

Murray State University  
Writing Across the Curriculum Annual Report 2011-12  
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The year began with some changes in the WAC committee and the constitution of a QEP committee consisting of two QEP co-directors, Director, Assessment and the WAC coordinator. The QEP committee was constituted provide administrative oversight of the various activities related to the implementation of MSU's the On the Write Path QEP. In beginning another academic year the past year's progress was reviewed and a WAC mission statement and program objectives were clarified.

WAC committee's mission

The mission of the WAC program is to provide university faculty with development opportunities and resources to enhance student writing. Writing Across the Curriculum encourages writing to learn and learning to write in all disciplines. This program is faculty-driven; faculty will actively consider and adopt pedagogical techniques to improve student writing. This mission is related directly to the first academic goal of MSU that "Quality teaching and learning shall be the pre-eminent activities at the institution".

The following objectives are tied to this mission.

- to respond to the university-wide expressed felt need by faculty for strengthening student writing
- to create a faculty-led foundation of resources for teaching and assessing writing that focuses on writing to learn and discipline-specific writing
- to increase faculty ability to sensitize university students to the value of writing as a learning and communication tool
- to prepare students for successful careers that recognize writing skills as a key job asset

Writing Ambassadors and the WAC committee

The expectations from incoming/ returning Writing Ambassadors were reviewed, the charge of the WAC committee and tasks of the ambassadors going forward were outlined. **Prospective/ past members were individually contacted for membership for the academic year 2011-12 and the membership requirements and tasks reviewed. The QEP co-directors met with the Writing Ambassadors in the first WAC committee meeting to review and clarify the tasks ahead.**

A Writing Ambassador would be one who exhibits:

- an enthusiasm for student writing and improving student writing, both within their discipline and across the curriculum
- an interest in fostering discussions about improving student writing at MSU, ranging from departmental to campus-wide conversations
- a willingness to learn about discipline-specific writing standards, research strategies, reading strategies, citation formats, key genres, discourse community goals and values, and appropriate writing sequences for typical writing tasks for the disciplines housed within their college or school
- an interest in an open-minded and critical consideration of a range of writing instruction techniques

The overall responsibility of a Writing Ambassador will be to serve as a liaison between their college or school and the WAC program, including identifying the student writing needs or concerns of colleagues in their college or school and promoting the WAC program goals, values, and events within their college or school. Enabling discussions on how writing is assessed and reviewing potential changes in improving student writing is part of this task.

**The immediate tasks for the Writing Ambassadors will be to:**

- assemble college/school level committees with representatives from each department
- look at other existing courses that are appropriate or taught by interested professors for assessing writing. Willingness to share follow up information with the QEP directors will help suitably inclusion of this exercise in the QEP report.
- meet regularly as a part of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) committee
- develop follow-up instruments for those that attended last year's workshops to see what impact those workshops had on instruction.
- review discipline specific resources on the WAC website and enable suitable updates
- propose student-writing projects or teaching oriented initiatives
- help plan and deliver pedagogical interventions for faculty aimed at improving student learning

**In the course of the semester and the academic year the ambassadors will:**

- discuss their writing pedagogy and experiences at a WAC panel or program
- read scholarship on writing in the discipline (WID), concerns for disciplines within their

college or school and discuss their work with the WAC committee and program

- contribute and/or enlist faculty contributions towards the WAC newsletter
- identify possible faculty development programs and resources

The WAC committee members for 2011-12 are:

Kimberly Bellah	Hutson School of Agriculture
Debbie Owens	College of Business
Joy Roach-Duncan	College of Business
Sharon Gill	College of Education
Kelly Kleinhans	College of Health Sciences and Human Services
ZB Smetana	College of Humanities and Fine Arts
Gina Claywell	College of Humanities and Fine Arts
Jessica Naber	School of Nursing
Lara Homsey	College of Science, Engineering and Technology
Caitlin Bagley	University Libraries
Kala Chakradhar	Chair, Coordinator of WAC

#### Faculty Development Programs

These faculty led monthly programs have continued like the previous year. The program selections were based on inputs from committee members and their respective college members, program participants and other faculty.

The programs so far, presented by MSU faculty are as follows:

- October 27, 2011  
Teasing Out Time Gobblers
  - Presenters: Dr. Kelly Kleinhans, College of Health Sciences & Human Services  
Ms. Julie Robinson, University Libraries
  - Number attended: **12**
- November 29, 2011  
The Effect of Reflective Writing Interventions on Critical Thinking
  - Presenter: Dr. Jessica Naber, School of Nursing
  - Number attended: **9**
- February 21, 2012  
Technology Tapas: A Web-Tools-for-Writing Sampler
  - Presenter: Ms. Lilia Murray, Center for Teaching and Learning Technology
  - Number attended: 14
- March 14, 2012  
Strategic Success: Creating a Writing Support Structure for Underprepared Students
  - Presenter: Ms. Misty Evans, Continuing Ed Academic Outreach
  - Number attended : 4

- November 11, 2011  
The fall semester also included a day-long Writing-Intensive workshop presented on the following topics by MSU faculty:

Overview of writing-intensive courses

- Presenter: Dr. Kelley Wezner, College of Humanities and Fine Arts
- Number attended: 14

Scaffolding Assignments: Using Low and High-Stakes Writing

- Presenter: Debbie Bell, College of Humanities and Fine Arts
- Number attended: 7

