



VALERIE M. BALESTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: March 1, 2007  
TO: Dr. Sally Abrahams, Head, Department of Biology  
FROM: Valerie Balester, Executive Director, University Writing Center *VB*  
SUBJECT: Support for Jean Rowling for Teaching Excellence Award

I write to urge you to honor Jean Rowling for her teaching. Dr. Rowling was one of the first faculty members to offer a writing-intensive course at Texas A&M, In fact, she was the first faculty member to invite me to visit with her about making her course writing-intensive, and she was delightfully open to suggestions I had for enhancing the writing that was already occurring in her class (WIZZ 850).

Dr. Rowling uses writing as a way to reinforce and deepen student learning and has an innovative way of making the writing real to her students by providing them with an actual audience. With her first writing assignment, she encourages students to think on paper. Students in the field, observing many different practices, spend a bit of time at the end of a trip thinking about a problem that a typical dragon trainer might encounter. They also write longer, more formal reports, using collaborative strategies that help them work together for the final product.

I invited Dr. Rowling to do a number of talks that have been enthusiastically received by her peers from across the university. Once other faculty members understand that a scientist can incorporate writing successfully in classes without detracting from course content, they are inspired to assign writing as well. She has also been featured in our faculty newsletter, mentioned in our faculty blog, and been interview for a writing center podcast.

Because of her willingness to share her experiences, she has had a positive impact on both students in her classes and on students across the university. She truly deserves recognition. If you have any questions about her candidacy, I would be more than happy to answer them.