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Susan Miller-Cochran and Chris Anson at the White House

English Professors [Chris Anson](#) and [Susan Miller-Cochran](#) were invited guests at the White House last week for a summit focused around their areas of expertise. Miller-Cochran directs the university's [First Year Writing Program](#). Anson, a university distinguished professor, directs the [Campus Writing and Speaking Program](#).

Here's their report:

We were invited to the White House for an October 7 meeting with representatives from the national Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) as part of the Community Leaders Briefing Series. Our primary goals for the visit were to open doors of communication with the Obama administration about writing instruction, literacy, and connections between secondary and post-secondary education.

We were particularly interested in discussing a recent document that the CWPA has released: the [Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing](#). We also hoped to discuss some of the ramifications of the [Common Core State Standards Initiative](#) on writing instruction.

During a morning session, we heard about several initiatives of the Obama administration, and in the afternoon, we participated in a small group discussion with officials from the Department of Education. The DOE encourages participation in the discussion about the Common Core Standards, and we discussed some of the differences between high school and college writing.

Having students repeatedly practice narrowly defined, formulaic modes of writing doesn't prepare them well for the variety of writing tasks they'll encounter in college and beyond, so we stressed the importance of helping students develop flexibility, critical thinking, and problem solving abilities to be effective writers.

We also urged the administration to look more skeptically on the idea that students can fulfill college-level writing requirements in high school, and to shift part of its earmarked funding for increased access to dual-credit programs toward improved literacy education in high school and toward programs for greater curricular articulation between high schools and colleges.

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