

March 30, 2004

Dear XXX:

As you know, writing and reading are at the core of students' success in college and beyond. As literacy educators, we are intensely interested in learning more about students' writing and reading processes. Beginning in September, we will embark on a project designed to help us understand more about what different audiences for student writing—college professors, administrators, employers, and community members—think about think about what makes writing and reading successful.

We are writing to invite you to participate in this exciting project. Your participation in the project will involve two stages.

During the first stage, you will participate in a focus group with 5-6 other people who have an interest in successful writing and reading. During the first round of focus group meetings, we will talk together about what constitutes successful writing and reading. These focus groups will meet during September or October 2004 for two hours each.

Once focus group discussions are concluded, we (writing program administrators) will use the transcripts from them to develop a rubric that can be used to assess student portfolios from English 121, Composition II (EMU's required first-year writing course). During stage two, we will reconvene the focus groups to discuss the rubric and how it reflects earlier discussions among the focus groups. The goal of these meetings will be to develop consensus among the groups regarding the descriptors used on the rubric to assess writing and reading. During stage two, we will ask you to participate in a maximum of two, two-hour follow up meetings during November or December 2004.

Once the rubric is refined, taking into consideration focus group members' comments, instructors of English 121 will use it to assess the work of approximately 10 percent of the end-of-term portfolios submitted during the 2004-2005 academic year (n=300). The results of this assessment will inform thinking about that that course and . However, the discussions leading up to this assessment will, we believe, be as important as the results of the assessment. As EMU moves to develop required writing intensive courses across the curriculum, we anticipate developing a series of workshops for faculty based on these discussions; we also anticipate using these discussions as a basis for student programming and discussions with those who have an interest in student work both on and off campus.

We hope that you will accept this offer to participate in this exciting project. If you have questions about it or would like additional information, please contact any of us at the numbers or e-mail addresses below. We would be happy to talk more with you about any aspect of the project. We also will contact you within the next two weeks regarding questions or requirements for additional information.

Sincerely,

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