

Writing Across the Curriculum Final Report

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March 31, 2006

To: Steve Tallant, Interim Provost

From: Writing in the Disciplines Committee

Thomas Hilton Robert Hollon Jan Larson Scott Lowe
Alex Smith Amy Oldakowski, student Karen Welch, Chair

Re: Proposal to Increase Writing Across the Curriculum at UW-Eau Claire

We would like to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to serve on this committee. Through this work, we have learned much from each other and from our colleagues about the ways in which writing in the disciplines (WID) could help UW-Eau Claire's students reach their academic and career goals. We are pleased to submit this proposal for enhancing writing across our curriculum (WAC), and we appreciate your support for this important effort.

Our charge from you on October 27, 2005 was to propose a structure and implementation plan for a Writing Across the Disciplines program at UW-Eau Claire. You asked that the proposed program "ensure that all graduates of UW-Eau Claire will have received formal writing instruction at two key points in their education: at the general, introductory college level, and at a more advanced, discipline-specific level."

Background

Building on the work that was begun in 2002 by the WINDEAU Project team and continued in 2004 by a Writing Across the Curriculum task force established by Provost Ron Satz, we began by discussing the kinds of writing that UW-Eau Claire students already are assigned in their major, minor, and GE curricula. Of the 124 faculty who responded to the all-faculty on-line survey for the 2002 WINDEAU Report (See Appendix A for this report), 80 % agreed that writing assignments are "very important" in helping our students acquire the ability to inquire, think, and analyze (the third of our eleven Goals of the Baccalaureate).

We learned that writing serves, for these faculty, many pedagogical purposes besides more effectively evaluating their students' mastery of course material. Faculty reported that writing assignments encourage students to think and to engage more thoroughly in the content of the course; they promote different critical thinking skills than other pedagogical tasks can develop; they help students synthesize and integrate and apply the concepts they've learned in a course; and they help students build the confidence they need as scholars to form, articulate, and support their opinions. Reports from the eighteen department chairs who responded to an all-chairs survey in the spring of 2005 indicated that fourteen of those departments already have writing goals for their majors, and twelve of them already offer writing instruction in the discipline. Ten of the responding chairs described writing courses that build skills across the department's curriculum. (See Appendix B for the report of this survey.)

Encouraged by these indications of our campus' commitment to writing as a learning tool, we then turned to the concerns expressed by faculty, administration, and students about writing across the UW-Eau Claire curriculum.

Concerns

Students' Writing Competency

From the *WINDEAU Report*, we learned that only 12% of participating faculty were satisfied with first-year students' writing, and only 7% believed that 90% or more of graduating seniors have the writing skills they will need to succeed after graduation (6). Among the concerns expressed about students' writing, their ability to think critically was most frequently mentioned. "Critical thinking—what, how, and why claims are made, how they are supported, how connections are made between and among ideas and what and how information is explained—is integrally meshed with content, and thus varies considerably by discipline" (10). Currently, students meet their entire university writing requirement by earning a grade of C or better in English 110, Introduction to College Writing, or its equivalent. While some students know that faculty in other courses value and expect them to apply those writing competencies to further writing assignments, too many assume that they do not. Students who do not expect to write broadly beyond English 110 often resist further writing assignments and sometimes actively resist faculty who comment on or evaluate their writing. This resistance, which grows from an assumption that only English faculty should care about student writing, undoubtedly discourages some faculty from assigning substantive writing and thereby limits students' growth as writers, learners, and critical thinkers. For this reason and others, the *WINDEAU Report* recommended a writing requirement beyond the current English competency requirement that includes at least one course designed and taught by faculty in the disciplines (23).

An Additional Writing Requirement

Results of the 2005 survey of 32 department chairs, however, indicate weak support for an additional graduation requirement. Of the 18 chairs who responded, all agreed that students need to learn and practice writing in the disciplines, but only four supported a requirement as a way to ensure that writing experience.

Students we heard from also question the efficacy of an additional writing requirement but do not oppose writing as a learning tool. In fall 2005, Dean Don Christian invited us to meet with his Arts and Sciences student advisory council to discuss the writing they do in their courses. Several students, particularly in the sciences, described frequent writing assignments with substantial percentages of their grades based on that writing. The writing they found most beneficial to their learning and success in the course was that which offered opportunities for faculty feedback and revision. One student said that she learned more from courses that included writing, and several students agreed but repeated the need for helpful faculty response to their drafts. Responses to a survey distributed by our student committee member to a small sampling of students echoed that need. Of 60 students, 21 said that faculty responses to their writing had been helpful or very helpful, and 39 said it had been somewhat helpful or not helpful. When asked how often they were encouraged or allowed to revise a draft after the professor had seen it, 19 said occasionally or often, and 41 said hardly ever or never.

To help all UW-Eau Claire students recognize the importance of writing as a learning tool, and to support faculty who assign and respond to student writing, we recommend a campus-wide writing program that supports and encourages more writing across the curriculum—in both the disciplines and in general education.

