Strategies for Supporting Graduate Student Writers

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The problem...

- Grad students are encountering new/unfamiliar genres
  - Many of these genres are "occluded" (Swales, 1996, 2004)
- Accessing & enacting disciplinary membership through writing/communication (Casanave & Li, 2008; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2011; Curry, 2016)
- The need for communication skills post-graduation

Additional considerations

- Attrition during the dissertation/thesis phase (Golde, 2005; Bell, 2011; Sowell, Allum, & Okahana, 2015)
- Retention/completion for underrepresented students (Bell, 2011; NCES, 2012; Sowell, Allum, & Okahana, 2015)
- URM Statistics suggest a systemic/structural issue (Madden, 2016)
- Parallel forms of oppression are reported by faculty (see e.g. Gutierrez y Muhs et al, 2012; Matthew, 2016; Grollman, n.d.)

No one's first language is academic writing.

"Academic discourse is a 'second' language to everyone, full of terminology (necessary), jargon (needless and pretentious), formal turns of phrases, and unfamiliar research methods, theories, and philosophical stances" (Casanave, 2014, p. 23).

Reflective writing...

FACULTY & ADMINISTRATORS:

- In your view, what are the biggest challenges that graduate students face in their writing?

- What else can be done to support graduate student writers at URI?

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

- What are the biggest challenges you face in writing for your graduate program/dissertation/thesis?

- What else can be done to support graduate student writers at URI?

Discussion

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

- What are the biggest challenges you face in writing for your graduate program/ dissertation/ thesis?

FACULTY & ADMINISTRATORS:

- In your view, what are the biggest challenges that graduate students face with their writing?

Discussion

- What else can be done to support graduate student writers at URI?

Supporting Graduate Writers

- Expect nonlinear growth and the need for recursive/sustained support.
- Model genre conventions and discuss with students what writing in your discipline looks like.
- Build writing process into your graduate courses.
- Craft assignments that make clear the criteria you will use to assess students' writing, and link those criteria to disciplinary expectations.
- Create frequent opportunities for students to experiment with multiple genres and to give and receive feedback on their writing.
- Don't wait for students to ask for help with their writing.

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