

# PROVIDING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK:

## TIPS FOR SCU PROFESSORS



## PRIORITIZE TO HELP WRITERS SEE THE BIG PICTURE

Students view feedback as a reflection of what we value (Dohrer, 1991), so strategize when commenting so they understand what is most important.

- Prioritize higher order, conceptual writing elements - e.g., focus, thesis, analysis, development, organization/structure. Be certain, however, to develop a shared vocabulary with your students so they know what you mean when using a given term (Sommers, 1982).
- Focus on 2 or 3 main conceptual areas and at least 1 strength. As difficult as it may be, do not comment on everything because writers can find that overwhelming and less useful (Lunsford, 1997; Harris, 1979).
- Provide explanations and reasons when commenting—both when making suggestions and praising. Rather than stating “weak example” explain a bit about why the example isn’t working and how the writer might address this (Lunsford, 1997; Sommers, 1982).
- Use feedback as an opportunity to help students understand what writing is expected in a discipline - how to use sources, how to organize texts (Van Heerden, Clarence, and Bharuthram, 2016; Haswell, 2006).

## COMMENT ON SENTENCE-LEVEL ISSUES STRATEGICALLY

To provide effective feedback, comment on sentence-level issues strategically. Writers tend to fix issues that are easiest to change, so make certain your feedback encourages thoughtful revision before emphasizing editing (Dohrer, 1991).

- When commenting on grammar and sentence-level issues, focus on finding patterns of error and explain the rule for an error that repeats (Ferris, 2011).
- Try minimal marking for grammar errors—highlight or use x's in the margins for the same error once you've identified it the first time (McNeilly, 2014; Haswell, 1983).

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Personalize the feedback - use students' names when commenting.
- Time feedback so students can use it most effectively. Feedback on earlier versions of an assignment can be much more impactful than feedback on later versions because that gives writers the opportunity to apply the feedback.
- Ask students to reflect on the feedback you provide. What do they see as most essential to consider when revising? How can they tackle the most challenging aspects of the revision process first? What questions would they ask you?
- Have students specify 2 or 3 aspects of their writing that they most want feedback on.