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Assignments across the Curriculum: A National Study of College Writing

Dan Melzer

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In *Assignments across the Curriculum*, Dan Melzer analyzes the rhetorical features and genres of writing assignments through the writing-to-learn and writing-in-the-disciplines perspectives. Presenting the results of his study of 2,101 writing assignments from undergraduate courses in the natural sciences, social sciences, business, and humanities in 100 postsecondary institutions in the United States, *Assignments across the Curriculum* is unique in its cross-institutional breadth and its focus on writing assignments.

The results provide a panoramic view of college writing in the United States. Melzer's framework begins with the rhetorical situations of the assignments—the purposes and audiences—and broadens to include the assignments' genres and discourse community contexts. Among his conclusions is that courses connected to a writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) initiative ask students to write more often, in a greater variety of genres, and for a greater variety of purposes and audiences than non-WAC courses do, making a compelling case for the influence of the WAC movement.

Melzer's work also reveals patterns in the rhetorical situations, genres, and discourse communities of college writing in the United States. These larger patterns are of interest to WAC practitioners working with faculty across disciplines, to writing center coordinators and tutors working with students who bring assignments from a variety of fields, to composition program administrators, to first-year writing instructors interested in preparing students for college writing, and to high school teachers attempting to bridge the gap between high school and college writing.

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