

Writing across the curriculum... not the easiest topic if you don't teach English or a Gordon Rule class. Consider these suggestions from two science professors offer some basic suggestions for getting started. Learn more on Development Day!

Effective Writing Assignments: Non-Gordon Rule Courses by Emma Chow and Tcherina Duncombe

Two major concepts need to be addressed when creating a writing assignment for non-Gordon Rule courses: purpose and grading. First, the purpose should reflect the learning goals and objectives of the assignment. It should also be measurable and have clear directions. Two basic types of prompts provide an effective way to clarify instructions. *Restricted response* prompts direct all students to provide the same type information using their own words. *Extended response* prompts provide students flexibility in responding to a prompt. For example, the student may be asked to provide a position on global warming and to justify that position.

The second major concept to be addressed is the scoring or grading of the assignment. A rubric is a useful tool for documenting what the students should have learned and be able to demonstrate upon completion of the assignment. The rubric should be aligned with the requirements of the task and the stated learning goals. The values for competencies should be clearly defined. For example, the points used in the rubric should make sense and be free from bias. The format, the word count, and the expectations for an “A” paper or an “F” paper should be stated. The rubric should also specify the values of each type of skill to be demonstrated by the assignment. If partial credit is to be given, the guidelines should be specified. If the assignment is an “all or none” situation, it should also be specified in the rubric. Finally, the rubric should be given to the students in advance so that they have an overview of what is expected of them.

Well-designed prompts and rubrics create a win-win situation to the teaching and learning process in that they clearly communicate expectations to the instructor and the student. They challenge students but also inspire them to give their best effort.



Meet Emma Chow

Emma Chow has worn many hats at Palm Beach State. She began her work with the College in 2000 as both a math tutor and prep math adjunct professor, and in 2006, she joined the chemistry department as a full-time professor. Her prior experience includes teaching chemistry and earth science at a private high school for six years. Professor Chow also worked for an environmental company before her teaching career. Originally from Nicaragua, she has been in the United States for 27 years, 26 of those in Florida, and has two sons, ages seven and four.



Meet Tcherina Duncombe

Professor Tcherina Swilley Duncombe is a tenured professor I in the Biology department on the Lake Worth campus of Palm Beach State College. She teaches anatomy & physiology, microbiology, non-majors biology, and has implemented Science Foundations at the College, a course to provide academic support for our students in the sciences. She has been very active in different aspects of the college. Her committee service includes General Education Assessment, Lab Assessment, and co-chair for the Safety committee. She is president of the Palm Beach State Chapter of the National Council on Black American Affairs and has been a speaker for Black History month. Professor Duncombe has also been a Math Awareness Week presenter and judge for the prestigious Sam Budnyk Scholar Athlete Scholarship Award. She was a 2011 Travel Award recipient for the American Society of Microbiology Conference for Undergraduate Educators at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Professor Duncombe came to Palm Beach State from the School District of Palm Beach County where she served as a district

As published in *GASP! Get a Student Pondering*, offered by Palm Beach State College QEP and General Education committees, January 2014: <http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/qep/Documents/GASP-January2014.pdf>

office administrator, an assistant principal at the high school/middle school levels, and a high school science teacher. She is the proud mother of an adult son, Brandon.