August 20, 2015

To: All Teachers in the First-Year Composition Program

From: Michael J. Day, Director of First-Year Composition (on leave fall semester)
      Doris Macdonald, Interim Director of First-Year Composition (fall semester)

Subject: General Information and Policies

First Week Concerns

1. Official enrollment and registration: Please remind all students that they can remain in a section only if they have officially enrolled in it on MyNIU. There is no other way. Permits are not issued for closed sections. Students in English 204 must have been placed in the course by Testing Services on the basis of test scores.

   PLEASE CHECK ALL STUDENTS AGAINST OFFICIAL ROLLS AND ADVISE STUDENTS NOT OFFICIALLY ENROLLED THAT THEY MAY NOT REMAIN IN YOUR SECTION UNLESS THEY HAVE A PRINTED COURSE SCHEDULE SHOWING LATE REGISTRATION.

   PLEASE REMIND STUDENTS OF THIS POLICY:

   Add-drop procedure (Undergraduate Catalog): “For 16-week courses, students may make changes to their schedules during the first week of class through MyNIU. Courses may be dropped during the second week of the term by permission of the student’s major college, or the Academic Advising Center for students with no major college affiliation. Sixteen-week courses which are dropped by the end of the second week of classes will not appear on a student’s record. Beginning with the third week of classes of a fall or spring term, all course load reductions become withdrawals, with the exception of last-half semester courses.” Please also remind students that the deadline for withdrawal without affecting semester or cumulative GPA is the end of the eighth week of classes (Friday, October 16).

2. Class lists: Class lists are available at MyNIU.
   - Go to: http://www.niu.edu/index.shtml
   - Click on “A-Z Index” or “Quick Links”
   - Click on “MyNIU”
   - Enter your faculty user ID and NOVELL password; click “sign in”
   - Click on “Faculty Center”
   - Click on the icon for class roster, which will be in front of the course(s) listed

3. Teaching schedule changes: Please check with the director if you have any concerns about your teaching schedule. Up-to-date information will be available at 8 a.m. on Monday, the first day of classes, after necessary schedule changes have been made over the weekend.

4. First week problems: Please do not hesitate to talk with me about any problems that may arise.
Semester Concerns

5. **English 203 and 204**: Effective fall semester 2015, we no longer offer English 104 and 105. The new course numbers are 203 and 204, reflecting the move from the general writing focus of English 103 to more domain and discipline-specific writing as students prepare for majors and careers. Later in the fall semester, we will hold a series of workshops to prepare all FYComp faculty to teach these new courses. **You will be required to attend one of these workshops.**

6. **Communication is key; please stay in touch!** Because of our commitment to the university to use technology in our classes, along with our need to save time and energy, teachers in the First-Year Composition Program must have an email account and check it regularly (at least every other day). The English Department and First-Year Composition staff will use email to send important reminders and program information to you; it is your professional responsibility to read this email and respond in a timely fashion when asked. Further, all First-Year Composition teachers need to be subscribed to and be reading the FYCOMP distribution list. Accordingly, please be sure that both Eric Hoffman and Tracy Wescott have the email address of the account you check regularly. [It is the expectation of the university that you can be contacted at your NIU e-mail address, so please use it or forward it to another address.]

7. **Reporting your absence from class**: Because we are required to notify the university about all absences and their reasons, you must report your personal absences to both FYComp/Grad Office Support Specialist Tracy Wescott, 753-1607 or tracy@niu.edu, and the office administrator, Angie Dybas, 753-0612 or adybas@niu.edu. **This includes instructors and TAs who are teaching in Grant and Neptune Halls, as well as the Stevenson South Writing Center classroom.** I will be notified of the absence and, whenever possible, arrangements will be made for class coverage. **Any arrangements you make for class coverage should be approved by me.** If for any reason you need to change classrooms or ask for additional lab days, please check with Tracy.