Tweet me a story: Using Twitter to teach writing

- Presenter: Ms. Leigh L. Wright, College of Business
- Number attended: 7

Providing Feedback: Using Grading Rubrics and Minimal Marking Techniques

- Presenters: Dr. Jo Ann Hammons, College of Health Sciences & Human Services  
Dr. Lara Homsey, College of Science, Engineering & Technology  
Dr. Neal Messer, College of Humanities & Fine Arts
- Number attended: 5

How to Make Life in and out of the Classroom easier for both You and Them

- Presenter: Dr. Martin Roper, College of Humanities & Fine Arts
- Number attended: 6

i-Write: Helping Students Communicate Professionally in the Social Media age

- Presenter: Dr. Kimberly Bellah, Hutson School of Agriculture
- Number attended: 11

Technology in Writing for Class: Strategies and Tools for Instructors

- Presenters: Dr. Sue Sroda, College of Humanities & Fine Arts  
Ms. Lilia Murray, Center for Teaching & Learning Technology
- Number attended: 9

Mechanics in Writing

- Presenter: Dr. Sharon Gill, College of Education
- Number attended: 8

Newsletters

Monthly electronic newsletters beginning October 2011 giving updates of the WAC program and highlights of faculty development programs along with useful resources have been sent out to faculty in and outside the campus. They include adjunct faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

### WAC Faculty survey

The WAC faculty survey was developed and administered online to a total population of 802, including full-time faculty, part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants. The survey was designed to assess faculty attitudes about student writing abilities and practices. It looked at getting to know strategies used by faculty in their courses and faculty interests in teaching writing skills. It also gauged faculty interests in using available resources provided by the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) activities.

The anonymous online survey consisting of 24 questions was administered in Oct.-Nov, 2011 and the preliminary analyses have been completed. The total number of respondents was 249, for a response rate of 32.41%. (A detailed report and a copy of the survey are attached).

### WAC College level Subcommittees

In keeping with one of the immediate tasks early in the year, of assembling college/ school level subcommittees, various Ambassadors have the following updates from their respective Colleges/ Schools.

#### College of Business

The College of Business is finalizing an upcoming meeting time, but will consider in the March meeting several items, including: areas of concern in business writing, suggestions for website resources, reviewing the posted websites and making everyone aware of those already identified resources, and asking for any ideas for WAC presentations from the College of Business group. The subcommittee has 5 members.

#### College of Education

This subcommittee has met 4 times so far. After a review of the results of student teachers and their writing, this committee decided to work on identifying problems in student writing and developing solutions. Some initiatives the committee has come up with include: modifying the curriculum to include writing related instructional features early in the curriculum at the 100 level; surveying faculty college-wide to get their inputs on problems and solutions and develop assessment measures to elicit outcomes of changes tried. The writing survey has been distributed and results discussed to implement suggestions. The committee is also collecting suitable resources and working towards developing a research proposal that will gather necessary resources to be used in 200 classes. These classes will be pilot groups in assessing learning outcomes related to additional writing instruction. ( detailed report available). The committee has 7 members.

#### College of Health Sciences & Human Services

The subcommittee first met in November of 2011. The committee drafted plans to present a series of WAC Grand Rounds on topics relevant to discipline specific writing issues faculty from HSHS may face. The committee has met 3 additional times to prepare the Grand Rounds sessions. Meetings are scheduled for 60 minutes and the committee has been productive with the allotted time, requiring only a few phone calls or emails to attend to details for the Grand Rounds. The first session of HSHS Grand Rounds occurred on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Subsequent sessions have been scheduled for March and April. The 50 minute session used a case based approach to share writing assignments and strategies.

The committee has 4 members.

#### College of Humanities & Fine Arts

The Humanities Sub-Committee for WAC has met once. The committee members addressed common writing assignments and issues with writing instruction in their disciplines. Problems with teaching writing at MSU that were revealed include needing strategies for improving peer reviews, time factors, efficiency in marking papers, plagiarism, apathy and lack of reading among students, and the need for even more awareness of and access to the Writing Center.

The committee has 7 members.

#### School of Nursing

In Fall 2011, each member of the committee was assigned a program in nursing. For each program, the committee member would talk with faculty members about current writing assignments, possibilities for new writing assignments, and needs regarding writing. At the end of the semester, the information gathered was compiled and examined to look at courses that were writing intensive, and the needs of the faculty.

It was determined that a need is to have similar grading and/or expectations throughout the nursing courses with regards to writing. Currently rubrics used in nursing or in general writing courses are being explored to guide student writing. A rubric or a compilation of rubric that will work best will be made. This rubric may be included in the student handbook and shared with students upon admission to the nursing program.

The committee has 4 members.

#### College of Science, Engineering & Technology

Beginning in October 2011, the committee came up with a list of roles and duties including serving as a liaison for WAC activities, identifying discipline-designated WI courses, developing resources and tips, identifying writing needs and developing workshops. The committee has reviewed the WAC website and is working on adding resources from the disciplines. Work has also been initiated on reviewing writing-intensive courses, problems in student writing, poster presentations and writing and tips for presentation for Writing tips in science, math and engineering.

The committee has 6 members.

[WAC website](#)

The website has been developed with substantial resources collected and compiled last year. The current WAC committee has also worked on adding resources and structuring the website. The website was published in March this year to make it accessible to university faculty. In-built evaluation features will enable evaluation of the website and faculty feedback. Invitations have been made for faculty contributions to the website.