Approaches Considered

The Writing in the Disciplines committee examined two distinct approaches to such a program. Both approaches include the current requirement of a C or better in English 110 or its equivalent during the students' first year.

Requirement Model

In this model, students would be required to take three additional writing-intensive courses in other disciplines, at least one of which would be in the major. Sophomores would be required to pass a Writing-Intensive course (WI) in the college of their major; Juniors would be required to pass a WI or WID course in their major department; and Seniors would be required to pass a WID course as part of their major capstone experience. (See Appendix C for a more detailed description of this approach.) We believe, however, that writing in the disciplines should be considered a mark of excellence for UW-Eau Claire rather than a graduation requirement that layers on additional work and responsibility for faculty, and that students often view as an obstacle.

Infusion Model

The model we recommend offers a more holistic approach in which writing of some kind would be a common occurrence in most courses across the curriculum so that students would not only write frequently but would also recognize ways in which diverse disciplines value writing as a learning, thinking, and communication tool. We support this model for a number of reasons:

- it encourages and supports the writing that many departments are already requiring of their students;
- it recognizes departments as the most appropriate level for examining and deciding the writing needs of their students; and
- it sends a message to students about the value of writing as a learning tool in any discipline-specific or general education course.

Review of Consultant Visit

In February 2006, you made possible a two-day consultation visit by Dr. Duane Roen, Head of Arts and Humanities at the Arizona State University Polytechnic campus. We sought Dr. Roen's advice because of his extensive experience helping campuses establish, assess, and maintain Writing Across the Curriculum programs.

Dr. Roen's recommendations grew from the information he gathered from the department chairs and deans on February 23 about the reading and writing abilities our students need; from meetings with Dr. Karen Welch and with the WID committee on February 23 and 24

about the committee's progress so far; and from a meeting with Dr. Scott Oates on February 24 about assessing institutional goals. (See Appendix D for the full text of Dr. Roen's Report to the Committee.)

Dr. Roen affirmed that UW-Eau Claire is well prepared for a university-wide program in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID). He commended the provost, deans, and department chairs for their support of student writing and the departments that are already working to enhance students' writing skills.

During the visit, I was impressed with the commitment to improving students' writing and learning. Faculty and administrators clearly want students to write well in courses and in the workplace because they know how important writing is to success in the academic, professional, civic, and even personal arenas of life.

He also found support for a WAC/WID initiative in the spring 2005 assessment report which indicates that graduating seniors already value their preparation in several areas that relate to WAC/WID activities. On the other hand, he noted that some recently surveyed UW-Eau Claire graduates report that the kinds of writing expected of them are too seldom supported with helpful instructor feedback or opportunities to revise early drafts. A WAC/WID program could encourage and assist faculty as they design, articulate, and respond to meaningful and effective writing assignments. At the same time, the data that we collect from recent graduates and other alumni could help determine the success of our WAC/WID program.

Building a Campus Culture for Writing

Dr. Roen noted that when students believe that only first-year writing instructors care about their writing, they fail to apply what they learn in those courses to the writing assigned in later course work. To overcome this view and to help students take writing across the curriculum seriously, he recommends that UW-Eau Claire develop an institutional culture in which writing is a part of many or even most courses. He agreed that establishing a WAC/WID graduation requirement would undoubtedly meet with resistance from both students and faculty, "rendering the requirement an unpleasant hurdle rather than a meaningful learning experience." A more effective approach would be to encourage departments and colleges to decide how they will implement WAC/WID initiatives and to take pride in their efforts.

To have maximum impact the program should probably be a combined WAC and WID program. The WAC portion will enhance the writing competencies of students—both majors and non-majors—in general education courses. The WID portion of the program will help majors as they prepare for writing that they will encounter in their professional lives.

When departments have opportunities to decide how they will enact a WAC/WID program for their students and to describe on syllabi and web sites and recruiting materials how they engage students in meaningful writing activities, they are more likely to take pride and responsibility for doing what they believe in.

Recommendation for a WAC/WID Program at UW-Eau Claire

Structure

The WID committee envisions a campus culture that embraces writing in the disciplines and in general education courses at all levels, that infuses writing to learn and learning to write throughout many or all courses, and that allows for great curricular flexibility. The writing culture would support a variety of assignments and activities to help meet course goals and to prepare students to become clear and effective communicators in every discipline they study.

In a recent campus-wide invitation to an online discussion about liberal education, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Don Christian, said this about writing:

...developing written communication skills is perhaps the single most important educational outcome that we should seek for our students. Furthermore, we may argue that we all share the responsibility for their continued development as writers. An effective university writing program would go well beyond seeing a single course or department as “the” domain in which students learn to write, and would diffuse writing instruction intentionally throughout our entire (collective) curriculum.

An essential component of WAC/WID is flexibility and department control over how writing occurs throughout courses and within a discipline. Because we agree that individual departments must make the decisions about ways that writing gets taught on our campus, we strongly recommend that the colleges and departments be the entities that determine which of their courses will include writing and what kinds of writing curricula will most effectively model, teach, and assign the writing conventions and discourses for their specific disciplines.

