
WPA SESSION ON THE
CONSULTANT/EVALUATOR PROGRAM

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San Bernardino

Harvey S. Wiener, Office of Academic Affairs,
The City University of New York

Michael Flanigan, University of Oklahoma

Harvey Wiener began the session by recounting the founding and development of the National Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA). Supported in part by an Exxon grant, the WPA has developed into an important organization in the field of writing, with its own journal, newsletter, summer conference, and consultant/evaluator (C/E) service. The presenters then distributed a brochure describing the C/E program and the "Guide to Self-Study Preceding a WPA Visit."

Ed White, director of the C/E program for WPA, reviewed the documents and described the way the program works: a campus requests a consultant/evaluation visit, two C/Es are assigned to the campus (in consultation with the campus), the campus contact sends the self-study report to the two C/Es and makes arrangements for the two-day visit, a report is sent to the campus within six weeks of the visit, the campus provides WPA with a follow-up report six months after receiving the report. Cost is minimal: a \$1,000 honorarium for each C/E plus expenses. Some support is available from the Exxon grant for campuses that are unable to meet all expenses. The C/Es are well-known faculty and administrators in the field of rhetoric and composition, selected for their ability to bring a national perspective to program evaluation and required to attend a retraining session every other year. They are thus able to combine the advantages of being both "insiders" and "outsiders."

Michael Flanigan described several of his experiences as a consultant/evaluator. He stressed that the visitors are consultants as well as evaluators, ready to assist the campus in meeting its own goals. A visit can serve as an impetus for change, but only if the campus is ready to take action.

The discussion that followed brought out many positive features of this kind of evaluation; with so much emphasis on assessment on so many campuses, it is obviously useful to be able to draw upon highly-qualified national figures in composition, functioning as part of an institution like WPA, for an informed report on a campus writing program.

Information about the WPA Consultant/Evaluator Program may be obtained from Ed White, English Department, California State University, San Bernardino, CA 92407 (714-880-5845).