

# **Department of Special Education**

Feinstein School of Education  
And Human Development



Department of Special Education  
Admissions  
Portfolio Guidelines

September 2009

Department of Special Education  
**Undergraduate Program in Special Education**  
Portfolio Assessment Summary

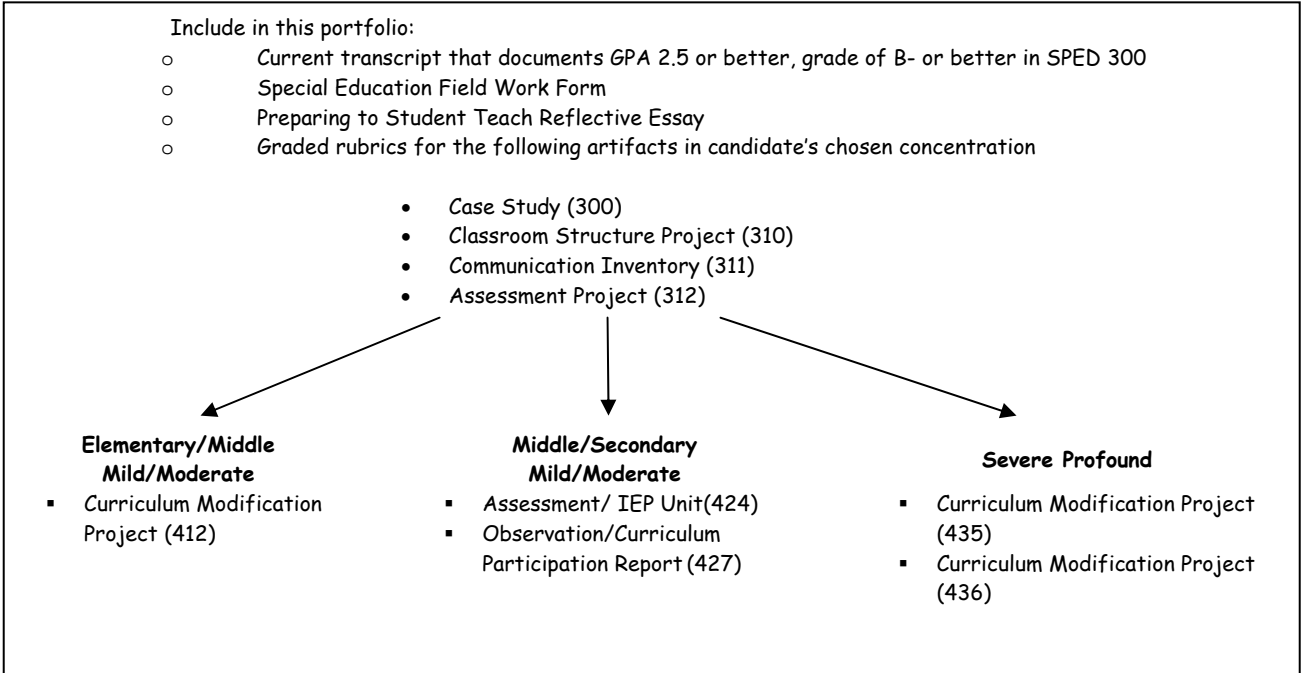
### **Admissions Portfolio**

(Submitted before registering for SPED 311 or SPED 312)

- Letter of recommendation
- Special Education Career Commitment Essay
- B- or better in SPED 300
- Transcript with SPED courses highlighted
- G.P.A. of 2.5 or better
- Acceptance letter into FSEHD Elementary or Secondary Education Teacher Preparation Program

### **Special Education Preparing to Student Teach Portfolio**

(Submitted prior to student teaching)



### **Special Education Exit Portfolio**

(Submitted upon completion of student teaching)

- Individualized Education Plan
- Instructional Planning & Monitoring
- 1 Lesson Plan with reflection
- Student Teaching Observation Report
- Professionalism Entry
- Exit Portfolio Reflection Essay

## The Portfolio Process

Within your special education program at Rhode Island College, candidates must prepare and formally present an Admissions Portfolio, a Preparing to Student Teach Portfolio, and an Exit Portfolio. The Admissions Portfolio is prepared, submitted, and approved after successful completion of SPED 300 (or an equivalent course with approval of department chair) and prior to registering for SPED 311. The Preparing to Student Teach Portfolio is prepared submitted, and approved prior to student teaching in special education. The Exit Portfolio is submitted upon completion of special education student teaching.