All faculty would have an opportunity to participate in WAC/WID, access to writing workshops, and support for adding writing to their curricula. After department members determine how they will contribute to the writing culture, those methods would be clearly detailed for students in the university catalog, on web sites, and in other appropriate venues.

Mission

The Mission of the Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines Program at UW-Eau Claire is to

- empower UWEC faculty to provide appropriate writing instruction and assignments in both GE and discipline-specific course
- provide monetary and academic support for that instruction, and
- support assessment and appropriate improvement of writing throughout the UWEC curriculum

Rationale

Returning to our Roots, a report of the 1997 Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, outlined three primary changes that institutions must initiate in the new century:

1. They must become genuine learning communities
2. They must be student centered
3. They must “emphasize the importance of a healthy learning environment that provides students, faculty, and staff with the facilities, support, and resources to make this vision a reality” (v-vi).

We see evidence that UW-Eau Claire is committed to this vision, and we believe that a Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines program can provide an essential component of its success. Through a university-wide, grass-roots effort such as this, we could truly create and effectively maintain a culture of writing that would shape students’ perceptions of knowledge-making well beyond their college experience.

Implementation Plan

Informed by the data gathered in the past few years, by committee discussions in the fall of 2005, and by Dr. Roen’s February 2006 consultation, we propose the following plan to establish an effective WAC/WID program at UW-Eau Claire:

1. Hire a WAC/WID director with an earned doctorate in rhetoric and composition or a related field and evidence of effective WAC/WID program management experience. Because the program serves the entire university, the director should report to the Provost.

The director will be responsible for the following administrative duties:

- Conduct faculty-development workshops on a range of WAC/WID topics
- Work individually with faculty as they develop curricula, materials, and writing pedagogy
- Work closely with the Director of Composition and the Director of the University Writing Center
- Seek grants to support WAC/WID activities on campus
- Work closely with the Director of University Assessment to design procedures for assessing the effectiveness of the WAC/WID program

We recommend that this director be hired and in place by January 2007

2. Study existing data on the kinds of writing students need to do to be effective in UW-Eau Claire course work, in graduate work, and in the workplace.

We gained valuable perspectives from meetings with department chairs and deans during Dr. Roen’s campus visit . Many agreed that, while academic writing is often very different from professional writing, students need to be better prepared to do both more effectively. A number of participants pointed out the important relationships between critical reading and effective writing. They also noted the importance of specific writing proficiencies

such collaboration, problem solving, writing for lay audiences, synthesizing material from multiple sources, revising effectively, posing effective questions; accurately gathering, interpreting, and explaining data; constructing and articulating sound arguments, and so on. They agreed that writing is not just for assessing student learning but is also an effective thinking and learning tool that students need to expect to use.

With help from alumni and Career Services, departments can learn what kinds of writing students will encounter beyond their undergraduate experience. Career Services could recommend, for example, the top ten companies that employ UW-Eau Claire graduates. Employers repeatedly acknowledge the importance of writing in the workplace and would be helpful resources for defining students' writing needs in specific disciplines.

3. Ask departments and colleges what they do and what they need to do to prepare students for such writing.

The WAC/WID director would work with individual departments to help assess current writing activities and determine further writing needs based on the information gathered in Step 2. After making these decisions, departments would describe what they are doing and make those descriptions available to students on department web sites, brochures, syllabi, and the like.

We offer the UW-Eau Claire history department as an example of an effective departmental initiative in writing in the discipline. Included in history's curriculum is History 489, *Research Seminar*, the capstone experience for majors and minors that "reflect[s] the writing, reading, and analytical skills that the student has developed in the history major or minor." A decade or so ago, English 201, *Advanced College Writing*, was a prerequisite for History 489. As students moved through the history program, however, the department recognized the need to prepare them with a writing requirement within the discipline that would introduce them to the methods of discourse and inquiry specific to that field of study. Now history majors and minors must also satisfactorily complete History 288, *Sophomore Seminar: Methods* and History 488, *Proseminar in History*, to help prepare them for the capstone course. The department also offers History 399, an *Independent Study for Juniors*, that results in a substantive research paper or report. In addition, every lower-division course in history includes at least one outside writing assignment and some writing on exams.

While some departments require other kinds of writing in their major/minor and GE courses, history's process of examining and providing these writing-intensive courses is one successful example. Of course, not all departments will determine the need for writing requirements such as these. Dr. Roen included in his recommendations a number of options for departments to choose from when deciding how to incorporate writing in their curricula. Following is a list of those options:

- a. In some courses, departments may wish to focus more on writing to learn (WTL) and less on learning to write (LTW). Writing is a powerful tool for learning, and a WTL focus can engage students in the kinds of thinking that academics and employers value—application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- b. Some departments may wish to focus the writing experience in three or four key courses at various levels. In these writing intensive (WI) courses, a substantial part of the grade will depend on students’ writing. In such courses, student writers benefit from feedback that they can use to revise their writing thoughtfully.
- c. Some departments may wish to infuse writing in many courses, with a mix of writing to learn and leaning to write.
- d. Some departments may wish to ask students to demonstrate their writing proficiencies in portfolios. In these portfolios, students will make the following case: “Here’s what I have learned, and here is the evidence that I have learned.” Such portfolios would be evaluated in light of each department’s stated writing goals for students.

