop" of those students who entered Western from 1993 to 1996-97, including 368 schools (all of which sent at least 10 students during that four-year period), with a total of 10,961 students, has been disconcerting to the students, to the high schools, and to the university: these students had a mean OAC average of 79.5%, and a mean first-year grade at Western of 65.3% – for a mean grade first-year grade drop of 14.2%. It is hard to believe that this situation is peculiar to Western, and one should avoid the speculation that this grade differential occurs because university professors make unreasonable demands and/or mark too severely (more on this below).

These inflated HS grades lead students, sadly, in my experience, to have expectations of themselves that they cannot possibly fulfill in their first-year courses. I provide one other piece of evidence in this regard: in the chemistry test mentioned in Part I above, the average mark from 1978 to 1996 – and I remind the reader that this test covers basic HS chemistry, with 40 questions that have remained constant over these years – has dropped from 64% in 1978 to 48% in 1996 (see Appendix B).

B. At the University Level

As the USC document (Appendix B) clearly indicated, there is considerable dissatisfaction among the professoriate with incoming year I students. Fully 91% of the 72 professors who responded to the survey disagree with the statement, "High school prepares students well for essay writing at university." 94% believe that these students do *not* have a strong grasp of the

rules of grammar, and 97% believe that they do *not* have a strong grasp of style. See also the related prose comments in Appendix C.

My experience with my own first-year tutorial students in the 1997-98 academic year is pertinent here. Of the 17 students, only 4 wrote at an acceptable level of literacy – ie. they were able to construct basic sentences and paragraphs. Most of the remaining 13 had severe problems with writing, comprehension (they made the same errors in paper after paper, even though detailed comments were made on all papers), with reading, and also with oral expression. All of these students seemed to me to be hard workers (although not efficient), and they had good attendance records in the tutorial. They were very concerned about their inadequacies, and frustrated and embarrassed by the gap between what they had been led to believe they could achieve (because of the HS grades) and their actual level of accomplishment in my tutorial.

But it is not just the secondary schools which are guilty of grade inflation. If I and my colleagues were to mark these students according to their *actual* abilities, the grade drop would be much higher than it is. But we do not do so, for a complex number of reasons, not the least of which is that Western recently adopted an invidious internal funding system which rewards Faculties and Departments financially for attracting and retaining additional students in post year-one courses. This system has ostensibly been introduced to encourage interdisciplinary teaching and course development (and strangely so, particularly at a time when students have little or no disciplinary knowledge); its actual effect has been to increase grade inflation across the university. I possess no statistical evidence for this observation, but I assure you that the matter has, for example, been openly and fully discussed by those of us who share the teaching of first-year English. The point made in such discussions is simply this: don't mark the students too honestly or we will have few students in upper years, thus losing funds and probably faculty positions. These deliberations, by the way, occur in a context in which our Departmental Honours registration has dropped 36% over the past five years, and in which students in all Faculties, wisely understanding their own deficiencies, avoid courses in which there are any essay or other writing requirements. I expect that some version of this same situation exists in all universities.

Why do not the universities attack the problem of this lack of basic skills in our year I students? The answer, simply, is money. It seems that universities are basically in denial that the problem is as severe as I have indicated. And while Western has recently invested \$200,000 in a Writing Certificate Program (an embarrassed gesture which simply restores the \$200,000 that I, as Provost, had directed to writing courses, which my successor then cut), the administration seems not to understand that such a program is only a token creation because it will involve so few of our students. Quite frankly, most universities ignore the problem because to solve it would cost huge sums of money which, administrators believe, should be spent on "relevant" areas like communications, technology, and applied science.

There is one other important reason that universities fail to address the issue of ill-prepared students and inflated OAC marks. Universities are in competition with each other for good students (ie. students with superior marks), and for high numbers of student enrolments (because they mean money). Each year, for example, there is a competition in Ontario among University Presidents as to which one will win bragging rights about the highest number of

applicants in the student pool who indicate a preference for a particular institution. In this context, naturally enough, individual universities are extremely cautious about offending their “customers,” for fear that they will lose out in this competition for presumed quality, numbers, and dollars (cf. my comments above concerning the internal competition for students at Western).

