

University of Michigan Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2019 WINNER



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M-Write: Making Writing-to-Learn Pedagogies Practical and Sustainable



Innovation Description

M-Write increases learning in large enrollment introductory courses by requiring students to translate key concepts into real-life situations via writing. M-Write has made writing-to-learn pedagogies practical and sustainable by a) developing an automated peer review system that fits seamlessly into Canvas and b) training undergraduates to provide formative feedback on student writing about content. Combining technological and human resources assures that faculty can elicit student understanding of key concepts and in turn provide formative feedback—no matter the size of the course—without imposing an undue burden on their time.

To support faculty and students, M-Write created a corps of undergraduate Writing Fellows who are trained by the Sweetland Center for Writing to assist students with understanding prompts, participating in peer review, and revising drafts. They serve as liaisons between faculty and students, providing a student perspective on writing assignments, standards for evaluation, and common misperceptions of subject matter.

Through its Engaged Learning Seminar, M-Write assures that participating faculty have ample time and support to develop well-crafted assignments or writing prompts that address key concepts in their course and include three features that foster student learning: clear expectations; interactive writing processes; and meaning-making. Assignments that link course concepts to everyday issues and students' aspirations motivate them to learn and persist in their intended field of study. The Seminar also introduces faculty to research on writing to learn, to colleagues who have already used M-Write, and to the logistics of peer review and working with Writing Fellows.

Comments

Students

I liked that the process of writing out the reaction helped me to better understand how the reaction occurred.

The assignment wasn't just cold guessing--it was more reasoning/critical thinking skills that we were capable of using.

Writing Fellows

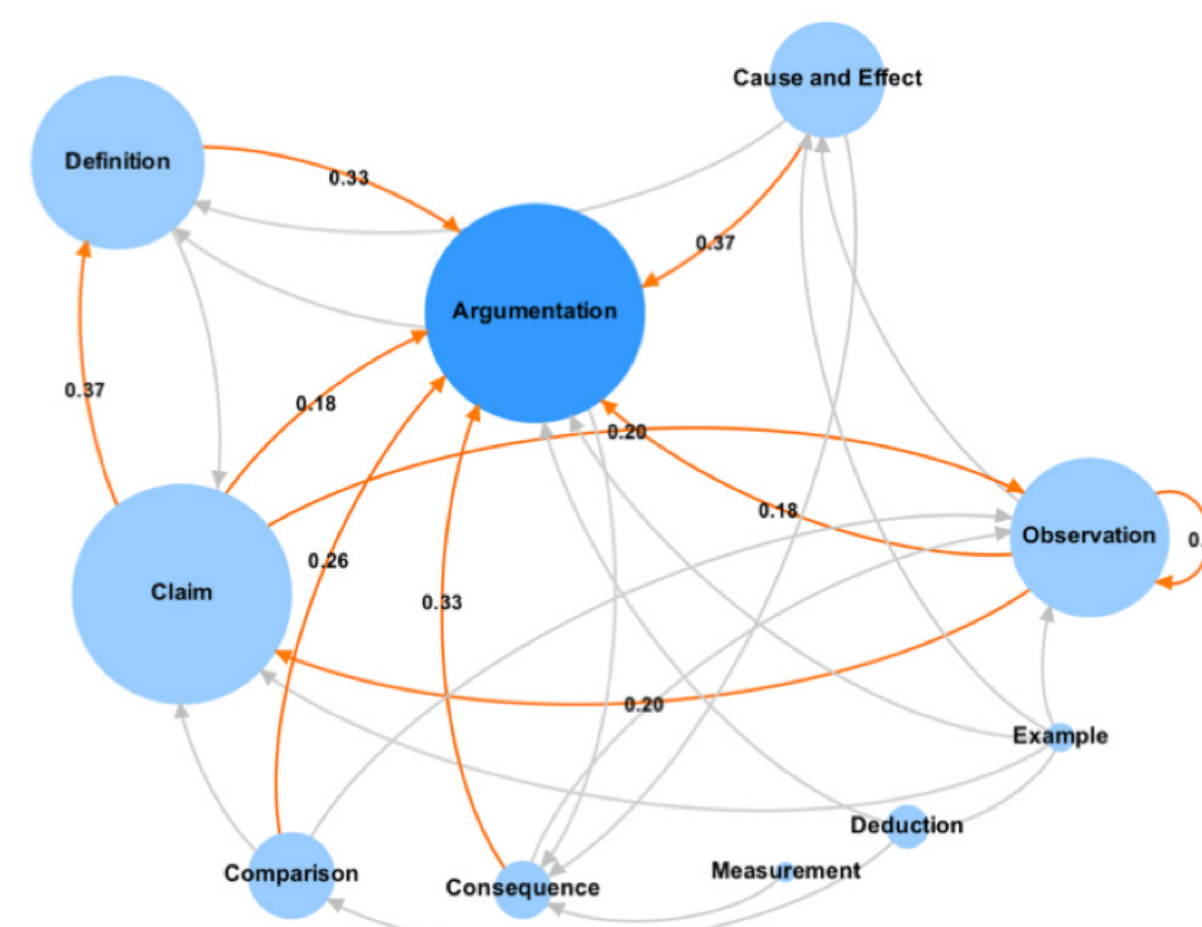
In primarily 'drill' STEM classes, where concepts and methodologies are taught through the repetition of problems and problem sets, the introduction of writing assignments offers students an additional avenue for learning the required material.

