Three ideas for incorporating writing into the college classroom, based on demonstration lessons from the Central Connecticut Writing Project.
Idea #1: Found Poetry

Using important documents from your discipline, have students highlight key words and phrases, and then write a poem (free verse or formal) that incorporates and demonstrates an understanding of those words and phrases.

Rationale:
Creative approach will appeal to many students. Demands concision. May allow for a new way of perceiving a concept. May demonstrate understanding of concept.

Example: Science

Definition of Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle

The Heisenberg uncertainty principle states that it is impossible to know simultaneously the exact position and momentum of a particle. That is, the more exactly the position is determined, the less known the momentum, and vice versa. This principle is not a statement about the limits of technology, but a fundamental limit on what can be known about a particle at any given moment. This uncertainty arises because the act of measuring affects the object
being measured. The only way to measure the position of something is using light, but, on the sub-atomic scale, the interaction of the light with the object inevitably changes the object's position and its direction of travel.

Coming or Going

When it comes to a particle, you can’t know both: position and momentum. Determine one and lose the other. It’s fundamental: the act of measuring affects what’s measured. Light’s the only tool available, but as soon as you shine it your object’s gone somewhere else.
Idea #2: Writing about a visual image

Using a visual image (the scene of the signing of an important peace treaty; a photo of the Milky way galaxy, a famous painting, etc.) students write as thick a description of the image as possible.

Rationale:
Promotes close observation of details, making connections, promotes new perceptions. Demonstrates understanding.

Example: History, Social Studies, English, Journalism
Barak Obama looks serious, thoughtful, reflective and dignified. He appears to be walking in a decisive manner. He comes across as young and vital and seems to be in front of John McCain. McCain appears to be following Obama, making some kind of gesture of disgust or mockery. With his tongue protruding out of his mouth and his hands spread open and arms reaching out, he appears violent, monster-like, even deranged.

Taken out of context, such an image can be used to promote the presidential qualities of one candidate and the lack thereof of the other.
Idea #3: Newspaper Articles

Students write journalistic articles on principles, concepts, ideas important to a given discipline.

Rationale
Creative, fun application of important disciplinary principles and ideas. Can reinforce and demonstrate understanding.

Example: MATH

REDBIRDS ON DRUGS

Last week, we might have found the shocking conclusion to how the St. Louis Cardinals beat the New York Mets out of the World Series last season along with the Detroit Tigers. After the game, one of the reporters went over to the Cardinals to congratulate them for their victory. Then, after all of the tiring interviews with the players, she went to their bullpen and had a cup of Gatorade. The reporter claimed that the Gatorade tasted funny and instantly gave an adrenaline rush. So she took a sample to her friend, Add.
The algebraic lab saw that the strange tasting drink contained a power boosting expression, \( \frac{3x}{5} + \frac{2y}{x} \), that needed an \( \text{lcd} \). They took samples and made them undergo more tests so they can combine these unlike fractions. It was very clear to Mr. Add Numerator Only that there were high levels of steroids inside of the Gatorade, but he had problems finding the \( \text{lcd} \). He brought in denominator specialists to discover what the \( \text{lcd} \) is. Then, finally, they got down to one common denominator—Yadier Molina, the catcher, also known by the uniform number 5x. This, however, did not completely solve this expression, because they knew that another person had to be teamed up with 5x. They soon found out it was the team manager. The manager had multiplied x to the left fraction and then 5 to the right, making the chemical very active. 5x and the manager were sent to trial and they both pleaded guilty to contaminating the Gatorade with power boosting expressions. The court came to the conclusion that \( \frac{3x}{5} = \frac{2y}{x} \) came to \( \frac{3x^2 + 10y}{5x} \) which is a pretty high dose of steroids. Their case was filed as the perfect in “fraction”. The Cardinals had wondered why 5x was drinking so many cups of Gatorade that night, leaving the Mets behind as only East Division winners. The jury decided that 5x is suspended from the next season and the manager will be fired.