V. Priority Actions: Remedies

Despite the negative views that I have expressed, I believe that the situation does have remedies, even though I, and many of my colleagues, are rather cynical about the outcome of exercises such as this. But no amelioration will occur at either level (HS or PSE) if governments simply rely on their so-called “reforms” at the HS level, and if universities continue to ignore the most severe educational problem they have. I would, therefore, recommend *all* of the remedies that follow.

1. Grade inflation at both levels must be addressed.
2. Secondary school students must be inculcated with more realistic expectations concerning their potential achievements in first-year courses.
3. There must be much more formal and continuing liaison between the two levels: HS/PSE. Currently such liaison is minimal, and the result is that neither level knows what the other is, or should be, doing, or what the other expects.
4. There must be an increased emphasis on basics, and a consistent curriculum, at the HS level.
5. Finally, and most importantly, *all* potential university students should be given some form of tests for literacy and numeracy. If students fail these tests, university courses should be created to address the problems.

I realize that proposal #5 would be complex and costly, both for the provinces and the universities. I also am aware that this idea has been much and frequently discussed in various jurisdictions, and always, finally, rejected, precisely because of its complexity and cost. But we must face this problem, and solve it, or we will increasingly become a nation of semi-literates, with excellent computer skills, but with nothing to process that is beyond the gibberish that I encountered in the essays of my English 20 tutorial students (see Appendix D).

VII. How to Measure the Remedies

No mechanical or automatic measures are, I believe, possible. The results of implementing the suggestions in Part V will only become evident with the passing of time. But if no *real* remedies are sought, the effect will be easy enough to measure.

VIII. Conclusion

I have purposely kept this paper brief, and relatively simple in its focus and its recommendations concerning remedies. My personal experience in dealing with various

aspects of #5 above, for example, is sufficiently extensive that I could easily enough write 20 pages on that subject alone. But I have chosen to avoid such complexity for a very important reason: a project such as this usually becomes unsuccessfully bogged down because the discussion is so complex that those involved simply give up attempting to reach solutions, or they reach solutions that are so wide-ranging and extensive that they end up in bound volumes that gather dust on bookshelves. I urge those involved in the project *to keep focus and to simplify*. Some very positive results could follow.

The University of Western Ontario

First-Year Grade Drops

First-year students at Ontario universities sometimes express frustration because their first-year university grades are considerably lower than their OAC averages. At Western, we refer to the difference between these two as the "Grade Drop":

Grade Drop = the OAC average at admission less the First-Year Average at Western

Thus, if a student has an 80% OAC average, and a first-year average at Western of 65%, the Grade Drop is 15%.

At the request of Western's Provost, the Office of Institutional Planning and Budgeting recently reviewed the experience of OAC students who entered the University from 1993-94 to 1996-97. We restricted our sample to students from those schools which sent us at least 10 students during that four year period. There are 368 such schools, with 10,961 students who entered Western -- an average of 30 students per school. These 10,961 students had a mean OAC average of 79.5%, and a mean first-year grade at Western of 65.3% -- for a mean Grade Drop of 14.2%.

There was, however, considerable variation among schools in the size of the Grade Drop. As the attached table shows, we divided the 368 schools into six groups. Group 1, with 19 schools, had a Grade Drop less than 10%. Group 6, with 41 schools, had a Grade Drop greater than 18%. The other schools were in Groups 2 to 5, with Grade Drops between 10% and 18%.

The table indicates that there is very little variation in the mean OAC average among the six groups of schools, but considerable variation in the mean first-year average at Western. Thus, comparing Group 1 and Group 6, there is no significant difference in the mean OAC average (79.9% vs 79.3%), but a very significant difference of 11.6 points in the first-year average at Western (71.4% vs 59.8%).

