A Web-based System for Reciprocal Evaluation of Student Paper Writing

With his project, A Web-based System for Reciprocal Evaluation of Student Paper Writing, Christian Schunn, Department of Psychology and Learning Resource Development Center, addresses the instructor’s over-whelming task of providing students in classes of 200 or more sufficient opportunity to write, receive feedback, and revise papers in their major disciplines. Schunn will design, implement, and evaluate an automated, Web-based program, Scaffolded Writing and Rewriting in the Discipline. Since the administration of this process will be computer facilitated, Schunn anticipates that faculty in large graduate and undergraduate classes will be even more inclined to make the writing assignments so necessary to students’ success in all disciplines.

Schunn will assign each student in one of these large classes to a five-member peer evaluation team. Each of these teams will then be assigned a subset of student papers to evaluate. To address three issues generally associated with reciprocal peer evaluation, Schunn’s project will do the following: (1) provide clearly articulated criteria for the peer evaluations, thereby improving the quality of feedback; (2) automatically evaluate the quality of peer evaluations by measuring the consistency within the five-student teams; and (3) automatically coordinate the assignment of students to a topic of their choice and to a peer assignment team.

Schunn must first develop a rubric defining critical dimensions of good writing that can be easily applied by the peer teams. By assigning five students to each team, he can then monitor the consistency among the evaluations and minimize the effect of an obvious discrepancy on a student’s grade. Finally, Schunn will grade students not only on their own writing but also on their critiques of peer writing. For those
involved, the diverse perspectives and ideas afforded by peer feedback undoubtedly should encourage a deeper exploration of their writing topics and a more meticulous approach to their writing itself.

The system will be piloted initially in a medium-sized, entry-level graduate course and then in a large undergraduate course in the spring semester. Considering its educational benefits, its ease of implementation, and its adaptability, Schunn anticipates the use of his project in large classes, regardless of the discipline.