VALUE Rubric Addendum

Many courses, including this one, at Ashland will be using the VALUE rubric to evaluate writing. (VALUE stands for Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education.) In itself, the rubric does not deal with all of the issues related to paper grades for this course, so here are my additional comments.

Holistic Grading

A simple average of points will sometimes give a false result. A paper that deserves a "B" is quite good. It may have some problems, but it is certainly above average. Consider, though, a very uneven paper:

- Context of and Purpose for Writing = 20/20
- Content Development = 20/20
- Genre and Disciplinary Conventions = 20/20
- Sources and Evidence = 0/20
- Control of Syntax and Mechanics = 20/20

Everything about the paper is wonderful, except that the student "Provides confusing supporting information or no information that supports purpose/content of the writing." That is not a "quite good paper." It is a well-written piece of fabrication—not a good academic paper.

After reading the paper and marking the rubric, your instructor will ask the question, "Was this any good?" Therefore, in addition to the marked rubric, each paper will have a written narrative which explains the instructor's response to the essay and has the final grade.

Some Special Considerations

Several items which were not addressed by the rubric can affect the paper's grade, for example:

- **Did not respond to the assignment:** No matter how well-written the paper is, if it didn't respond to the teacher's assignment, it's not a "good" paper. Grades can vary from zero to C minus for papers that are off topic.
- *Many* **grammar/mechanical errors which did not impede the meaning:** Even if everything else is good and the reader can piece your meaning together, five errors per page is a *LOT*. If they are careless proofreading errors or the sort of thing covered in early elementary school, your grade will suffer greatly.
- **Essay did not meet the assigned length:** If you did not write at least 80% of the assigned length, your final grade will be multiplied by the percentage you actually did write. Thus, if the assignment was 1300 words and you wrote 650, your final grade is multiplied by 50%.

What is a Zero?

The *Written Communication VALUE Rubric* says, "Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance." The rubric, as published, does not give criteria for a zero, so I have drawn on a rubric published by the University of Houston Downtown (www.uhd.edu/about/ie/Documents/Written_Communication_Draft_Rubric_10_10_14.pdf) and added my own comments to explain what "zero" means:

Context of and Purpose for Writing:

- Does not respond to the writing prompt
- Style and/or content are inappropriate for the context, audience, purpose, and/or assigned task.

- **Content Development:**

- Content is inappropriate, irrelevant or fails to develop even simple ideas.
- Develops the paper primarily by repetition.
- Just plain wrong in its conclusions.
- Misreads a source or ignores the source (for example in an analysis or critique assignment).

- **Genre and Disciplinary Conventions:**

- Adherence to genre or disciplinary conventions is not evident.
- Rambling, single paragraph paper or a paper which is totally disorganized and/or has no discernible thesis.

- **Sources and Evidence:**

- Provides confusing supporting information or no information that supports purpose/content of the writing.
- Supports its points primarily by personal feelings or opinions or is primarily a patchwork quilt of quotations.
- Supports its points primarily with conspiracy theory or other sources which are academically invalid.

- **Control of Syntax and Mechanics:**

- Message cannot be deduced due to structural and grammatical errors.
- Several errors per page which, though they may not impede meaning, deviate from standard English spelling and usage.