Flexibility is one of the most important factors in encouraging departments and faculty to experiment with writing as a learning tool, and committed faculty at all ranks should be given the opportunity and encouragement to teach writing-intensive courses.

4. Provide faculty development opportunities and incentives to assist departments in designing effective assignments, articulating their writing expectations, and responding to students’ writing.

Faculty development is crucial to the success of a WAC/WID program. As noted above, the WAC/WID director will provide ongoing faculty development in the form of regularly scheduled workshops, retreats, summer institutes, and individual consulting. While some of these—such as the summer institute—might require monetary incentives for participating faculty, the satisfaction of increased knowledge and confidence in assigning and evaluating students’ writing could motivate many faculty to take advantage of these opportunities.

A number of UW-Eau Claire faculty already value writing as a learning tool and feel adequately rewarded when their students write more effectively. To support their commitment and to encourage other faculty who would like to include writing in their curricula, we recommend the following kinds of incentives:

- Reduce class size to 25 for writing-intensive courses
- Provide frequent faculty development opportunities in the form of mini-workshops, interdisciplinary writing groups, and departmental and/or individual consultation
- Allow reassigned time for faculty to develop curricula and/or pedagogical practices or to mentor colleagues

- Give public recognition for excellent performance
- Provide paid multi-day workshops, retreats, and learning communities in which faculty develop material for their courses
- Award a certificate for faculty who have developed special skills in WAC/WID
- Offer travel funds for WAC/WID-related conferences

5. Identify and showcase best practices that departments already use to prepare students for the above tasks.

We recommend that this initiative begin with a faculty forum during the first two-week contract period of the fall 2006 semester. This WAC/WID forum could include a panel of faculty in disciplines such as history, business communication, biology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies, and mathematics—departments that already teach and assign writing in the discipline. The purpose of the forum would be to encourage faculty to consider ways in which writing can be included in the curriculum to enhance students' comprehension and application of course material.

In addition to panel discussions such as this, we see other ways in which departments could be highlighted as good WAC/WID examples. An online WAC Director's newsletter, for example, could showcase a department in each issue and describe its writing goals, assignments, and the courses and faculty who provide them. A WAC/WID website—which could grow from such a newsletter—would not only highlight those best practices but could also serve as a resource for faculty and students. Its links could include announcements of faculty WAC/WID development opportunities, ongoing writing workshops for students, and ideas for faculty/student research opportunities.

6. Establish a university writing center under the leadership of the WAC/WID director to help foster a campus writing community and to provide both faculty development opportunities and graduate/undergraduate writing assistance.

Currently, this campus provides a number of opportunities for students to get help with their writing. The Academic Skills Center employs students as peer tutors to work with students who request help with writing assignments in courses across the curriculum. A recent discussion with Andrea Gapko, Director of the Academic Skills Center and Educational Support Services, centered on the services available through the ASC. She reported that the ASC writing tutors have worked with students on various writing projects for courses in 26 departments, addressing such topics as “grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, structure and organization, transitions, letters of application, resumes, citations, and portfolios.” The English department also provides peer tutoring for students in English classes. The English Writing Center is staffed by undergraduate and graduate students who have successfully completed or are enrolled in a 2-credit tutor-training course that includes three hours of tutoring per week and fulfills tutors' service-learning requirement. In addition to these two specific locations for writing assistance, some departments hire successful upper-division majors to help students with writing assigned in the specific disciplines.

We recommend that a university writing center be established to replace these disparate services and to offer a learning-community space designed not only for undergraduate and graduate students but for faculty as well. We envision a writing center where faculty-recommended undergraduate and graduate students serve as writing fellows to help make writing an integral part of the curriculum. Trained as general writing tutors or as writing specialists in specific disciplines, these writing fellows will provide valuable links to peers' learning processes by helping them use the language and conventions of writing in their GE or major/minor courses. Faculty, too, will find assistance in this writing center through frequently scheduled workshops; a collection of resources for planning, articulating, and responding to writing assignments in their disciplines; and individual consultations with the director. Some faculty might want to request curriculum-based peer tutoring, or tutor-linked courses, that include a student assigned as a writing mentor to support them as they experiment with various kinds of writing-to-learn or transactional assignments.

A university writing center designed to support this curricular renewal would encourage both students and faculty to challenge traditional ways of thinking about writing and learning in and across disciplines.