For comparison purposes, information for each individual school is shown at the bottom of the table.

A Comparison of OAC Average To First-Year Average by Grade Drop Range OAC Entrants Between 1993-94 and 1996-97 Inclusive

INCLUDES ONLY THOSE SCHOOLS FROM WHICH A MINIMUM OF 10 STUDENTS REGISTERED AT WESTERN

Group	Grade Drop Range	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Mean OAC Average	Mean First-Year Average	Mean Grade Drop
1	Less than 10.0%	19	841	79.9	71.4	8.5
2	Between 10.0% and 11.9%	49	1,332	78.7	67.5	11.2
3	Between 12.0% and 13.9%	89	2,795	79.5	66.6	12.9
4	Between 14.0% and 15.9%	98	3,349	79.7	64.8	14.9
5	Between 16.0% and 17.9%	72	1,739	79.4	62.7	16.7
6	Greater than 18.0%	41	905	79.3	59.8	19.5
	TOTAL	368	10,961	79.5	65.3	14.2

Notes:

1. Includes only full-time, first-year OAC registrants in direct-entry Facilities between 1993-94 and 1996-97 inclusive.
2. Where possible, OAC final marks have been used. If unavailable, mid-year average was used.
3. First-year averages calculated based on final grades as of July.
4. First-year university grades of 'F' have been assigned a mark of 40%.

Quality of Writing Survey Results

Part One

Questions about the respondent to the survey

Question 1: What subject do you teach? Some participants indicated that they taught in more than one faculty.

English	18	History	11	Spanish	1
Astronomy	1	Journalism	1	Russian	1
Anthropology	6	Philosophy	3	Sociology	3
French	1	Geography	3	Psychology	8
Women's St.	1	Political Science	9	Biology	1
Kinesiology	1	Art History	2	Western Lit.	1

Question 2: What levels do you teach?

Respondents taught at all levels of undergraduate studies.

Question 3: How many essays and how many words per essay do you assign in your classes?

The answers to this question indicated no apparent pattern and were too varied to be included here.

Question 4: Are papers in your class graded by you, by a T. A. or both?

You 49 T. A. 0 Both 11

Seven professors indicated that this was dependent on the size or level of the class. For large classes either the T. A. or both the T. A. and the professor marked papers and essays but for small classes the professor did all of the marking.

Part Two

Rating scale: 1. Strongly disagree...4. Undecided...7. Strongly Agree; N/A

Question 1: High school prepares students well for essay-writing at university.

1	40%	5	4
2	27	6	0
3	24	7	0
4	4		

91% $\frac{3}{4}$

Question 2: First-year students have a strong grasp of rules of grammar.

1	62%	5	3
2	20	6	0
3	12	7	0
4	3		

94% $\frac{3}{4}$

Question 3: First-year students have a strong grasp of style.

1	46	5	0
2	34	6	0
3	17	7	0
4	3		

97% $\frac{3}{4}$

Question 4: First-year students have strong research skills.

1	27	5	5
2	24	6	0
3	29	7	0
4	16		

Question 5: Undergraduate writing improves in upper years.

1	3	5	38
2	10	6	15
3	10	7	10
4	15		

Question 6: Undergraduate research improves in upper years.

1	0	5	40
2	6	6	31
3	4	7	9
4	10		

Question 7: Students write well by graduation.

1	9	5	24
2	19	6	11
3	16	7	0
4	22		

Part Three

For the most part comments from this section have been reproduced word for word however they have not always been reproduced in full in the interest of saving space. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of people who made the same or a very similar comment.

Question 1: Over, how satisfied are you with the quality of undergraduate writing in your courses?