Portfolios are aligned with the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards (RIBTS) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Standards, embedded in instruction and explicitly evaluated. These standards identify some of the processes and skills used by excellent special educators to promote student learning for students with exceptional learning needs. Portfolio evidence addresses one or more of the following CEC standards and Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards.

### *CEC Standards:*

**1. Foundations.** Special educators understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence-based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view, and human issues that have historically influenced and continue to influence the field of special education and the education and treatment of individuals with exceptional needs both in school and society. Special educators understand how these influence professional practice, including assessment, instructional planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Special educators understand how issues of human diversity can impact families, cultures, and schools, and how these complex human issues can interact with issues in the delivery of special education services. They understand the relationships of organizations of special education to the organizations and functions of schools, school systems, and other agencies. Special educators use this knowledge as a ground upon which to construct their own personal understandings and philosophies of special education.

**2. Development and Characteristics of Learners.** Special educators know and demonstrate respect for their students first as unique human beings. Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs (ELN)<sup>1/</sup>. Moreover, special educators understand how exceptional conditions can interact with the domains of human development and they use this knowledge to respond to the varying abilities and behaviors of individual's with ELN. Special educators understand how the experiences of individuals with ELN can impact families, as well as the individual's ability to learn, interact socially, and live as fulfilled contributing members of the community.

### *CEC Standards (continued)*

**3. Individual Learning Differences.** Special educators understand the effects that an exceptional condition<sup>2/</sup> can have on an individual's learning in school and throughout life. Special educators understand that the beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures can affect relationships among and between students, their families, and the school community. Moreover, special educators are active and resourceful in seeking to understand how primary language, culture, and familial backgrounds interact with the individual's exceptional condition to impact the individual's academic and social abilities, attitudes, values, interests, and career options. The understanding of these learning differences and their possible interactions provides the foundation upon which special educators individualize instruction to provide meaningful and challenging learning for individuals with ELN.

**4. Instructional Strategies.** Special educators possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals with ELN. Special educators select, adapt, and use these instructional strategies to promote positive learning results in general and special curricula<sup>3/</sup> and to appropriately modify learning environments for individuals with ELN. They enhance the learning of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills of individuals with ELN, and increase their self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem. Moreover, special educators emphasize the development, maintenance, and generalization of knowledge and skills across environments, settings, and the lifespan.

**5. Learning Environments and Social Interactions.** Special educators actively create learning environments for individuals with ELN that foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and active engagement of individuals with ELN. In addition, special educators foster environments in which diversity is valued and individuals are taught to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world. Special educators shape environments to encourage the independence, self-motivation, self-direction, personal empowerment, and self-advocacy of individuals with ELN. Special educators help their general education colleagues integrate individuals with ELN in regular environments and engage them in meaningful learning activities and interactions. Special educators use direct motivational and instructional interventions with individuals with ELN to teach them to respond effectively to current expectations. When necessary, special educators can safely intervene with individuals with ELN in crisis. Special educators coordinate all these efforts and provide guidance and direction to paraeducators and others, such as classroom volunteers and tutors.

**6. Language.** Special educators understand typical and atypical language development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with an individual's experience with and use of language. Special educators use individualized strategies to enhance language development and teach communication skills to individuals with ELN. Special educators are familiar with augmentative, alternative, and assistive technologies to support and enhance communication of individuals with exceptional needs. Special educators match their communication methods to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences. Special educators provide effective language models and they use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with ELN whose primary language is not English.

**7. Instructional Planning.** Individualized decision-making and instruction is at the center of special education practice. Special educators develop long-range individualized instructional plans anchored in both general and special curricula. In addition, special educators systematically translate these individualized plans into carefully selected shorter-range goals and objectives taking into consideration an individual's abilities and needs, the learning environment, and a myriad of cultural and linguistic factors. Individualized instructional plans emphasize explicit modeling and efficient guided practice to assure acquisition and fluency through maintenance and generalization. Understanding of these factors as well as the implications of an individual's exceptional condition, guides the special educator's selection, adaptation, and creation of materials, and the use of powerful instructional variables. Instructional plans are modified based on ongoing analysis of the individual's learning progress. Moreover, special educators facilitate this instructional planning in a collaborative context including the individuals with exceptionalities, families, professional colleagues, and personnel from other agencies as appropriate. Special educators also develop a variety of individualized transition plans, such as transitions from preschool to elementary school and from secondary settings to a variety of postsecondary work and learning contexts. Special educators are comfortable using appropriate technologies to support instructional planning and individualized instruction.