Conclusion

The committee is convinced that UWEC has the potential to develop an effective WAC/WID program that will produce measurable improvement in our students' writing abilities. The time is right; most members of the university community recognize the need. We believe that faculty members should be enlisted through as many means as possible—inspiring leadership, practical assistance, meaningful incentives, and the like—to ensure that their participation in the proposed university-wide writing initiative is enthusiastic and enduring. The program must not be seen as a top-down imposition, or it will be treated as yet another onerous “unfunded mandate.” Above all, departments and programs must feel free to implement WAC/WID *as they see fit*, in keeping with the academic goals and methods of their disciplines.

A successful WAC/WID program will require academic leadership from a skilled director who has specialized in this emerging field of study/practice and who is capable of inspiring and motivating faculty to experiment with new teaching methods (or even rediscover old ones). The director will need full faculty status and the support of the higher administration; presumably she/he will report directly to the Provost. As we see it, much of the director's initial activity will involve outreach and education within the university. Since the success of the program, both short and long-term, is predicated upon the commitment and good will of the faculty, this person's position should not be taken from a current open faculty line. Too many instructional FTE have already been lost over the last ten or fifteen years.

With sufficient administrative support, a competent director, ongoing assessment efforts, and a wide range of workshops and training opportunities designed to enlist faculty support, we envision the creation of a strong culture of writing on the UWEC campus. As the program grows, faculty and especially students will see tangible benefits from a

renewed emphasis on writing to learn and learning to write. With time, this ongoing culture of writing will become another mark of excellence for our campus, bringing in highly motivated new students, attracting potential faculty hires, and drawing the positive attention of employers.

Appendix A

(See 2002 WINDEAU Project Report)

Appendix B

Report to UW-Eau Claire Department Chairs on the 2005 Writing Goals Survey

May 2005

To: Department Chairs

From: Ad Hoc Task Force on Writing Across the Curriculum

Re: Project Update

Thanks to all of you who recently completed the online survey requesting information about writing goals and writing instruction offered within your department. We on the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum are pleased to learn that several departments on our campus have goals in place for writing in the discipline and that most of you who responded to the survey view this writing as important to Goal 3 of the *Goals of the Baccalaureate* (An Ability to Inquire, Think, and Analyze).

The charge to this committee, created in the spring of 2004 in response to a recommendation of the WIND-EAU Project, is to study the feasibility of a university writing requirement in the disciplines and beyond English 110. To that end, the committee's charge includes

- consulting with all UWEC departments to see what writing goals are in place, what opportunities are available, and what resources are needed
- examining models of writing across the curriculum on other campuses
- recommending a model or models of writing in the disciplines for our campus
- identifying the scholarly, pedagogical, human, and financial resources that are now available and that would be needed to implement, maintain, and assess such a model

Your responses to our department survey have provided valuable opportunities for us to compare writing requirements on our campus to those of other campuses within and beyond the UW System. As we learn about courses within your department that prepare your majors and minors for writing in your discipline, we can better determine how and how much students are writing beyond English 110 and what further knowledge they need in order to meet your discipline's expectations for effective writing.

We received 18 responses to surveys mailed to 32 departments. Of those, 10 were from the College of Arts and Sciences, 2 from the College of Business, 1 from the College of Education and Human Services, and 5 from the College of Nursing and Human Sciences. While there is much left to learn about the variety of ways that departments at UW-Eau Claire use writing, the information we have gathered so far is encouraging. Here is a summary of our findings:

1. Fourteen of the participating departments have writing goals for their majors
2. Seventeen respondents assert that writing is “very important” to their department’s efforts toward Goal 3
3. Twelve of the departments offer writing instruction in the discipline
4. Six departments have a plan for improving writing within the discipline
5. Ten respondents described writing courses that build skills across the department’s curriculum
6. Four respondents support the notion of a writing requirement in addition to English 110
7. The fourteen respondents who said they do not support such an additional requirement offered some interesting suggestions:
 - Reduce the General Education requirements by 3 credits and add one 3-credit communication requirement to each major
 - Include [one or more] writing intensive courses within each discipline, ensuring adequate University support for those courses
 - Direct resources to faculty development in areas of writing instruction (For example, how to grade writing assignments efficiently; how to provide effective feedback to student writing; how to know if peer evaluation really works; how to assign appropriate time frames for writing, revision, and feedback)
 - Leave it up to departments to decide how and when to incorporate writing into the curricula for their majors

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of these responses and the helpfulness of the suggestions. As we move into the next phase of our project, identifying models of writing in the disciplines within and beyond our campus, we will be in touch with you about these models and their relevance to our University’s mission and to your department’s specific goals, ideas, and needs.

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please contact any of the members of this task force with questions and comments.

Karen Welch, *English*
 Bernard Duyfhuizen, *Arts and Sciences*
 Rosemary Jadack, *Adult Health Nursing*
 Allen Keniston, *Psychology*
 Paula Lentz, *Business Communications*
 Art Lyons, *Academic Skills Center*
 Scott Oates, *English and University Assessment*
 Rick Ryberg, *Social Work*

Appendix C

Requirement Model

To improve the writing skills of UW-Eau Claire graduates, the committee considered the effects of augmenting the present university composition requirement with an additional requirement for writing-intensive (WI) and writing-in-the-discipline (WID) courses:

- Sophomores could be required to pass a WI course in the college of their major.
- Juniors could be required to pass a WI or WID course in their major.
- Seniors could be required to pass a WID course as part of their major capstone experience.