- most students write poorly with a few exceptions who write very well (27)
- not satisfied (25)
- large range in quality of writing with most students in the very low range (2)
- Somewhat satisfied: In general, the quality of writing is considerably lower at Western than at other universities. I lay the blame on high school 'Inglush'. UWO has no vision in terms of composition instruction.
- Public school system should be doing a better job of instilling basic English literary skills. Some of my students still can't write in complete sentences.
- Generally extremely poor. (1)
- High School has not prepared them for even the discussion of grammar.
- Very dissatisfied with about 1/3 of my 200 level students. There are some who are incapable of putting two proper sentences "back to back"
- Not very satisfied: students in both writing and English at all levels display a basic ignorance of grammar and style and logical structure of arguments. More disturbingly, many of them seem unable to improve their writing, even after time has been taken to write detailed comments on essays.
- Student writing is in a crisis. In a first-year English course of 30-40 students there are usually one or two who understand what is required in writing an essay and can accomplish the task successfully and with confidence. The rest react with dread or panic to essay assignments since they are conscious of their inadequate preparation. In an honours course with an enrollment of about 30 there may be five or six who can produce an articulate, coherent essay. As an instructor one of my biggest problems is

to deal honestly and thoroughly with students' writing problems without entirely discouraging the students.

- Overall quality is relatively weak, especially among students whose background in maths and sciences has meant that they have been asked to write very few essays at high school or here at university.
- Dismal. The quality of student writing has declined even in the past two years.
- Most problems due to confused thinking rather than poor writing skills.
- Quite well satisfied.
- Satisfactory, no change in 28 years.
- Generally satisfied, varies from year to year.
- A few are exceptional, a very few are extremely poor, most are adequate.
- Poor in the beginning but usually improves (1)
- ¼ excellent, ½ adequate, ¼ poor
- Satisfactory
- Quality is extremely uneven. Overall better than the 1970's.
- It could be better.
- Not satisfied but not surprised.
- 200's - not satisfied, 400's - reasonably so
- I think it is appalling but not their fault.

Question 2: What elements of undergraduate writing would you most like to see improved?

- all (8)
- grammar (41)
- stylistic convention
- ability to argue with subtlety
- organization of ideas (18)
- vocabulary (10)
- structure (17)
- content
- expository writing skills (1)
- spelling (16)
- research (5)
- critical thinking (7)
- punctuation (11)
- syntax (7)
- conciseness (3)
- clarity (1)
- consistency
- scholarly practice and procedure (3)
- style (11)
- developing a thesis (2)
- consistent argument
- clearly and logically expressing their thoughts (1)
- The basic problems lie at the thinking stage. A student must have understanding and insight into the subject-matter and then be able to organize that insight coherently and logically.
- the ability to properly assess other written materials and to provide their own version of this material, properly referenced
- Less dependence on spell checks. More critical approach, more carefully organized and reasoned arguments
- rewrite and revise (3)
- spell check has proved an insidious trap

Question 3: How much time do you spend instructing your students in essay writing for your class? What do you teach them? How do you teach them?

For this question, because the answers were very instructor specific, I have only included the comments that were most often repeated and those that were most interesting.

- thoroughly correct essays and exams (32)
- offer time during office hours to consult (18)
- provide clear guidelines, give out an outline (13)
- not enough time (1)
- a lot (4)
- no time (1)
- going over the most common mistakes in essay writing in class (6)
- Very little. They do not belong there if they cannot write well. When I taught Freshmen I did spend time in tutorials on writing. I have always been willing to read and mark up essays for students who wish to practice but I will not read essays being prepared for any course. Today there is too much emphasis put on "methods", "creativity", "theory" and far too little placed on logical thought, grammatically expressed in graceful prose. The comparison between honours students here and comparable ones in Ivy League schools or British Universities leaves UWO looking rather poor even though some here are as good as any other places.
- I allow "re-writes" (3)
- I have a submit-resubmit assignment (1)
- My experience has been that when students pay attention to the comments made by professors they improve.
- I teach them to read critically and evaluate arguments, to develop their own contribution to the topic, and to read widely, with special emphasis on journals.
- I expect students to have mastered these skills by the time I see them (1)
- Students are not receptive to being told how to write hence never more than 15 minutes at a time on the subject.
- Suggest students with poor writing take a writing course or take advantage of Effective Writing Program (6)

Question 4: What criteria do you use to grade papers? How does a student get an A? B? C?

