HOW TO ASSEMBLE EVALUATIONS

Burt Guttman

The members of a faculty team usually write evaluations for separate facets of a student's work, or for different quarters, and the team member who is writing the final evaluations has to pull all these pieces together to make a coherent whole. You can't let program secretaries do this work; it isn't fair to dump a lot of separate bits and pieces on a secretary's desk and expect her to assemble the puzzle, and they'll refuse to do it. In writing an evaluation, you have a responsibility to make a coherent whole, not just a collection of pieces. At the very least, it ought to have a general opening paragraph saying that the student was registered in this program and saying something about his or her overall performance, and you may want to close with some nice summary words. Furthermore, some faculty teams have an agreement that the final evaluation will actually be an integration of all the pieces--for instance, that the final writer will use the separate evaluations for fall, winter, and spring to make coherent narratives about seminar participation, about writing, and about other aspects of the program, so the evaluation will be seamless. No matter how your team has agreed to do this job, you will need to bring separate pieces together in a single document. This is my method for simplifying this task. It is written on the assumption that the members of your team will exchange computer disks with pieces of evaluation and that you are using WordPerfect; if you're using a different word processor, you'll have to find equivalent operations.

1. Make a general introductory paragraph that you can use for all evaluations; write a separate version for males and females. Save these paragraphs.

2. It may also be convenient, at this point, to make an ending for the evaluation giving all the equivalencies that you and your colleagues have agreed upon. If you create the initial student file with this in place, all you'll have to do is finally move it to the end of the completed file (since the computer will insert the pieces from your colleagues after this list of equivalencies).

3. With this paragraph (and the equivalencies list, if you wish) in WordPerfect, insert the name of each student, in turn, and save the altered paragraph to a file, using the macro SAVE (or ALT-letter if you wish), which has the form:

    {SAVE}C:\<directory>\{PAUSE}(type student name and Enter).INT{ENTER}

This starts a file for each student, with the ending .INT, for "interim."

4. Be sure you have saved all of these boilerplate materials. Your colleagues may have given you disks with either one large file, containing a paragraph or two for each student, or separate files for each student. Let's take the first case first.

5. Retrieve into memory the long file with the evaluations you want to have first in your evaluations, right after the introductory paragraph. Make a macro, which we'll call ADD, with the following form:

    {MOVE}34C:\<directory>\{PAUSE}(type student name and Enter).INT{ENTER}

or

    {BLOCK}{PAUSE}{MOVE}14C:\<directory>\{PAUSE}(type student name and

Enter).INT{ENTER}

The first macro is for the case where each piece of evaluation is only one paragraph long. It will take that paragraph and append it to the file of the student. The second macro is for the case where each piece of evaluation is of variable length, two paragraphs or more. In this case, you've inserted PAUSE, and you will simply block the entire section to be appended.

6. Go through the entire file in this way, until you have added a piece to each student's interim file. Repeat for contributions from each colleague.

7. If, on the other hand, your colleagues have given you separate files for each student, you can handle them in various ways. Suppose you have files from only two colleagues; then an easy procedure, which requires only a bit of disk shifting, is to get the interim file for Student A into memory. Leaving the cursor at the point where you wish to insert Colleague #1's evaluation, go to Colleague 1's disk and retrieve Student A's evaluation, answering "Y" when asked if you want to retrieve into the current file. You can switch disks and insert the piece from Colleague #2, and then your interim file will be essentially done. An alternative requires more saving but no disk shifting; do all of the pieces from #1, saving each time, and then go back and do all the pieces from #2.

Jin,

Here's the piece I wrote for the Real Faculty Handbook. Please comment, edit if you wish. I can give this to you as a computer file, of course.

Burt