



*Department of English
Language and Literature*

To: Karra Shimabukuro
From: Chuck Paine, Professor, Associate Chair for Core Writing
Re: Observation and evaluation of your English 101 class
Date: October 25, 2013

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Paine", is written over the "From:" line of the header.

It is always a great pleasure to visit a class where students understand and appreciate they're involved with a community of learners. In the past twenty-odd years, having observed hundreds of writing teachers, I've found that I can usually tell how a section is going in the first few minutes. With your class, I could tell after just a minute that your students enjoyed coming to class and were ready to get to work. By the end of the class, I was convinced that your students were engaged in their writing and were eager to collaborate with their fellow students.

Your students feel oriented. At the beginning of class, you did a fine job of leading a plenary discussion that tied together past, present, and future—where this community of learners had been so far, what it was doing now, and where it was headed. More difficult to achieve and more important, they understood *why* they were engaging in these activities. Part of your success in this area results perhaps from the way you have helped them gain a solid understanding of the key concepts that underlie our curriculum. For instance, at the beginning of class, I noted several asked astute questions about reflection and rhetorical analysis. Understandably, they were struggling to master these concepts, but the point is that they were in fact making the effort, and they felt comfortable asking questions. You did a fine job of leading the discussion, asking leading questions and providing mini-lectures as appropriate. And your wrap-up at the end of class, too, was exceptionally clear.

You paced and varied the class exceptionally well, keeping students active and attentive. As they listened to your very brief mini-lectures, all were taking notes, and then you moved seamlessly to a plenary discussion. You had them freewrite on the Frost interview, share their ideas in small groups, and then sharing their group's findings with the entire class. They also used group work to brainstorm ideas about their upcoming interviews. In all, your class is highly interactive and engaging, so your students were actively working through ideas, and that means what they created and learned in class will stick with them.

Your students "know the drill." For instance, when you had them count off for small (two-person) group work, everyone moved quickly to their partners and got right down to work. I watched as you moved around the room, hovering and listening in on conversations, showing students that if needed you were there to offer advice, which several asked for and accepted gladly. This is no small matter. It demonstrates that you have showed them *how* to work collaboratively and *that* collaboration is rewarding. It shows that you have consistently structured classroom and outside-class work.

Because of all this, you have achieved something essential. Your students are motivated to take on the challenging assignments you give them. It was clear from your materials and what I witnessed during your class that you have succeeded in fostering these interrelated attitudes and beliefs: Your students 1) *want to write* because they have ideas they want to communicate, 2) believe that what they are learning has value and is worth their effort, and 3) understand that when they stretch toward the limits of their capacities they will be supported by you and their colleagues.

I know you are a veteran teacher, Karra, so I expected at least a pretty good class, but I was impressed far beyond my expectations.

Thank you so much for allowing me to sit in on your class. And thank you on behalf of the program and our students. We are all fortunate to have you among our faculty.