

Writing Across the Curriculum Open Forum
November 4 and 5, 2014
3-4:30 p.m., Stevenson Hall Room 401

Mark Temple, Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, discussed the Senate-Approval Process for implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum Program. The end result would be a recommendation from the UCC to the Provost and Academic Senate.

The General Education task force endorsed maintaining the current course structure in General Education while extending the concept of writing-intensive courses into the majors. Specifically, the task force recommends the establishment of a graduation requirement for all undergraduate degrees that would mandate two writing-intensive courses to be taken normally as part of a student's major.

This would be a new graduation requirement and this is the beginning of the process for making that recommendation. This is a proposal and has not yet been approved or submitted to the Provost or Academic Senate for approval.

The Power point presentation with full text regarding Writing Across the Curriculum and the process for implementing can be found on the Provost Website. Feedback can also be given at the Provost's website.

Feedback

Clarification was sought on the proposed definition of writing intensive as 30% of the grade and the assessment of writing.

There is concern that faculty would be "hard put" to devote 30% to writing.

Questions regarding where the 30% writing requirement came from were posed. There are some areas that may never reach 30%. Would those areas need to develop two courses?

It was noted that there is a separate objective in a course with writing as 30% of the grade and the development of writing as a stated outcome.

Writing as 30% for final grade does mean more time for faculty spent in grading.

Concern was expressed that programs with accreditation have specific requirements and that adding two writing courses would be difficult as content is already maxed out. Some areas already have curriculum mapping specific to their accreditation and wonder if there would be a waiver for this type of program.

Concern was expressed for programs that have a small faculty and large classes. Programs with licensure and certification specifically were discussed.

The WAC movement tries to get at the mapping that is already in place, where writing already exists and matters. It would be up to each program to consider how to deliver writing in the discipline. WAC does not want to create additional courses for anyone. Based on a survey conducted by the WAC task force, there is a sense that a lot of departments are already offering these courses.

Are there existing models in place or are departments free to teach as they see fit? There will be faculty development resources such as CTLT faculty workshops and there are some best practices. There is much expertise on campus. Faculty development will be part of implementation.

Questions regarding how the program would be assessed were discussed. The model of assessment would be minimally intrusive. Using the concept similar to the Institutional Artifact Portfolio – we would use a rubric to evaluate student writing. Since the rubric would likely be the same as that developed for General Education, there could be some good information on value added in the major.

Questions about how the 2016-2018 requirements would work for departments that do not have writing courses in place.

Questions regarding the specific credit hour attached to the writing course were posed. This was left vague by the WAC taskforce. The requirement was designed to be flexible.

One area identified two courses that will fit as writing intensive, however both of these courses come and the end of the senior year. Is it the intention of the taskforce that these courses would be more scattered? Writing is seen as a developmental process. Students will develop better if they are moving through a process. It may not serve students to backload these courses. However, the decision would be up to the Department/School. This may create division among faculty about moving courses up in the curriculum. Perhaps there is a way to strengthen the expectation in the early courses.

Concern that faculty are not necessarily writing teachers was expressed. There will be a good deal of faculty development so that faculty members feel comfortable. Faculty are experienced writers in their respective disciplines and this is what is needed. While we are using the term “Writing Across the Curriculum” the WAC taskforce discussed the fact that “writing in the disciplines” would satisfy the intent of the requirement. A good WAC program would give tools to faculty and the provost understands that resources will need to be provided. There will be best practices and tools for faculty members to teach writing efficiently and effectively.

Questions regarding why there are two courses required. This is a starting point from the WAC Taskforce with the assumption that courses would be offered in both the junior and senior year.

Concern was expressed regarding writing as an area of disability or students who speak English as a second language. Written expression is not always understood. Some people may never be able to write and we cannot teach everybody how to write. Accommodations will be made. Documented disabilities would qualify for additional support(s).

Will there be additional resources for students? Discussion regarding satellite Visor center or resources for tutors/peer mentors to work directly in the departments.

There used to be a Junior Writing Exam. There was a plan to have a university writing portfolio. We have no university wide assessment. As a university we should care and value writing. This message needs to be sent to students and their parents. How do we help students see the value of writing? Curriculum proposals get us to think about our practices. It is time we have this discussion to stave off the day when we will have exit exam or some other externally imposed accountability measure.