Bren Communication Center
Writing Workshop: Part I

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What Employers Want

- Employers consistently identify **strong communication skills** (both oral and written) as the **most important factor** that influences hiring and advancement of employees.
Assignment

• You are an advisor to **U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell**.

• Write a policy brief with recommendations on the **best fire management strategies** for U.S. National Forests.

• Write **500-750 words**. Do not exceed 750 words.
References

• Review 3-5 of the references provided.
• References are posted to web and printed copies are in Reading Room (BH 3312).
• Use information from readings to support your claims.
• Focus attention on
  – Scientific information about how climate change will affect wildland fire risk
  – Role of fire in forest ecology
  – Ecological, economic, political and social benefits and costs of various fire management strategies
No other references needed

• Do not look up any other sources to complete assessment!
• You do not need to be an expert on fire!
• Purpose is to assess your writing for general organization, logical flow, support, clarity, and smooth transitions
Policy Brief

• A document that outlines rationale for a particular policy alternative or course of action in a policy debate.

• Options:
  – Targeted discussion of current alternatives without arguing for a particular one
  – Argument for adoption of a particular alternative

• Goal:
  – Inform the target audience of available options and the evidence supporting each option
  – Convince target audience of the need to adopt an alternative or course of action described
An effective policy brief is

- Focused
- Professional
- Evidence-based
- Succinct
Writing Tips

• Introduce your main point in first paragraph
• Make every paragraph relate to main point
• Focus on a single topic for each paragraph
• Flow from one paragraph to the next
• Be concise
• Avoid the passive voice
• Review and edit your writing

Note: Please do not share and edit other students’ papers. You will do this on Friday, September 26.
Plagiarism

• Submitting someone else’s work as your own
• Copying words or ideas from someone else without using a citation
• Failing to designate a quote with quotation marks
• Misquoting a source
• Changing the words but copying sentence structure without giving credit
• Copy so many words/ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of a sentence, paragraph or body of your work
References

• Include a reference section.
• Copy reference format from prompt.
• You may include some direct quotes in your policy brief.
Timeline

• **Monday, September 22 at 1 pm:** Introduction to writing assignment

• **Friday, September 26 before 1 pm:** Your policy brief is due! Send it to Camile Clementi (camile@bren.ucsb.edu) and bring 2 hard copies of your policy brief to engage in peer review

• **Tuesday, September 30 at 11:30 am:** Bren Faculty Panel on Wildfire Risk and Climate Change

• **Tuesday, September 30 at 1 pm:** Summary of writing sample evaluations and introduction of writing tutors
Writing Sample Due
Fri, Sept 26 by 1 pm

• Submission
  - Send an electronic copy to Academic Programs
    Assistant Camile Clementi (camile@bren.ucsb.edu).

• Title
  - LAST NAME_FIRST NAME_Writing_Workshop_2014
  - E.g., Airame_Satie_Writing_Workshop_2014
Peer Evaluations  
Fri, Sept 26 at 1 pm

- **Print two hard copies** of your policy brief and bring them to the peer review session in Bren Hall 1414
- Receive policy briefs from 2 students
- Use rubric to evaluate policy briefs
- Provide constructive advice for how to address specific concerns
- Submit evaluations to instructor
Evaluation Rubric

Evaluated on a scale of 1-5 for:

• Mechanics
• Style
• Ideas
• Development and support
• Organization and coherence
Mechanics

- Few spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors
- Observes conventions of format and citation
Style

• Clear command of English
• Words chosen for precise meanings
• Appropriate level of specificity and sophistication
• Sentence style fits audience
• Sentences varied, clearly structured and carefully focused
Ideas

- Interesting and sophisticated response to the topic
- Central thesis clearly stated, developed and suitably specific
- Recognizes complexity, acknowledges contradictions, qualifications or limits of the thesis while sustaining logical development
- Offers thorough discussion of alternatives
Development & Support

- Draws implications from supporting evidence
- Connects ideas to explicate conceptual relationships
- Assesses recent research, discusses positive & negative aspects of options, draws implications for environment, policy, and economy
Organization & Coherence

