WACC 4/26/18 Meeting Minutes

Present: Marie McDonald (co-chair), Wes O’Brien, Matt Miller, Richard Zipoli, Elizabeth Kalbfleish, Claire Novosad (co-chair)

Yan Wei voted electronically on the proposal.

Motion 1:
We voted on the proposal:

- EXS 488 Exercise Testing and Prescription, Lunn

- 6:0:0 to approve

Discussion: Liz provided the committee with a power point presentation and a word document on why the Writing Intensive program is in need of revision.

Motion 2:
WACC votes to provide the documents prepared by Liz to the UCF chair for distribution to the WACC committee that will be formed in Fall 2018.

- 5:0:0 to approve

Discussion: Marie provided the committee with updated forms and guidelines, which were based on our discussion from the last meeting.

Motion 3:
Motion to approve the W course proposal form and WAC Guidelines. The WACC committee in FALL 2018-2019 shall consider implementing the proposed changes.

- 5:0:0 to approve

Respectfully submitted to the UCF,

Claire Novosad
This form applies to EXISTING courses that are being submitted for designation as W-courses according to the Guidelines for Designing and Teaching Writing-Intensive Courses (Revised October 1999; updated 2001, updated 2018).

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM FORUM  
W-COURSE PROPOSAL — SIGNATURE SHEET

Submit the original signed copy of the completed proposal to the UCF office (EN – C216) and email electronic forms and attachment to ucfoffice@southernct.edu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department Code &amp; Number</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Faculty</td>
<td>Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>E-mail address</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SIGNATURES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Date</td>
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List the other departments affected by this proposal None

Include letter(s) of acknowledgment from the Chair(s) of Department(s) with this proposal or include the signature(s) on the signature form.

**UCF Use Only:**

Date Received by UCF: 

Date Reviewed by WACC Date Reviewed by WACC

Decision: ☐ Approve ☐ Return for Revision

☐ Not Approved

Date WACC Approved: Signature of WACC Chair

Date UCF Approved: Signature of UCF Chair
UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM FORUM  
W-COURSE PROPOSAL

Directions: Please fill out this form, attach UCF W-course signature sheet and include all other information requested below. Submit 1 hard copy of the proposal to the UCF office (EN – C216) and email electronic forms and attachments to ucfoffice@southernct.edu

Date _____ Semester this course will be taught next_______

☐ Please check here if this is a revised proposal and attach a new signature page

DEPARTMENT _____

NAME OF FACULTY _____

DEPARTMENT CODE & NUMBER _____ CREDITS _____

COURSE TITLE _____

CATALOG DESCRIPTION _____

PREREQUISITES: ENG 112 and _____

SPECIAL CONDITIONS _____

Proposal Requirements: All materials should be submitted as an attachment in MS Word, PDF or RTF format.

Required materials:
☐ W Course Proposal Form

☐ A 1-3 page cover memo summarizing how the proposal addresses the criteria for writing intensive courses (See Writing Guidelines). The memo will reference specific pages of the course outline or syllabus for each of the required components. The memo will include an explanation how:

   a. A significant portion of the course is dedicated to either general academic writing skills or disciplinary specific writing skills.

   b. The instructor of the course will teach those skills.

   c. At least one writing assignment in the course should require revision.

   d. Written assignments should be a major part of the course grade.

☐ A copy of your course outline or syllabus (with specific notations of points a through d)

☐ Two to three sample assignments for the course (again with specific notations of points a through d)
W-Course Guidelines

Southern Writing Across the Curriculum Program
Guidelines for Designing and Teaching W-Courses

The Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Committee (WACC) wants the W-course program to include courses in all disciplines; we particularly want to foster W-courses in such previously under-represented fields as applied arts and social sciences, and the technical, professional, and quantitative sciences. W-courses are not faculty specific. Department chairs may use their discretion in assigning faculty to those courses.

