What is the Meaningful Writing Project?

The researchers launched the project, "Seniors Reflect on Their Meaningful Writing Experiences: A Cross-Institutional Study," with support from a Conference on College Composition and Communication Research Initiative Grant, one of only three awarded in 2010-2011.

Why Study Students' Meaningful Writing Experiences?

Student learning in higher education, particularly student writing, is under intense scrutiny. Students are "academically adrift" (Arum & Roksa), reporting less time spent reading and writing than their predecessors, and those who make it to graduation face dim job prospects and crushing levels of student loan debt (Grafton). At the same time, more and more pressure is on institutions to assess outcomes, whether driven by outside accreditors, legislative mandate, or program improvement.

This strong narrative of crisis and the assessment methodologies used at all levels of education, however, often leave out the study of "incomes" (Guerra) or an understanding of what students bring to their learning experiences and the important meanings they might derive. Students' development as writers is deeply connected to their overall cognitive and social development (Baxter Magolda), to their engagement with learning (Light), and to their success in a wide variety of disciplines and professions (Beaufort). Understanding the meaning students derive from their writing experiences can potentially offer insight into student learning and their college experiences in ways not captured by standardized tests and counts of pages written or read. The intent of this research is to gain that understanding across three very different institutions: a private, urban Catholic university (undergraduate enrollment: 14,000); a private, urban university known for experiential learning (undergraduate enrollment: 15,600); and a public R1 institution (undergraduate enrollment: 20,000). The first stage of this project conducted during spring 2012 focused only on seniors (N= 780) at these institutions.

http://meaningfulwritingproject.net/

What was your most meaningful writing assignment as a student?

What students said: relevant, connected to their lives, added content learning, involved researching to learn

Exchange ideas with people around you.

Meaningful assignments don't come from a formula but instead from student-faculty relationships around the course and course content.