All classes are to be held as scheduled, including those before and after holidays and mid-semester breaks. Please consult the academic calendar, [http://www.niu.edu/u_council/calendars/2015-2016/index.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/u_council/calendars/2015-2016/index.shtml) for further information. Classes must meet during finals week as scheduled by the university. Final exam schedules may be found at [http://www.reg.niu.edu/regrec/dates/finalexam.shtml](http://www.reg.niu.edu/regrec/dates/finalexam.shtml).

8. **Drug and alcohol policy**: Please remember that “NIU’s policies prohibit the possession, manufacture, use or sale of illegal drugs, narcotics or controlled substances. NIU’s Department of Public Safety is a member of the North Central Narcotics Task Force, which is designed to create a system that effectively fights the use and abuse of drugs in the community and the NIU campus. **NIU is a drug-free and alcohol-free workplace**” (go to: [http://www.hr.niu.edu/policy/PolicyView.cfm?Policy=650](http://www.hr.niu.edu/policy/PolicyView.cfm?Policy=650)).

9. **Smoke free campus**: As of July 1, 2015, NIU is a smoke free campus ([http://niu.edu/smokefree/](http://niu.edu/smokefree/)). You may not smoke or chew tobacco anywhere on campus, not even outside buildings or in your private office. Vaporizers and electronic cigarettes as well as all other tobacco delivery systems are forbidden.

10. **FERPA**: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts law prohibits us from communicating with anyone outside NIU about a student in our classes without written consent from the student. This includes parents/guardians of students who are over 18. Please familiarize yourself with NIU's faculty and staff FERPA policy by consulting the guidelines and tutorial at [http://www.niu.edu/regrec/confidentiality/ferpafaculty.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/regrec/confidentiality/ferpafaculty.shtml). The phone number to call with questions is 753-8218. For your convenience, when approached by a student or parent, you may share the consent form linked from the Program Handouts section of the FYComp Faculty Resources page, [http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/faculty_resources.shtml](http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/faculty_resources.shtml). Please keep a
signed copy of the form for your records.

11. **Grade reporting system:** You must post your final grades on the MyNIU system. All First-Year Composition faculty will also be required to turn in a printout of the grades to Tracy Wescott. As always, remember, DO NOT POST grades in any public place, or you will be violating FERPA regulations. Guidelines for determining grades, including the point/percentage scale for the new plus/minus system, can be found on the Grading handout in the Faculty Resources folder. Observe the deadline for submitting your final grades; failure to do so will cause you and your students considerable inconvenience.

12. **Plagiarism statement:** The First-Year Composition Program’s official policy on plagiarism is contained in the “Statement on Plagiarism,” also found at [http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/plag.shtml](http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/plag.shtml).

This policy statement clarifies our program mission to teach research and documentation skills. It recognizes (1) our programmatic responsibility to teach appropriate uses of resource materials in all classes; (2) our desire to incorporate into English 203 and 204 more organized instruction in appropriate quotation, paraphrase, and documentation; and (3) our students’ need to understand what constitutes academic integrity (see also the section on “Academic Integrity” in the online Undergraduate Catalog).

During the first week or so of classes, please be sure to go through the plagiarism statement with your students. You may include it in your syllabus, electronic and/or paper, or have copies of the green handout made to distribute in class. Stress to students that they need to know what plagiarism is and be aware of its consequences.

If you have a student who you think may have plagiarized, follow the Guidelines for Plagiarism, which can be found at [http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/faculty_resources.shtml](http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/faculty_resources.shtml). If you and I agree that a student has plagiarized, you should fill out the Academic Misconduct Incident Report form that is available online at [https://publicdocs.maxient.com/incidentreport.php?NorthernIllinoisUniv](https://publicdocs.maxient.com/incidentreport.php?NorthernIllinoisUniv).

13. **Submission of course syllabi:** Submit an electronic copy of each syllabus that you are using during the semester to Angie Dybas no later than **August 28, 2015**. Be sure to include all the required information (listed on the “Syllabus Requirements” handout) in your syllabus. **Note:** If you have your syllabus duplicated in the departmental office, the student workers should make an extra for our files, but please check to be sure that yours is in our files by August 28. Teaching Interns will fill in required information and submit one copy during English 600 class. Even if your syllabus is online, you still need to print it and submit it.