**8. Assessment.** Assessment is integral to the decision-making and teaching of special educators and special educators use multiple types of assessment information for a variety of educational decisions. Special educators use the results of assessments to help identify exceptional learning needs and to develop and implement individualized instructional programs, as well as to adjust instruction in response to ongoing learning progress. Special educators understand the legal policies and ethical principles of measurement and assessment related to referral, eligibility, program planning, instruction, and placement for individuals with ELN, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Special educators understand measurement theory and practices for addressing issues of validity, reliability, norms, bias, and interpretation of assessment results. In addition, special educators understand the appropriate use and limitations of various types of assessments. Special educators collaborate with families and other colleagues to assure non-biased, meaningful assessments and decision-making. Special educators conduct formal and informal assessments of behavior, learning, achievement, and environments to design learning experiences that support the growth and development of individuals with ELN. Special educators use assessment information to identify supports and adaptations required for individuals with ELN to access the general curriculum and to participate in school, system, and statewide assessment programs. Special educators regularly monitor the progress of individuals with ELN in general and special curricula. Special educators use appropriate technologies to support their assessments.

**9. Professional and Ethical Practice.** Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with ELN, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with ELN and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

**10. Collaboration.** Special educators routinely and effectively collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways. This collaboration assures that the needs of individuals with ELN are addressed throughout schooling. Moreover, special educators embrace their special role as advocate for individuals with ELN. Special educators promote and advocate the learning and well being of individuals with ELN across a wide range of settings and a range of different learning experiences. Special educators are viewed as specialists by a myriad of people who actively seek their collaboration to effectively include and teach individuals with ELN. Special educators are a resource to their colleagues in understanding the laws and policies relevant to Individuals with ELN. Special educators use collaboration to facilitate the successful transitions of individuals with ELN across settings and services.

## **Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards**

- Standard 1:** Teachers create learning experience using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the world in which we live.
- Standard 2:** Teachers create learning experiences that reflect an understanding of the central concepts, structures, and tools of inquiry of the disciplines they teach.
- Standard 3:** Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop.
- Standard 4:** Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of learners and an understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning.
- Standard 5:** Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
- Standard 6:** Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- Standard 7:** Teachers foster collaborative relationships with colleagues and families to support students' learning.
- Standard 8:** Teachers use effective communication as the vehicle through which students explore, conjecture, discuss, and investigate new ideas.
- Standard 9:** Teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies to support the continuous development of the learner.
- Standard 10:** Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.
- Standard 11:** Teachers maintain professional standards guided by social, legal, and ethical principles.

These Guidelines describe the process for candidate admission to and retention in one of three undergraduate teaching concentrations offered by the Department of Special Education. The three undergraduate teaching concentrations are:

- Elementary/Middle: Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities, Kindergarten through Middle School
- Middle/Secondary: Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities, Middle School through Secondary Level
- Severe and Profound: Special Education of Children and Young Adults with Severe/Profound Disabilities

The following four courses are common to each teaching concentration:

SPED 300: Introduction to the Characteristics and Education and Children and Youth with Disabilities

SPED 310: Principles and Procedures of Behavior Management for Children and Youth with Disabilities

SPED 311: Language Development and Communication Problems of Children

SPED 312: Assessment Procedures of Children and Youth with Disabilities

Beyond Special Education 312, coursework differs for the three undergraduate teaching concentrations.

## **Application Process**

### **Submission Timeline**

Candidates must apply to either the Department of Elementary Education or Department of Secondary Education *prior* to their application to the Department of Special Education. Candidates should begin the process of applying to an elementary or a secondary education program while enrolled in *FNED 346: Schooling in a Democratic Society*. Admission requirements for an elementary education program may be acquired from the Elementary Education Department. Admission requirements for a secondary education program may be acquired from the Educational Studies Department. Candidates should submit their Admissions Portfolio to the Elementary Education Department or the Educational Studies Department immediately upon receipt of their grade in FNED 346.

Candidates should apply for admission to the Department of Special Education upon completion of Special Education 300 (receiving a grade of B- or better) or a course equivalent (department chair approval required). Candidates must be admitted to the Department of Special Education before registering for Special Education 311.

***Transfer students*** are encouraged to seek advisement from an advisor or the Special Education Department Chairperson to determine if a transfer course(s) for SPED 300\* is equivalent in both content and related projects. Candidates should present their Admissions Portfolio to the Department secretary who will review it for completeness, place it in an admissions folder and return it to the candidate with information about scheduling an appointment with his/her special education advisor application review.

