

**TO:** All English 101 Students  
**FROM:** Department of English  
**DATE:** Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 2009  
**SUBJECT:** English Composition Portfolio

As a student in English 101, you must complete and successfully pass the English Composition Portfolio in order to receive credit for English 101. The English Composition Portfolio is a collection of essays each student taking English 101 will compile, revise, and turn in during the fifteenth week of the semester.\* The portfolio will be read and assessed by at least two English faculty members, and will be graded either “Pass” or “Fail.” If you fail the English Composition Portfolio, you will not receive credit for English 101, and you will be given a “W,” or withdrawal, for the class. At that point, you will need to retake English 101.

The portfolio will consist of four pieces of writing: one short (2-3 pages) essay; one longer (4-7 pages) researched essay; an in-class essay; and a cover letter, which will be a self-assessment of your portfolio essays. All four pieces must be present for a portfolio to pass.

#### QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION PORTFOLIO:

**Q. I haven’t heard of this portfolio before. Is it new at Prairie State College?**

A. Yes. In order to fulfill the College’s commitment to the North Central Association, PSC’s accrediting body, it is important to have a standardized assessment that all students take. The English Composition Portfolio replaces the English Composition Exit Test that was previously used.

**Q. Why do I have to create a portfolio of my writing?**

A. Instead of a single essay exam or other form of assessment, the portfolio is designed to assess your ability to write and revise in real-life situations, both when you have a significant period of time to perfect a piece of writing and when you’re writing in a timed situation. Because of the variety of types of writing included in portfolio, faculty can see and assess your overall ability to produce college-level compositions.

**Q. I know I am weak when it comes to essay writing. What kind of steps should I take to make sure I pass this portfolio?**

A. Careful preparation of assignments in English 101 is a key factor in developing habits that will enable you to pass the Composition Portfolio. Therefore:

- You should attend all of your English 101 sessions, participating in class discussions, and ask questions of the instructor when you are unclear about an assignment.
- Plan all of your essay assignments for English 101 in advance of writing them. Spend time developing individual paragraphs with clear topic sentences. Experiment with different organization patterns to discover the most effective one for your assignments.

\* The eleventh week for 12-week, late start courses.

- Whether writing a timed essay or working on a longer piece, make sure you take adequate time for revision, which includes deleting extraneous material and substituting more effective sentences, proofreading, and final polishing.
- Confer with your instructor about difficulties you experience when writing.
- Go to the Student Success Center for tutoring on individual assignments.

**Q. What kind of help can I get outside of class time?**

A. The College offers tutoring through the Student Success Center. You can schedule an appointment at the SSC by calling 708-709-3663 or dropping by room 2643.

**Q. What if I don't pass the Composition Portfolio? Will I still be able to withdraw from English 101?**

A. You will be able to withdraw from English 101 after the College's deadline for withdrawal if you do not pass the Composition Portfolio but have made a good faith attempt to pass it.