

Syracuse University SummerStart Writing Assessment Summer 2009

The following writing assessment is used by SummerStart to determine your present writing ability. The text you produce will not count against you; you will not receive a grade on it. It is, however, important that you do the best you can **on your own** to give us an accurate reflection of your present writing and critical thinking skills.

Directions: Please read passages one and two below, and select **one** passage to engage with. Write a response (minimum of 250 words) that reflects on the content of the chosen passage. You might want to support what the passage says drawing on your own examples and evidence, or argue against it, or even complicate the views of the writer. You might discuss things about the passage that you find meaningful, things you find confusing, or points on which you think the author is misguided. Whatever your approach, respond directly and thoughtfully to the passage itself. Try to do the best you can. Take time to think about your response and to plan how you will write it. The response will be evaluated on its organization, style, thoughtfulness, clarity, and mechanics. Give yourself at least an hour to plan, write and revise.

Mail in essays must be typed. Be sure to include your name and SU ID#, and please indicate if English is *not* your first language.

Passage One

[The] engagement of students and faculty in community-based work, and work around the world, can provide a launching pad for sustained attention to questions of social inequality and multicultural community. It also does something else dramatic. It turns the tables on who has a voice, and who can benefit by listening. It reverses roles and the epistemic privilege—perhaps even its enlightening discomfort—spreads to a different set of actors. As George Sanchez has suggested, those who often feel relegated to the outside of our campus communities, such as faculty and students of color, emerge with more expertise and authentic voices in this agenda, as they often begin with more “standing” in the surrounding community and on the issues at hand. The social/academic landscape begins to change when the insights of outsiders—either from the community outside or on the academic margins—begin to be heard.

From Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor’s essay
“Multiculturalism, Universalism, and the 21st Century Academy”

Passage Two

Years ago, being bilingual was a privilege reserved for those who could afford to send their children to private tutors or to a finishing school in Europe. It was a privilege reserved for those who traveled and went to the opera. In today’s global economy, being bilingual can no longer remain a privilege for the elite. Today, being bilingual is a right that must transcend all socio-economic strata. Denying all students that right is not only a mistake, it is an injustice.

Students are enabled—not disabled—by being bilingual; they are empowered by knowing more than one language. The American experience is strengthened, not weakened, by citizens who can cross languages and cultures. The United States can no longer afford to remain a monolingual country in a multilingual world. Being bilingual and biliterate not only gives people a political and economic advantage, it also allows them to be bridges between people of different cultures.

From Lourdes Rovira’s essay “Let’s Not Say Adios to Bilingual Education”