### **\*Note for students who transfer from the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI):**

As of September 2005, HMNS 2070 and HMNS 2080 together are considered an equivalent to SPED 300. Students must take both classes and receive grades of B or better in each class prior to admission to the Department of Special Education.

### **Admissions Application Review**

The candidate meets with an advisor to review the Admissions Portfolio application. When the candidate meets all admissions criteria, their advisor signs the application form with a recommendation for acceptance and returns the Admissions Portfolio to the candidate. The candidate gives the reviewed portfolio to the Department secretary. If the candidate does not meet all admissions criteria, (s)he is informed of the unmet criteria. This information is documented on the application form with a denial status, a signature, and the application is returned to the candidate. The candidate returns the Admission Portfolio to the Department secretary. Candidates may resubmit their application once unmet criteria have been achieved.

All admissions decisions are reviewed by the Department's Undergraduate Admissions and Retention Committee (UARC). The Chair of UARC signs the admissions form and submits the UARC decision to the Associate Dean of Teacher Education for the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development (FSEHD). When questions arise regarding admissions decisions, the Associate Dean confers with the Chairperson of the UARC. The Office of the Associate Dean of the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development notifies candidates in writing of admissions decisions.

### **Admission Criteria**

A complete Special Education Admission Portfolio must be submitted to the candidate's special education advisor. A complete Portfolio includes:

1. a completed special education application form;
2. a copy of current transcripts from Rhode Island College and other institutions of higher education attended during the last ten years documenting a minimum overall course grade point average of 2.50 in all college course work and including the Special Education 300 or equivalent (department chair approval required) indicating a grade of B- or better;
3. one reference letter from a professional documenting the extent and quality of the candidate's experience with individuals with disabilities; a personal statement describing the candidate's interest in a career teaching students with disabilities; this statement must address all content areas listed under the Content/Purpose section of the Career Commitment Essay rubric which is included in these guidelines;
4. a copy of a letter of acceptance to an early childhood, elementary or a secondary education teacher preparation program.

## **Admissions Decisions**

All admissions recommendations are forwarded to the Associate Dean of Teacher Education. Candidates who are accepted to a special education teaching concentration will receive a letter of acceptance from the Office of this Associate Dean of Teacher Education.

Candidates who are not accepted will receive a letter from the Office of the Associate Dean for Teacher Education explaining the reason(s) for the decision. Candidates may pick up their Special Education Admissions Portfolio in 049 Horace Mann after they receive the letter of non-admittance from the Associate Dean. The candidates who are not admitted may reapply by submitting a new Admissions Portfolio. They may re-submit information included in a previously submitted portfolio and provide new and/or additional information that addresses the reason(s) for non-admission. Candidates who reapply should meet with their advisor for assistance in their reapplication.

Candidates may appeal admissions decisions to Chairperson of the Special Education Department and then to the Dean of the FSEHD. Information regarding appeal procedures is available from the Secretary of the Department of Special Education (Mann Hall, Room 049), the Office of the Dean of FSEHD (Mann Hall, 108), and OASIS (Craig Lee, 154). Appeals must be in writing and comply with the procedures of the FSEHD.

## **Retention**

Retention in a Department of Special Education teaching concentration requires the following:

1. a minimum overall Rhode Island College GPA 2.50;
2. minimum course grades in education curricula, academic majors, and/or teaching concentrations (see RIC College Catalog for retention requirements of specific programs);
3. a minimum grade of B- in all required special education coursework in the concentration;
4. admission to and retention in an elementary or secondary education program.

In the case of a disagreement arising concerning a candidate's continuation in a special education program and another education program, an interdepartmental committee will meet. The recommendation of the interdepartmental committee will be forwarded to the Chairs of the respective departments. The candidate and the Associate Dean of Teacher Education will be notified in writing of the decision of the chairs as to whether the candidate will be allowed to continue in either program with specific academic goals or conditions. A candidate not recommended for continuation in a department program or concentration may appeal to the Dean of FSEHD. Appeals must be in writing and comply with the procedures of the FSEHD.

