

MCCRACKEN: me, the benefit is, it gets buy-in immediately from our students, that when they're making a connection between my expertise in writing and what they want to be their expertise, whether it's photo com, or graphic design, or biology, they start to see that all this work that they have been doing for the last 12 years before they ever arrived on campus actually does have a place, and that they don't need to get rid of it, that they have this expertise that they can tap into and to build on, and even as they figure out, OK that's not really going to work in biology, because this is who I'm going to be expected to be as a scholar, and so I need to start kind of shaping my previous assumptions about what it means.

But I also think-- I think it gives them some flexibility and some malleability as a writer to kind of have to go in and re-ask those questions about, what are the expectations? What are the conventions of this particular discipline, and how do I meet those? And do I even know what they look like? And if I don't know what they look like, do I know where to find that information? Do I know who to go talk to to try and understand why it looks this way over here and another way in another discipline?

So kind of the example that I always give my students is, you know, why is the year at the very end of the citation in MLA, and why is it at the very beginning in APA? So even something like that, just trying to understand the philosophy of it, I think is important to helping students become part of these communities of practice, to really own their expertise and to become scholars in their own right, even as they're in their first semester in their first year in college.

I guess the only other thing I would say about the disciplinary piece is that, you know, when we have a interview of professor assignment, and they have to do it in the first four weeks they're on campus, and so we ask the students to go into their discipline and to talk to that professor . Well, I take advantage of that assignment and say, you have to talk to them about their writing and you have to talk to them about their research.

And that's when the students come back and say, "You wouldn't believe it, my professor said we write all the time, and that if I can learn to write, I'll be a better candidate when I go to graduate school, and when I go on the job market." And I was like, "Really?" I always like to be very surprised by that. But it's that buy-in, that having someone else say no, this matters, too, even if you are an engineer or a biology major.