14. **Student archives:** For purposes of program assessment and the unlikely event of a grade appeal, student work must be collected both during the course of the semester and 4 weeks into the following semester. Such work can be collected in one of two ways:

A) Electronic: If, and only if, all student work is both submitted and graded online in the university Blackboard system, teachers may fill out an electronic archive request form to fulfill this archiving requirement.

B) Paper: In EVERY other case, teachers should collect hard-copy archives. All students are required to keep a folder of their major writing that you can review at any time during the semester. For purposes of program assessment and the unlikely event of a grade appeal, student file folders are kept by instructors in their offices until after the fourth week of the subsequent semester (excluding the summer session), at which time students may retrieve them. Please label
these stacks of folders clearly with your name, the semester, the class number, and the section number. After the twelfth week of the semester, we will provide for secure removal of remaining folders from your office. **Please remind your students to keep everything!**

15. **Awards, events, and the English major:** Familiarize yourself with the wide array of awards and events sponsored by the FYComp program at [http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/events.shtml](http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/events.shtml). Take time at the beginning of class or lab to project the URL and remind students of the multiple opportunities to gain recognition, celebrate writing, and share their achievements publicly. Encourage students who show promise in their writing, research, and critical thinking skills to consider the English major.

16. **Duplication of teaching materials:** Forms for requesting duplication of syllabi, exams, and quizzes are available in the English office, and jobs for duplication other than exams and quizzes should be deposited in the tray there. Because the tray and mailboxes are so public, exams and quizzes should be dropped off in Angie Dybas’s office for duplication. Black-on-white originals produce the best copies and should be submitted at least twenty-four hours in advance of need (2-3 work days during peak periods or for larger projects, please). Avoid using compressed letter fonts; they do not reproduce well. Also, please avoid pictures or busy graphics; they waste both space and ink. Syllabi will be duplicated on a first-come, first-served basis according to the requested date (give both date and time of day needed) as rapidly as student help can do the work. **All equipment in Reavis 214-217 is to be used by office staff only.**

**Note:** We are very concerned with ways to conserve paper and limit copying expenses. We strongly urge you to scan or request us to scan for you any handouts other than syllabi and exams. Please see the Copying and Scanning Options handout in the Faculty Resources section of the web page.

17. **Library research orientations:** All sections of ENGL 203 and 204 are required to have library orientation/research sessions. If you are teaching either of these classes, you will receive a “Library Instruction” memo with more information on procedures for ENGL 203/204 in your department mailbox. For more information about optional ENGL 103 library activities, please contact Karen Hovde, (815) 753-1770 or khovde@niu.edu.

18. **Early Alert/Student Success Program:** FYComp is one of the front lines for student retention. We encourage you to work closely with students to help them stay in school and to make appropriate referrals when necessary. This fall, all sections of ENGL 103 will again participate in a program with the Office of Student Academic Success (OSAS). Teachers of ENGL 103 will receive class lists for each 103 section during the fourth week of class. They will indicate any students not attending class or underperforming; sheets must be returned within a week. Identified students will receive a personalized letter with suggestions about support services, followed by a telephone call. Please contact Dana Gautcher, (815) 753-5721 or dana@niu.edu, if you have questions.

19. **Absence Intervention Program:** The Office of the Provost is conducting an intervention program to try to reduce student failure due to absences in ENGL 103. Report to Deb Miller, Student Success Specialist for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at (815) 753-2403 or dmill20@niu.edu, the names of all students who appear on your class roster but have not attended after teaching your first class of the second week. Absence tracking is targeted for the first few weeks of a semester only, not throughout the semester. If there are some ongoing issues with a particular student, then faculty may submit a referral through the OSAS website, [http://www.niu.edu/osas/](http://www.niu.edu/osas/).
20. **MAP-Works:** This fall, all sections of ENGL 103 will participate in a program with the Office of Student Academic Success (OSAS) called MAP-Works. We will all receive MAP-Works training on August 20. Other sections are encouraged to participate in this program as well and to use MAP-Works with your classes. It's as easy as setting aside 20 minutes on a lab day for students to fill out the survey, and periodically checking on the students in your classes. See [http://www.niu.edu/osas/MAPWorks/index.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/osas/MAPWorks/index.shtml) for more information.