WI courses would be defined as having

- 1) small class sizes (e.g., a maximum of 25);
- 2) a significant component of overt writing instruction (e.g., at least 20% of course content);
- 3) multiple, varied writing assignments (e.g., essay, library research, memo, report, email, online chat, instant messaging, PowerPoint, Web site, presentation poster, newspaper letter to the editor, news article, movie review, abstract/review/outline of a published professional paper, critique of or response to a published professional paper, etc.);
- 4) individualized, competent, detailed feedback on writing assignments (e.g., content, organization, mechanics, and format);
- 5) opportunities to revise and resubmit assignments based on initial feedback (e.g., from peers and instructor); and
- 6) various assignment contexts (e.g., in class, out of class, individual, group, opinion, research, professional/technical).

WID courses would be defined as having all the traits of WI courses plus

- 1) upper-division course designation,
- 2) discipline-specific content, and
- 3) discipline-specific, media-specific writing instruction.

WI and WID courses as an augmented composition requirement would involve already-existing courses revised as needed to incorporate the above traits; new courses would not be created solely to satisfy WAC or WID requirements.

As we created this structure, the committee considered questions about appropriate governance processes. In particular, we asked whether students or programs would be the focal point for accountability; how writing requirements might impact departments that already emphasize writing compared to those that don't; and how departments and faculty would be supported in developing and implementing writing requirements. The committee also identified several possible approaches such as targeting specific classes required of all students and linking writing requirements to the Goals of the Baccalaureate.

We also examined ways that existing University GE requirements might serve as a vehicle for improving writing across the curriculum. Concerns that emerged included how to ensure that all students would meet a requirement; finding incentives for departments and faculty who offer large numbers of GE courses; governance processes needed to identify and approve writing-intensive courses, ensuring that units actually meet the requirements claimed; and the faculty development and time needed to institutionalize a GE requirement. We concluded that the processes involved in establishing an additional writing requirement at UW-Eau Claire would not only be complex and time-consuming but would also entrench the notion that writing is a prescriptive, isolated activity confined to designated courses or faculty. A writing requirement would also necessarily come through university governance processes and could be viewed as a “top-down” decision rather than a campus community effort.

The committee recommends, instead, that support be provided for a culture of writing on this campus that would grow from departmental commitments to enhancing students’ reading and communication proficiency.

Appendix D

Duane Roen's Report to the WID Committee

Date: March 2, 2006

To: The UW-Eau Claire Committee on Writing in the Disciplines

From: Duane Roen, Professor of English and Head of Humanities and Arts
Arizona State University

RE: **Recommendations for Establishing a WAC/WID Program at UW-Eau Claire**

Based on my conversations with faculty, students, and administrators at UW-EC on February 23 and 24, I offer the following observations and suggestions. During the visit, I was impressed with the commitment to improving students' writing and learning. Faculty and administrators clearly want students to write well in courses and in the workplace because they know how important writing is to success in the academic, professional, civic, and even personal arenas of life.

Context

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is well prepared to establish an effective program in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID). The following factors make it possible for a WAC/WID program to succeed on campus:

1. The Provost, deans, and chairs have expressed support for a university-wide program that prepares students to write effectively in the workplace and in graduate school after completing their undergraduate degrees.
2. Some departments and colleges are already doing much to enhance students' writing skills. For instance, roughly 20% of the students in the College of Business complete the Business Communication Certificate. Similarly, the Department of History takes great pride in its commitment to requiring writing in courses.
3. The Spring 2005 assessment report, "Progress Report: Assessment of Student Academic Achievement," indicates that graduating seniors already value their preparation in several areas that relate to WAC/WID initiatives. For instance, in 2004, 83% of seniors reported that their experience at UW-EC contributed "very much" or "quite a bit" to their ability to write clearly and effectively (p. 45). Also, in 2004, 92% of seniors reported that UW-EC contributed "very much" or "quite a bit" to their ability to think critically and analytically (p. 38).
4. The student member of the WID Committee, Amy Oldakowski, recently surveyed students to solicit their perceptions of writing on campus. Of the sixty students

surveyed, more than half (31) indicated that they had done more writing in general studies courses than in major courses, while 23 indicated that they had done more writing in major courses than in general studies courses. Further, only 21 students reported that they had received helpful responses to their writing. Perhaps most telling is that only 19 students reported that they were given opportunities to revise their writing after a faculty member had seen it. These perceptions indicate that students would benefit from a WAC/WID program.