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES DESCRIBE THE SORT OF COURSE THE WACC ENVISAGES, THOUGH ALTERNATIVE MEANS TO THE SAME END WILL ALWAYS BE CONSIDERED.

a. A significant portion of the course is dedicated to either general academic writing skills or disciplinary writing skills.

• General academic writing is comprised of the following tasks:
  • reading comprehension
  • developing an argument/thesis in response to what is read
  • organization
  • grammatical/syntactical knowledge.

  Generally, reading comprehension and developing an argument can be taught by a series of comprehension, synthetic, and analytic questions. Organization and grammatical/syntactical skills can be taught via model papers.

• Disciplinary specific writing focuses more on teaching genre conventions—the specific features of writing tasks that characterize a discipline’s writing. Examples of genres are: the lab report in science classes, case notes in human service fields, proposals in business classes, etc.

• Courses that are writing-intensive by their nature (e.g., journalism, technical writing, creative writing) may be approved as W-courses. However, writing in these courses must clearly articulate what writing skills they will teach.

• W-course proposals must summarize which skills students will learn in their classroom, and explanation of why those particular skills are relevant for that level course.

b. The instructor of the course will teach those skills.

• Instructors may communicate their knowledge of writing in their disciplines to their students through a variety of means such as paper comments, conferences, handouts, and in-class presentations on writing.

• In addition to formal papers, the writing component may include short, unrevised papers, essay exams, and in-class writings.

• W-course proposals should outline the process of teaching the writing skills summarized in part a.

c. At least one writing assignment in the course should require revision

• "Revision" implies making substantive changes to writing: rethinking the thesis, organization, support, or content, rather than simply correcting surface errors.
• Instructors may encourage revision in a variety of ways, e.g., written comments on drafts, one-on-one conferences, and in-class peer workshops.

• To encourage revision, instructors’ comments should suggest changes and explain reasons for the suggestions.

• W-course proposals should indicate clearly the process of revision, and how many assignments will require revision.

d. **Written assignments should be a major part of the course grade.**

• The WACC suggests that out-of-class papers count for 50% or more of the semester grade, though in certain fields, other percentages may appropriately be applied.

• The weight of the revision should be explicit and should be communicated clearly to the students (e.g., in the syllabus).

**Course Outline or Syllabus**
The course outline or syllabus must include specific references to the above points a through d. It is highly recommended that the course outline or syllabus explicitly state the writing objectives for the course.

**Directions for submitting W proposals:**
- Complete the W proposal forms that are available on-line at [http://www.southernct.edu/UCF/formsampdirections/](http://www.southernct.edu/UCF/formsampdirections/)
- Submit a signed hard copy to the UCF office in EN C216
- Submit an electronic copy to ENTER UCF EMAIL ADDRESS HERE. Please try to include all supplemental materials (e.g., cover memo, syllabus, and 2-3 sample assignments) in one .doc/.rtf/.pdf document

**Directions for proposing new courses as “Ws”:**
- Submit new course proposal to UCF for review by NMC
- Upon approval, submit W proposal to UCF for review by the WACC

**Directions for revised W proposal submissions:**
- Submit revised proposal with a new signature page and proposal form
- Include the entire proposal (i.e., not just the revised portions)
- Attach a brief cover memo specifying how the revised proposal addresses the committee’s feedback, including references to appropriate page numbers.
How one might revise the W program:

- Re-certify all W classes: have them indicate whether they are teaching writing skills (teaching ‘learning to write’) or if they are using writing to teach course/subject content (‘writing to learn’) (revised proposal form captures this)
- Consider better structuring W course curriculum—i.e. have students take a ‘learning to write’ class at each level beyond the 100, i.e. 200-, 300-, 400 level W courses. 400 and possibly 300 level courses could be disciplinary restricted and deal with disciplinary writing.
- Be more explicit about W that are disciplinary courses and structure them more carefully in a curriculum proceeded by general 200 level ‘learning to write’ courses
Do we need to revise the WAC program?