The writing assignments offered a safety net to identify if students understood the material. If a student missed a point on a 'low-stakes' writing assignment, they could clarify their understanding of the concept before a much higher-stakes test.

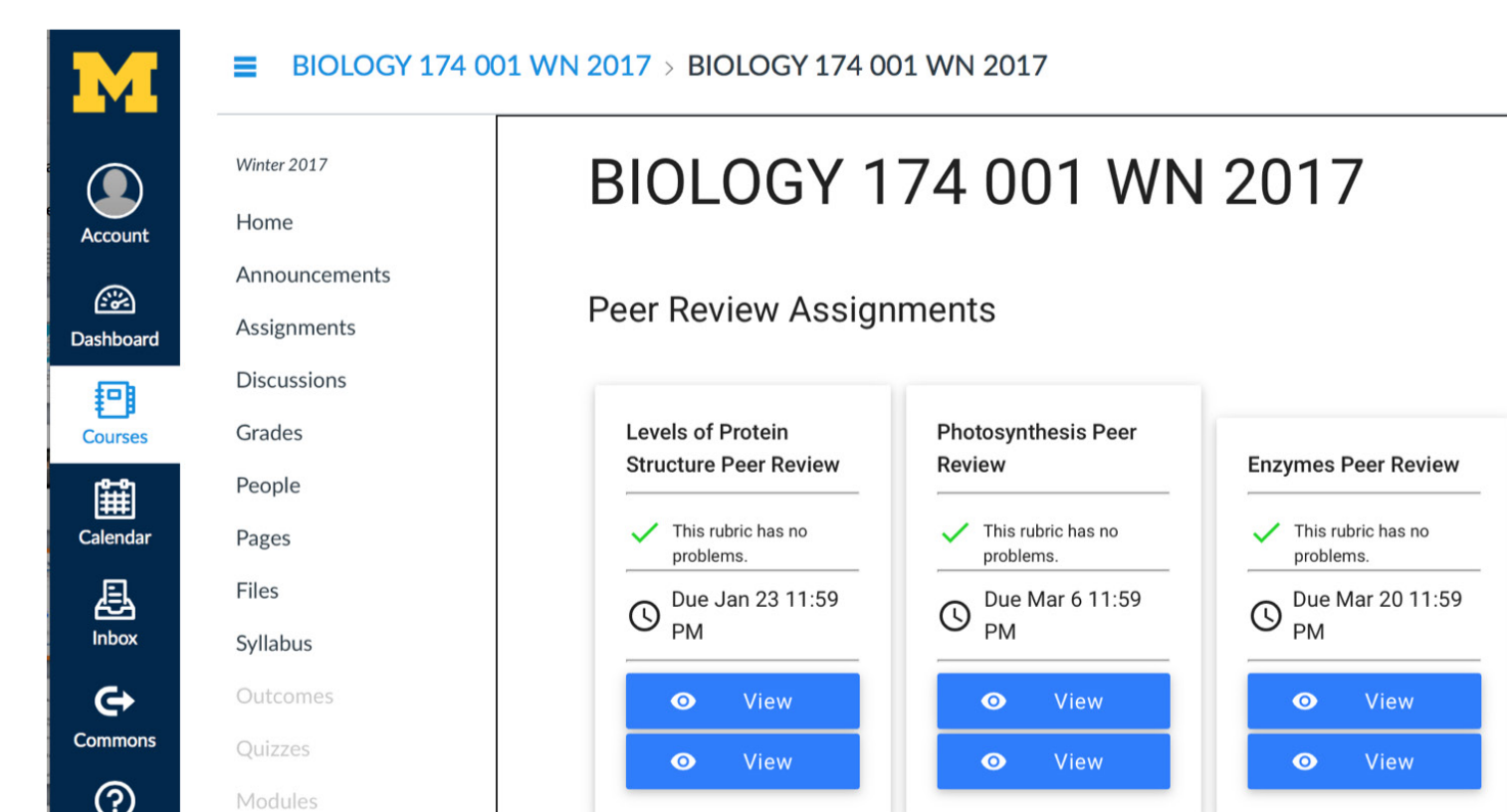
Faculty

In my first three years of teaching at UM I was completely burned out at the end of April each year. I started running MWrite in my class in my fourth year. At the end of that year I wasn't burned out. Quite the opposite: I was happy and had the energy I used to get from teaching. I fervently believe mentoring these writing fellows has been a major component to this experience. These writing fellows made me like teaching again.

Examples of Teaching Innovation



Network representation of writing moves made by M-Write students in argumentative writing with relevant transition probabilities.



Using an automated system to read their peers responses, students see new ideas and approaches while receiving content-focused comments on their own writing.



Writing Fellows for Winter 2019