5. On February 23, I met with department chairs during the weekly meeting with Provost Steve Tallant. When I asked chairs to describe the writing skills that serve students and alumni most, I heard many insightful comments such as the following:
 - a. Reading and writing are linked, so students need to routinely engage in both.
 - b. The nature of writing is evolving, partially because of the omnipresence of digital technologies. For instance, writing includes more visual elements than it did even a few years ago.
 - c. Workplace writing and academic writing are both important.
 - d. It's important to develop students' skills in reading and in interpreting data.
 - e. Students need to develop skills in constructing arguments of all kinds.
 - f. Students need to learn how to write not only to colleagues in the field but also to the general public, including clients.
 - g. Students need to learn the social conventions of writing to various audiences in various media—e.g., email.
 - h. Student need to learn how to pose the right questions to guide their writing.
 - i. Writing differs from conversation.
 - j. Students need to write clear, succinct, and logical prose.
 - k. Synthesizing information is a crucial skill.
 - l. Writing to learn is as valuable as learning to write.
 - m. Revision is important.
 - n. In certain contexts, students need to attend to surface features of their writing.

6. When I met with the deans and Provost Tallant on February 23, I heard equally insightful observations:
 - a. Writing well requires a complex array of skills and knowledge. Students need to understand that complexity.
 - b. Faculty should share their writing with students to model writing behaviors—e.g., invention, drafting, revising, editing.
 - c. Writing is the act of making thinking visible.
 - d. Students need to understand that writing is never done; however, effective writers know when it's time to stop working on a project.
 - e. The campus would benefit from a writing center that serves both students and faculty. In a healthy campus culture, it's acceptable to need and to ask for help with writing.

- f. Those who develop WAC/WID programs need to be mindful of faculty workloads. One way to do that is to encourage faculty to use relatively simply writing-to-learn activities.
- g. Sometimes we are so concerned with coverage of content that we don't spend enough time developing students' skills in writing, reading, thinking, listening, working in teams, and problem solving.
- h. It is helpful to solicit feedback from employers who are familiar with the writing skills of UW-EC alumni.
- i. Writing-intensive courses should include analytical, critical writing.
- j. Students need to learn how to synthesize material from multiple sources.
- k. Students need to learn how to write for lay persons.
- l. A WAC/WID program should use institutional resources carefully.
- m. Peer review is important to writing effectively.
- n. Faculty need to take the mystery out of writing for students.

Building a Campus Culture for Writing

On too many campuses, students believe that the only faculty who care about writing are their first-year composition instructors. In such settings, students work diligently to write for English faculty, spending time on invention, drafting, revising, and editing. However, when they finish the first-year writing course, they believe that they no longer need to think much about writing. In such settings, students who write fairly well in first-year writing courses appear almost illiterate in other courses that require writing. In some cases students even resent faculty who require writing and loathe faculty who expect high quality writing. To overcome this view that first-year writing is an inoculation against illiteracy, campuses need to develop a culture in which writing is a part of many or even most courses. That sends students the message that writing is important—that they need to take it seriously.

Although it is important to establish a culture in which writing is routine, it is rarely effective to establish a WAC/WID graduation requirement. Students and faculty often resist such requirements, rendering the requirement an unpleasant hurdle rather than a meaningful learning experience.

WAC/WID involvement should be a point of pride, rather than a graduation requirement. One way to make a WAC/WID program a point of pride is to encourage departments and colleges to describe how they engage students in meaningful writing activities—both learning to write and writing to learn. When departments and colleges decide how they will enact WAC/WID programs and then describe their activities on Web sites and in recruiting materials, they are more likely to feel responsible for actually doing what they have announced to the world. When departments and colleges have flexibility in deciding how they will implement WAC/WID initiatives, there is an opportunity to take pride in what they are doing and how their students are succeeding.

Tasks

To establish an effective WAC/WID program at UW-Eau Claire, the following steps could be useful:

1. With a focus on academic writing, study existing data on the kinds of writing that students need to do to be effective in courses at UW-EC.
2. Study existing survey data that describe the kinds of writing required of UW-EC graduates. The institution probably has such data gathered from the top employers in the area, from graduate schools that UW-EC alumni attend, and from alumni themselves.
3. If necessary, gather additional survey data from top employers, graduate schools, and alumni. Also, ask how well UW-EC is preparing students to do the kinds of writing that employers and graduate schools require.
4. Using the survey data noted above, ask departments and colleges to describe what they do to prepare students for the kinds of writing tasks that are important in UW-EC courses.
5. Using the survey data noted above, ask departments and colleges to describe what they do to prepare students for the kinds of writing tasks that employers and graduate schools expect their alumni to do.
6. Identify best practices that departments and colleges already use to prepare students for writing in UW-EC courses, in the workplace, and/or in graduate school. Showcase these best practices.
7. Develop a mission statement for the WAC/WID program.
8. Develop an implementation plan, with dates and milestones.

Structure of the Program

Flexibility is important. Without flexibility, it will be difficult to establish widespread support for the program.