Presentation to UCF by WAC committee and Director Liz Kalbfleisch, April 27, 2017
Rationale for revision

There is little, incomplete assessment data describing student writing, but what data we have says:

- 256 seniors graduating from SCSU in 2016 had their writing rated as ranging from **below expectations** to **met expectations** (see fuller explanation in appendix)
- 41 juniors (not a large enough sample size) had an overall score average of 2.65 on a 4 point rubric
Rationale for revision

Additionally, for some time, those involved with writing on SCSU’s campus—

• WACC committee
• Former WACC directors Karen Burke and Debby Carroll
• Current WAC director Liz Kalbfleisch
• Faculty teaching W courses
• ENG 110 and 112 coordinator

--Have felt that the WAC program is in need of revision for a variety of reasons.
Limits of program design--bureaucratic

• Uncertainty about how the W is “certified”: course or teacher?

• Paperwork required is onerous

• No on-going “quality control” or assessment of program by SCSU faculty

• May not have the Ws in the “right” place—i.e. not enough tier 2 courses are W. Especially a problem for transfer students
Limits of program design-curricular

Put simply, there seems to be a misalignment between the theoretical design of the WAC program and faculty’s expectations for the outcomes of the program.
Limits of program design-curricular

More specifically, we have a “writing-to-learn” program, but faculty may want a program that teaches students to “learn to write”

“Writing-to-learn” and “learning to write” are different, not necessarily incompatible, designs for a writing program.
“writing to learn”

From the WACC documents: “The purpose of WAC is to create a curricular structure and educational environment in which writing can be encountered as a tool of discovery across the curriculum for both faculty and students who participate in writing-intensive courses”
“writing to learn”

A program that has a “writing to learn” design uses writing as a “tool” to learn course content. In this sense, writing (papers, exams, etc.) is one of a variety of pedagogical strategies faculty may use to teach—or assess the learning of—course content. Other “tools” might be multiple choice tests, class presentations or demonstrations, etc. Of these various tools, writing can be one of the most powerful and effective, which is why the “write to learn” paradigm was developed.
“writing to learn”

Further, though students are using writing and doing writing, they may not be learning to write. The instructional emphasis in a “writing to learn” curriculum may not involve much instruction in how to write.
Additionally: when we talk about student writing, faculty are commenting on deficiencies they encounter in the following areas of their students’ writing:

- Reading comprehension
- Cognitive operations like synthesis, analysis, abstract reasoning
- Producing grammatically and syntactically correct writing
- Organization
- Use of sources/citation of sources
- Knowledge of genre features
“learning to write”

• Reading comprehension
• Cognitive operations like synthesis, analysis, abstract reasoning
• Producing grammatically and syntactically correct writing
• Organization
• Use of sources/citation of sources
• Knowledge of genre features

These are the skills of academic literacy. Facility with these aspects of academic literacy marks a “good writer”. “Writing to learn” programs work best at schools populated by “good writers” but these programs may not produce good writers.
“learning to write”

Many people believe that a list of skills like the one above is the domain of first year composition (FYC). They think that students should acquire these skills in FYC and then be ready to write successfully everywhere else in the university.
Acquiring academic literacy

Unfortunately, this is not how the acquisition of academic literacy works for a variety of reasons. I’ll describe two:

1) reading comprehension, producing grammatically and syntactically correct prose, and facility with cognitive skills like synthesis, analysis, and abstract reasoning are not static skills that can be acquired at the beginning of an education and applied smoothly throughout a degree program. Rather, these are dynamic skills that build up and break down and build up and break down as students learn increasingly complex material and intellectual operations.
Acquiring academic literacy

2) Organization, the use of sources, and features of particular genres are varying aspects of disciplinary writing. How a written work is organized, how its sources are cited, and the features of its genre (i.e. do you have to discuss the method by which you arrived at your argument?) are quite different for different disciplines.
Conclusion

So:

in order to align our program design with faculty’s goals, we may want to redesign our program to have more “learning to write” features.