This question was extremely instructor specific and I could not find any patterns or common responses whatsoever. All surveys have been retained however, and responses to this question can be viewed.

Question 5: How do you think the university should go about improving students' writing skills?

- mandatory writing course (27)
- entrance exam (21)
- essays mandatory for every class or at least more classes (9)
- lobby government to improve primary and secondary system (7)
- non-credit remedial course (6)
- no time to teach style on top of regular course material; embarrassed that we graduate students without solid writing skills
- These should be quite intensive and include critiques and analysis of samples of the students' writing - we really shouldn't need to do this at all at the university level.
- We need to put pressure on departments of education to teach the teachers these skills. Short of that, we need to have admission tests to university to weed out those who fall below a minimum standard.
- More university - wide attention should be paid to it. TA's themselves need remedial instruction
- Keep up Effective Writing Workshops (2)
- raise admission standards

- stop bleeding funds from the writing programs. acknowledge the importance of writing for science students
- the only way to improve is to write a lot
- it should be something the students pay extra for
- more resources directed to Effective Writing program (8)
- more writing courses for credit
- university wide task force on quality of writing
- test upon graduation (1)
- ban the use of multiple choice exams
- smaller classes increases the likelihood that all courses will have written components (2)
- consistency in policy, early instruction in writing
- Require instructors to assign written projects/exams. Provide more T. A. support for larger courses to assist grading
- Students should receive more instruction by professors at the first year level; courses should be writing intensive in the first two years.
- get some decent teaching at high school level
- Workshops and clinics mandatory in first year.
- Required 'writers handbook' for each discipline for majors in that discipline. Publicize to faculty the extent of plagiarized wording and encourage faculty to reject such work.
- The university greatly needs to expand its support systems through classes, workshops and individual counselling.
- professors need to take more time to improve their students' writing
- A summer pre-entrance program?
- mandatory logic course
- ask professors to give a minimum of 40% of marks to quality of expression in all faculties
- require far more reading and writing
- require a thesis of all honours students
- there should be a standard of writing adequacy established and papers that do not meet such a standard should be returned to the student for re-writing

Question 6: How do you think the University should prioritize this issue?

- High/Top (24)
- Hire more people to teach writing.
- Fund writing courses, which must be kept small.
- Very high - right after computer literacy and math skills. UWO students have to compete in a world in which well-educated Americans, Europeans, Asians and others perform far better than they do when they come in and when they leave.
- High, being able to clearly express oneself is tremendously important to success.
- Very highly, recently the university has increasingly abdicated its responsibilities to uphold standards and send out competent and qualified students. In particular, students are admitted to teachers' colleges such as Althouse without having remedied their writing problems. So how can they be expected to teach their students to write? But the university faces challenges in restoring standards: possible declining enrollments leading to loss of revenue; competition with other universities which set their standards lower (and their grades higher) etc. So 'prioritizing' this issue may be politically unpopular and require great resolve. Most students need an entirely separate on writing to raise their abilities to an undergraduate level.
- Build it into basic curriculum
- Low, those who already have the skills will do well, those who do not will fail out and not much can be done to change that.
- Should recognize teaching in its awarding of tenure and promotion to junior professors rather than focusing all of its attention on research.

Question 7: If you have other comments, please express them here.