1. To have maximum impact, the program should probably be a combined WAC and WID program. The WAC portion will enhance the writing competencies of students—both majors and nonmajors—in general education courses. The WID portion of the program will help majors as they prepare for writing that they will encounter in their professional lives.
2. Departments should decide how they can best prepare their students for the writing that students will encounter after graduating. After making these decisions, departments should describe what they are doing, making those descriptions available to students on department Web sites, brochures, syllabi, and the like.

3. In some courses, departments may wish to focus more on writing to learn (WTL) and less on learning to write (LTW). Writing is a powerful tool for learning, and a WTL focus can engage students in the kinds of thinking that academics and employers value—application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
4. Some departments may wish to focus the writing experience in three or four key courses at various levels. In these writing intensive (WI) courses, a substantial part of the grade will depend on students' writing. In such courses, student writers benefit from feedback that is used to revise their writing thoughtfully.
5. Some departments may wish to infuse writing in many courses, with a mix of writing to learn and leaning to write.
6. Some departments may wish to ask students to demonstrate their writing proficiencies in portfolios. In these portfolios, students will make the following case: "Here's what I have learned, and here is the evidence that I have learned." Such portfolios would be evaluated in light of each department's stated writing goals for students.
7. Committed faculty at all ranks should be given the opportunity and encouragement to teach writing-intensive courses.

Administration of the Program

1. To be successful, the program will need a director who can perform the following duties:
 - a. Conduct frequent faculty-development workshops on a range of WAC/WID topics.
 - b. Work individually with faculty as they develop curricula, materials, and pedagogy.
 - c. Work closely with the Director of the Composition Program and the Director of the Writing Center.
 - d. Seek grants to support WAC/WID activities on campus.
 - e. Work closely with the Director of Assessment to design procedures for assessing the effectiveness of the WAC/WID program.
2. The director should have the following qualifications:
 - a. An earned doctorate in rhetoric and composition or a related field.
 - b. A record suitable to be appointed to a faculty position, with tenure.
 - c. Evidence of effective program management or administration.
 - d. Evidence of effective leadership.
3. Because the program serves the entire university, the director should report to the Provost.

Support Structures

Faculty development is crucial to the success of the WAC/WID program. As noted above, the WAC/WID director needs to provide ongoing faculty-development in the form of regular workshops, retreats, summer institutes, and individual consulting.

For the WAC/WIC program to be successful, students will need to consult qualified tutors who can assist them with the writing projects that faculty assign.

1. To some extent, faculty can assist their own students. In other cases, though, well-trained tutors will need to be available five to seven days a week.
2. In some cases, departments may decide to have their own writing tutors.
3. To serve the most students, UW-EC could staff a university writing center with writing tutors. Given the working habits of student writers, the tutors should be available five or more days a week from late morning to late evening. To make this writing center maximally effective, it should have the following features:
 - a. It is located in a highly visible location on campus.
 - b. It is perceived as a site for making good writing even better, rather than a site for remediation.
 - c. It provides a writing space where both students—undergraduate and graduate—and faculty can discuss their writing plans, assignments, drafts, and questions.
 - d. It has useful materials and activities for both students and faculty. It focuses on both faculty development and student development.
 - e. Its tutors are graduate and upper-division undergraduates who are effective writers in their disciplines and who are willing to learn more about the discursive practices in their fields.

The director of the university writing center

- a. knows writing and WAC/WID curricula and pedagogies.
- b. can work with the WAC/WID director to help faculty develop WAC/WID curricula and pedagogies.
- c. is an effective tutor.
- d. is skilled at training and supervising tutors who work with student writers in a wide variety of disciplines.
- e. trains tutors in the writing center, as well as tutors in departments.
- f. reports to the WAC/WID director or the Provost.

Evaluation and Assessment

Departments and colleges should have flexibility in deciding how to evaluate students' writing and how to assess the success of their WAC/WID activities. The evaluation practices in any course should be guided by the learning outcomes for that course for the

program or department that offers the course . In some courses, for instance, students' writing to learn will be much more important than their learning to write. Further, some departments might ask students to construct portfolios in which each student makes the following case: "Here's what I have learning about writing in my discipline, and here is the evidence that I have learned."

To assess the effectiveness of their WAC/WID activities, departments and colleges do not need to examine the writing of all students. Rather, randomly sampling students' writing usually provides ample evidence of a program's effectiveness.

I don't need to say much here because UW-EC has faculty who know much about evaluation and assessment. Scott Oates, for instance, is very knowledgeable.

Faculty Incentives and Rewards

Although some faculty will feel adequately rewarded if their students write more effectively, others will need additional incentives and rewards. Such incentives could include the following:

1. Reduced class size for writing-intensive courses.
2. Support for faculty-development opportunities.
3. Reassigned time to develop curricula and/or pedagogical practices or to mentor colleagues.
4. Public recognition for excellent performance.
5. Paid workshops, retreats, leaning communities in which faculty develop materials for their courses.
6. A certificate for faculty who have developed special skills in WAC/WID.
7. Travel funds for conferences.