

CUNY ESL DISCIPLINE COUNCIL

Founded 1973

March 25, 2015

Dear Members of the CUNY English Discipline Council:

We are writing to you as co-chairs of the CUNY ESL Discipline Council and on behalf of our membership. In our meetings, the ESL representatives have been discussing language concerns raised by faculty in their respective English departments. Often, we are told, ESL and foreign students entering ENG COMP are struggling with the course material and writing. This is because many ESL and EFL (English as a Foreign language students) are still developing language proficiency, though they have tested out of ESL programs and have passed the CATW.

English program faculty, on the other hand, have also been voicing their concerns about their preparedness to teach ESL/EFL students who have more exhibited serious language needs. As a faculty teaching both ENG 1101 and ESOL courses, I personally know how challenging such classes with many ESL/EFL students can be. Similarly, second language writing researchers and scholars who teach both second language composing and native-speaker ENG composition have intensified their focus on this issue (see for example, Paul Kei Matsuda's "Writing teachers' perceptions of the presence and needs of second language writers: An institutional case study" in 2013 *Journal of Second Language Writing* 22(1), pp. 68-86). Recently, *NYS TESOL Journal* published a study on composition teachers' preparedness to teach students of ESL/EFL background based at BMCC (CUNY) (see *NYS TESOL Journal*, current issue Volume 2/1, authored by John Beaumont).

The above-mentioned challenges are not new, but there are few mechanisms in place at CUNY (or elsewhere across the USA campuses for that matter) that can address them with even a relative amount of success. The need to develop closer collaboration between composition and second language writing (SLW) teachers is even reflected in the CCCC adding a new strand on SLW with the LaGuardia CC ESL director Maria Jerskey on the committee.

Having provided the brief description of the issues, we hope that our meeting can open an exchange of experiences, ideas, concerns and possible solutions.

We both look forward to meeting you this coming Friday, March 27, 2015.

Sincerely,
ESL DC Co-chairs

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