21. **Individual conferences:** Research suggests that individual conferences make a big difference in students' feelings of engagement in college. I encourage you to have two or three individual conferences with your students, but I suggest that you make these conferences mandatory and substantial if you plan to cancel classes. You may replace no more than three weeks of classes with individual conferences. If you need a quiet place to hold conferences, please contact Tracy.

22. **Using films in FYComp classes:** You may use films in your classes to stimulate student writing, but please use common sense about using multiple class periods to show feature-length films. When possible, arrange for showings of required films outside class time, and use class time for discussion with video clips from the films.

23. **Course evaluations:** Because of problems with the online course evaluation process, we have returned to paper evaluations. The FYComp office support specialist and student workers will prepare your packets and notify you when they are ready. Be sure to administer these in your classes BEFORE finals week. You may not be present in the room during evaluations.

24. **Goals, outcomes, and technology guidelines:** The First-Year Composition Committee (FYCC) has adopted a set of outcomes and technology guidelines for the FYComp Program. We ask that you review these goals each semester for your use in shaping your pedagogical approaches to the classes you teach. These are meant to be descriptive, not prescriptive documents. That is, they codify what all of us want our students to be able to DO at the end of 103, 203, and 204. You may want to go through them with your students to show them the rationale for many of our activities in First-Year Composition classes, and you may also use them to guide your assessment of student work at the end of the semester. For your convenience, these goals, guidelines, and outcomes are available online at [http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/outcomes.shtml](http://www.engl.niu.edu/composition/outcomes.shtml).

25. **Reflective electronic portfolio assessment:** As part of our ongoing commitment to best practices in the assessment of student writing, students in all FYComp classes are required to submit reflective electronic portfolios for individual and program assessment. Accordingly, you should adjust your syllabus, curriculum, and assignments to incorporate student reflection and portfolio preparation starting fairly early in the semester, and devote at least two lab periods to portfolio assembly. For a rationale and overview of electronic portfolio pedagogy and assessment at NIU, please see the Portfolio Manifesto in the Faculty Resources section of the FYComp website.

   In the Fall of 2015 and Spring of 2016, every section will be required to use the Blackboard eportfolio tools, though this does not mean you cannot also use another platform. Initial training will be conducted August 20, with additional ongoing support throughout the year and upon request.

26. **Shared office guidelines:** The FYCC has adopted a set of guidelines and posted them in each shared office to help ensure that all FYComp teachers will be able to do their work in a safe, respectful atmosphere with a minimum of interruptions. Please read and follow these guidelines. **If you cannot locate your office’s copy or if it is in need of replacement, please notify Doris (fall) or Michael (spring).**
27. **Residence hall instructor classrooms**: For your convenience, an information sheet about the Neptune and Grant South residence hall labs and smart classrooms is available in the Faculty Resources section of the FYComp website. If you teach in Grant South, you will need to pick up a key for the lab and smart classroom (1 key) before classes start, and return it after classes end. You will also need to have an NIU proximity OneCard (your photo should be on the left side of the card). To pick up a key for Grant South and for all inquiries about keys, please contact NIU Key Control. If you need to exchange your current OneCard for a proximity card, you will need to take your old card to the NIU OneCard office in the lower level of the HSC, adjacent to TCF Bank.

28. **Contact me**: During the first semester, Doris Macdonald is available to discuss any aspect of your teaching in the First-Year Composition Program. Michael Day will be returning to the post in the spring. Do not hesitate to drop by the appropriate office or send an email at any time to consult about concerns, problems, or questions that arise during the year. Additionally, for purposes of recommendation, we are happy to observe your teaching at any time you request.