**Rhode Island College**  
**Feinstein School of Education and Human Development**  
***Department of Special Education***

**Application Form**

Type or print this form and return: Department of Special Education  
Rhode Island College HM049  
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Town/City State Zip Code

Emp ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

Phone: Home (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Other (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION**

\_\_\_\_ **American Indian/Alaskan Native**    \_\_\_\_ **Asian/Pacific Islander**    \_\_\_\_ **Black/African American**  
\_\_\_\_ **Hispanic/Latino**    \_\_\_\_ **White**    \_\_\_\_ **2 or More**

Education Curriculum \_\_\_\_\_

Special Education Teaching Concentration \_\_\_\_ Mild/Moderate Disabilities, Kindergarten through Middle School  
( ✓ all that apply )

\_\_\_\_ Mild/Moderate Disabilities, Middle through Secondary Level

\_\_\_\_ Severe/Profound Disabilities Children and Young Adults 3-21

When submitting this application include the following in the Special Education Application Binder:

1. a completed special education application form;
2. a copy of current transcripts from Rhode Island College and other institutions of higher education attended during the last ten years documenting a minimum overall course grade point average of 2.50 in all college course work and including the Special Education 300 or equivalent (department chair approval required) indicating a grade of B- or better;
3. one reference letter from a professional documenting the extent and quality of the candidate's experience with individuals with disabilities;
4. a personal statement describing the candidate's interest in a career teaching students with disabilities; this statement must address all content areas listed under the Content/Purpose section of the Career Commitment Essay rubric which is included in these guidelines;
5. a copy of a letter of acceptance to an elementary or a secondary education teacher preparation program.

**Rhode Island College**  
**Feinstein School of Education and Human Development**  
*Department of Special Education*

**Recommendation Form**

Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ has applied for admission to a teaching concentration offered by the Department of Special Education at Rhode Island College. Please indicate the basis for your recommendation, your knowledge of this applicant's experience with students with disabilities, and your view of his/her potential for success as a special educator.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print

Agency

Position

Address \_\_\_\_\_



# FEINSTEIN SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## CAREER COMMITMENT ESSAY

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Reader \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Score: Initial Assessment \_\_\_\_\_ Revision Date \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

	EXEMPLARY 4	ACCEPTABLE 3	REVISE/RESUBMIT 2	UNACCEPTABLE 1	
	EXEMPLARY	ACCEPTABLE	REVISE/RESUBMIT	UNACCEPTABLE	
<b>CONTENT/PURPOSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for choosing program</li> <li>Commitment to teaching</li> <li>Specific experiences used to discuss beliefs</li> <li>Dispositions toward diversity, all children, collaboration, lifelong learning</li> <li>Reflection on need to improve</li> </ul>	<p><b>All content</b> criteria are evident and shows evidence of clear, <b>well-reasoned reflection</b> and understanding and knowledge of the nature of teaching. Essay includes <b>effective use of personal experience</b> to discuss promising dispositions.</p>	<p><b>Most criteria</b> are evident or <b>some evidence</b> of thoughtful reflection and understanding of teaching. Essay includes <b>some relevant examples based on personal experience to discuss promising dispositions.</b></p>	<p><b>Some criteria</b> are evident or <b>shows little thoughtful reflection</b> and understanding of teaching. Essay includes <b>few relevant examples</b> based on personal experience; <b>does not generally use</b> those examples to discuss promising dispositions.</p>	<p>Content is relevant but not comprehensive or well integrated. There is little evidence of thoughtful reflection or understanding of teaching. Essay makes little connection to personal experience and/or dispositions or those made are not relevant.</p>
<b>EXPRESSION/VOICE</b>	Well focused essay with evidence of thought in composition, phrasing and structure. Audience is clear and is effectively addressed.	Essay is focused and shows evidence of skill in writing. Audience is clear throughout.	Essay is not focused and shows minimal evidence of writing skills. Audience is generally clear.	Essay is poorly expressed with little attention to language and sentence structure	
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Logically organized, using an appropriate format and written structure. Effective transitions between ideas	Essay is organized, using appropriate format and structure. Transitions between ideas are weak or inconsistent.	Essay is organized. Format is appropriate, but structure is weak with little evidence of transitions between ideas.	Essay is disorganized; no evidence of a logical outline or transitional attempts.	
<b>CONVENTIONS</b>	Completely free from spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.	Essay is mostly clean (has no more than 3 errors) in spelling, punctuation, and grammar	Essay contains many errors (more than 3) in spelling, punctuation, and grammar which do not detract from reader's understanding.	Essay contains numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar which detract significantly from the reader's understanding.	

**INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS:**

- A score of 4 or 3 is passing, submit with your portfolio.
- A score of 2, the essay should be revised and resubmitted with all original paperwork fore the next assessment date (see department for dates). Recommend Writing Center for assistance.
- A score of 1, the essay is unacceptable and should be completely redone. Students should visit the Writing Center for assistance.