• Logical framing of key issues
• Paragraphs directly related to main point
• Transitions smooth
• Connections logical
• Recommendations are specific and clear
Summary of Evaluations
Tues, Sept 30 at 1 pm

• Instructor will provide summary of evaluations of your writing assessments
• Bren writing tutors Adam Jorge and Lauren Steely will provide advice on how to address common problems that emerged in policy briefs
Communication Center  
BH 3310

- Make an appointment with a Bren writing tutor in the Communication Center
  - One-on-one appointments to review writing
  - Linked to core courses (ESM 210, 241, 207)

- Tutors: Adam Jorge and Lauren Steely
- Email: writing@bren.ucsb.edu
- Hours posted to the website
- www.bren.ucsb.edu/academics/comm_center.htm
Writing Skills Course

• Enroll in ESM 437 **Writing Skills for Environmental Professionals**
  – Taught by LeeAnne Kryder in fall quarter
  – 2 units
  – up to 20 students
  – Wed at 1-2:15 pm
Communication Center Workshops

• **Grant and Proposal Writing Workshop** taught by MESM graduate Josh Simmons
  - Mon at 1-2:15 pm on Oct 6 – Nov 3

• **Group Project Proposal Workshop** also taught by MESM graduate Josh Simmons
  - Fri, Nov 7 at 1-4 pm
Assignment

- You are an advisor to **U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell**.
- Write a policy brief with recommendations on the **best fire management strategies** for U.S. National Forests.
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Mechanics

1. Noticeable and frequent problems with sentence structure. Major and repeated deviations from accepted English usage and grammar, interfering with meaning.

2. Mechanical and grammatical errors are noticeable or frequent enough to impede a reader's understanding. Format may be inappropriate, or may indicate neglect or misreading of instructions.

3. Minor mechanical or grammatical errors distract from understanding.

4. May contain a few mechanical or grammatical errors, but they do not impede understanding.

5. Few spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors, and observes conventions of format and citation.
1. Incoherence within paragraphs; vague language use throughout.

2. Language inhibits clear communication. May contain awkward, ungrammatical simplistic or monotonous sentences.

3. Language is vague and abstract, or overly personal and specific. Sentence structure is generally correct but may be wordy, unfocused or choppy.

4. Language may be general or rely on jargon. Sentences mostly clear and well structured, may be occasional awkward or ineffective construction.

5. Clear command of English, words chosen for precise meanings, appropriate level of specificity and sophistication. Sentence style fits audience. Sentences varied, clearly structured and carefully focused.
Ideas

1. Fails to focus on central thesis or key questions.
2. Surface-level approach, thesis vague or unrecognizable, or too obvious.
3. Responds to topic, but presents central idea in general terms, may not offer insights or suggestions beyond the most obvious.
4. Clearly stated thesis acknowledges topic's complexity or significance.
1. Provides little evidence for ideas and alternatives. Fails to acknowledge source material.

2. Depends on overgeneralizations for support, or offers little evidence. Alternatives may not be convincing, rely on personal narrative, or lack sufficient analysis.

3. Attempts to answer key questions, but lapses into unsupported opinion or personal experience, or assumes evidence speaks for itself.

4. Offers support for key points but needs further evaluation or qualification. Assesses recent research, discusses positive & negative aspects of options, draws implications for environment, policy, and economy.

5. Draws implications from supporting evidence. Connects ideas to explicate conceptual relationships.
Organization & Coherence

1. Lacks proper framing and logical flow.
2. Random organization, insufficient transitions, ineffective framing, paragraphs lack logical links to main point, paragraph length inappropriate, some irrelevant paragraphs, recommendations unclear.
3. Limited framing inhibits overall structure, flow not smooth, arrangement of sentences ineffective, limited logical flow, recommendations lack specificity or offers only simplistic summary.
4. Logical progression of ideas, but issues not clearly framed, superficial connections between key points, recommendations lack sufficient specificity
5. Logical framing of key issues; paragraphs directly related to main point, transitions smooth, connections logical; recommendations are specific and clear.