- Good job/Good luck (7)
- Western has all but abandoned its responsibility to help students improve as writers. It is yet another example of this university discarding academic principles and standards. Effective Writing Program as is, is not enough.
- True false testing develops no writing skills. Walk in writing labs would be a nice start too.
- Nothing will be done about this. Western and the Ontario system will continue their slide toward the standards of second rate state universities in the USA. We had a chance to be like UM (Ann Arbor) but we will be like MSU (East Lansing). The provost and others congratulate themselves for doing more with less. It is a pity that some believe them.
- This survey is long overdue, and I congratulate the students' council for taking action where the administration has failed to do so. I hope the USC will vigorously follow up the survey by publishing its results and coordinating it with similar surveys elsewhere. Above all let the Ministry of Education know.
- Writing ability is a key factor in separating good from poor students, especially if they want to pursue a post-graduate program. It follows that in Arts and Social Science, this can be a critical factor in the decision whether to admit to grad school. Students should be aware of this. The quality of writing at UWO is no better and probably no worse than most other N. American universities.
- The problem of plagiarism, especially disguised plagiarism, has to be taken seriously, not just as an issue of honesty but as a matter of more effective writing. Such essays are usually dreadful to decipher, as well as dishonest efforts. Students who need the most help don't pay attention to comments.
- This is something that students should work on, on their own.
- make it real, do something more than the token efforts UWO is known for
- We are inheriting a problem from the secondary school system, where students are taught everything but the technical foundations of writing. As a result, students now more than ever resent being given low grades for badly written work. Grading is more time consuming, frustrating and adversarial now than ever. It is the primary cause of instructor burn out, which leads experienced profs to retreat into esoteric scholarship and turn away from teaching.
- By the time students get to university and are convinced that they know what they're doing because of the inflated marks from high school that the task of redressing the ills becomes arduous and frustrating
- I have been teaching at the university level for 37 years - I have seen a steady decline in students' language skills - unfortunately I think it is irreversible
- Our mission as an institution fails if our graduates can not demonstrate rudimentary skills when they leave - funding, recruitment etc. follow quality - presently we are not giving it.
- concerned with extent of plagiarism
- I am not thrilled about the state of undergraduate writing at UWO. A few sessions of 100+ students writing 1st year essays lead the professor to a state of depression. The mentality seems to be; "how little work can I get away with" - or "how much cheating can I get away with". Each year I dread essay time, and carry on only because of the one or two each year that display a spark. They make it worth while. Despite that view, I maintain that good writing skills are among the most important things acquired at university.
- Writing courses currently have an enrollment cap of 22 students. Because of funding cutbacks and the new University formula for distributing per-student funds, these writing classes are being transformed next year into mega classes of 150-200 students. They're hard to teach now; next year, they'll be next to impossible. The USC should be aware that the major source of writing instruction to the undergraduate student population is being effectively made useless.

Sample essay pages - 2 different papers
from Exp 20 tutorial
of T. J. Collins, 1997-98

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

relevant
work
topic
idea?

not needed

awk: entry

"medium of expression"

As defined, art is a human skill, whether in painting, poetry, music or any other artful craft. For centuries people have been capturing what is for them considered a piece of art. It is for

this reason that no one has really been able provide a concrete definition of art. In Robert Browning's poem, "Fra Lippo Lippo," the debate continues. Both the monk and the Prior are in a continuous battle as to which of their theories of art is the most correct.

Throughout the poem the nature and function of two very opposing sides is expressed through the views of the church, one as a means of tradition, the other as a means of freedom of expression.

Lippo, an orphan, struggled through the beginning of his life just trying to get by. So at first for him it was a miracle that he was offered refuge by the Prior. At first a life in the monk-hood was a way for Lippo to live without constant fear and depravity but not long after this miracle became a burden. Living on the streets became like a metaphor for Lippo.

In exchange for living a comfortable life, he lost the freedom to do what he wanted, his freedom of will. Since Lippo wasn't very good at any of the traditional monk activities such as Latin, he turned to art, something that he wanted to use as a means of expression and something that he was crafted at. He saw everything created by God as beautiful and worthy of painting, thus how it was seen.

"The beauty and the wonder and the power, the shapes

The first two lines of generalization are not really necessary. Such comments are bound to be vague and usually contentious. You could simply begin with line 5: "In etc."