### FYComp Resources

29. **University Writing Center (UWC)**: The UWC (Stevenson Towers South, lower level), under the direction of Gail Jacky, provides full-time professional staff, TAs, and peer tutors who are trained to help all students in your courses on all phases of their writing. Encourage your students to visit [http://www.niu.edu/uwc](http://www.niu.edu/uwc) to check hours or schedule an appointment, or call 753-6636 for information. The senior staff can inform you of your students' progress if you call for the information.

You can also contact Gail Jacky at 753-6636 to arrange for a 15-minute presentation to your students on the UWC’s services. For further information, please see the UWC web site at [http://www.niu.edu/uwc](http://www.niu.edu/uwc).

30. **ESL Center**: We will staff the ESL Center (Reavis 306B) again this year; the consultants will tutor students whose native language is not English in all phases of their English development. The ESL Center offers specialized support in the areas of reading, speaking, and listening comprehension for non-native English-speaking students. Early in the semester, preferably during the first week or so, please try to identify students whose native language is not English who may have enrolled in your regular 103, 203, or 204 classes and refer them to the ESL center, 753-6637 or niu.esl.center@gmail.com. In some cases, if space permits early in the semester, a student with ESL-related challenges may be able to switch to an ESL section of 103 (fall) or 203 (spring), but we cannot make switches after the third week of classes. For hours and further information, please contact Doris Macdonald, drop by the Center, or see the ESL Center website at [http://www.engl.niu.edu/esl/](http://www.engl.niu.edu/esl/).

### Computers and Composition

1. **Computers for First-Year Composition faculty**:
   a. Every faculty member teaching ENGL 102, 103, 203, 204, 451, 452 and 453 will have a laptop available for the duration of the semester. Faculty who choose to use these laptops must sign a standard equipment release form prior to their receipt of the equipment, and must promptly return equipment (or sign a new equipment release form) at the conclusion of the semester. Laptops will be jointly supported by the NWR and by the CLAS IT staff. Each laptop will come with a standard set of software preinstalled, which will be
sufficient for normal use (including Microsoft Office, IE, Chrome, and Skype), and users will have limited ability to add new software as needed.

b. In addition to laptops, you may also use the computers located in the University Writing Center and the Networked Writing and Research (NWR) office (Reavis 308) during their regular office hours.

2. **Printing:** Faculty have access to networked printers in RH308, RH224, and ZU 1012. These printers should be used for printing related to teaching only, and should not be used to create multiple copies; mass duplication should normally be handled through the main department office. In addition, some faculty offices may have printers available.

3. **Staff support for computer-mediated instruction:** NWR has a staff of associates who are trained to serve as liaisons to each of the computer labs in which we teach. You should get to know your lab liaison and report to him/her any difficulty you experience with the operation of your lab. These staff members are also available to help you with any concern you have about setting up your course website, using programmatic software, or conducting your lab day. Please feel free to call on them.

4. **Composition computer labs:** We teach in a variety of different computer labs, all of which use Windows 2007, Office 2010, Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome. No eating or drinking is allowed by students or teachers in the labs. Under no circumstances should you interrupt a colleague who is teaching in a lab, for printing or any other reason. Other lab policies are posted in each lab, and, upon request, a lab attendant will review them as well as log-on procedures during your first lab day. Please familiarize yourself with these policies. Remind students to save work frequently to USB flash drives and/or their network drive spaces. Student network drives have been enhanced: they will now have 5G of storage (up from 200M), and will support remote connectivity via [https://anywherefiles.niu.edu](https://anywherefiles.niu.edu) as well as a mobile app.

Please remember that we are assigned and allowed to use computer labs for a good reason: NIU expects that students will have hands-on experiences in the technologies of writing, including networked discussion and writing for the web. It is a general expectation of the program that you will use the lab for most, if not all, of the assigned lab days. If you need help planning and executing lab days, please see Eric or one of the NWR staff. If you do not intend to use the lab on a specific lab day, **you must let the lab attendant and Tracy Wescott know beforehand.**

Have a good year!