

WAC Meeting Minutes for January 12, 2017

Following are the minutes for the latest WAC meeting. Please contact me with any revisions.

Meeting Called to Order: 3:10pm

Attending: Ellen Bayer, Will Burghart, Rebecca Disrud, Cynthia Howson, Asao Inoue, Kelvin Keown, Margaret Lundberg, Erik McDonald, Sushil Oswal, Heather Porter, Joe Sharkey, Justin Wadland

Absent: Bonnie Becker, Nicole Blair, Eric Bugyis, Alison Cardinal, Rich Furman, Emily Ignacio, Alex Miller, Walter Moore, Annie Nguyen, Deirdre Raynor, Riki Thompson

Announcements & Updates:

Rebecca Disrud has joined the TLC as the new Writing Center Coordinator.

Agenda Items:

Discuss campus-wide W-course requirements and process for course certifications via the WAC

We're looking for a way to create a certification process using guidelines put together by the WAC over the past two years. W courses are staffed differently across academic units which have differing needs. There is an opportunity to push for course enrollment caps on W courses that are meant to be writing intensive.

The work that has already been done can be found on the University Writing Program website: <http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/university-writing-program/common-curricular-element-0>

If a course meets these requirements, it can be certified and in some cases, the WAC or a similar body may review whether a course qualifies as a W-course. The review load is expected to be heavy initially while all courses have to be determined for certification, a process will take 5-7 years. The WAC would meet quarterly, though much of the work would be done independently, including collecting observations, voting online, and making final decisions. Course certification would provide stability in scheduling for students and would secure a certain amount of labor and no more, benefitting the faculty who teach W-courses. Consider a cap on the number of courses faculty can teach in a given quarter. Academic units and chairs would decide what limits to set for how many W-courses an instructor could teach during a quarter or over an academic year. The initial suggestion is to have a limit of 22-25 students per class, though this will not be realistic for some academic units. There may be special dispensation for some courses due to staffing limitations. The WAC may oversee W-courses and help faculty with designing and improving.

The original intent was to certify courses rather than certifying instructors. Course certification would guarantee that students still have access to W-courses, even when an instructor leaves. Ellen came from a program where the instructor was certified, rather than the course. Both Cynthia and Ellen teach courses that only qualify as W when they are the instructors. It might be possible to have two versions of a course (SOC 466 vs. SOC 466W) and students could choose whether to take the

regular course or the W-course. This would require adjustments within the system and courses may be required to go back through the curricular committee. Ellen suggested certifying faculty as well as courses. Sushil raised the concern that if an instructor who has the appropriate training leaves, someone with little or no experience could take over. The Writing Program could develop a summer institute for faculty to take W writing. In the past, institutes took place over the year, meeting twice per quarter. Per Sushil, the benefit was that you could plan a course at the beginning of the year, developing a practice model to work on in autumn and winter that you could teach in spring. Since faculty are overloaded 2/3 of the year, it might be wise to consider alternating years. A stipend would likely be attached.

Review the W-course guidelines created by the WAC already

“The course can enroll no more than 24 students since writing is labor intensive”

All research shows that writing course students and faculty need extra space, becoming ineffective over 20-25 students. If the division insists on a higher number, we have to accept that, though we can come back with research showing that it can't be writing intensive without overworking the faculty member and students. The cap will be left at 24 for now.

“50% of the total course work must be discipline-specific writing (referred to as DSW), which does not include daily quick writes, freewrites, journaling, or written exams”

How do we identify what the work of writing is and what it means? The 50% labor model includes writing being the entire process, from research to outlining, scaffolding, and drafting. Seattle uses a page count which we are trying to avoid as it could mean changing the curriculum if they don't have time to complete the planned content.

“Opportunities to receive formal feedback on most of the DSW should be designed into the course”

Feedback should also come from instructors and not just peers. Add in parentheses that the 50% of writing would receive feedback.

“Students should be required to revise a significant number of the DSW (preferably the writing that has been given feedback) and these revision drafts should be designed into the course”

Sushil suggested that the 50% writing should not be one-shot writing assignments as students have mentioned receiving an assignment in the beginning of the quarter and by the 9th and 10th weeks nothing has been produced. Asao recommended a middle ground qualifier. Students can write two papers and choose to revise one. This can't be mandated, though the wording can be changed to “all or most should be revised”.

“Some class time should be spent building writing practices that are discipline specific and critical, and that help them do the DSW of the course”

Change “some” to “appropriate amount of class time”. This amounts to instruction and not just assigning.

“Occasional, low-stakes, writing-to-learn activities should be incorporated into the course, for instance, freewriting, journaling, and reflection activities”

Change “occasional” to “consistent low-stakes”.

“The course should expect and help students use the library as a resource for their writing”

Justin recommended a wording change. It's not realistic to how research and data collection happens. He suggests something like “collaborating with the library to teach research skills as

appropriate to the W-course designation” to shift away from tying to a specific place. Some instructors take this to mean, “send my students to talk to the reference desk”. Encourage instructors to collaborate with librarians in offering resources. Justin will send Asao alternate wording in the next few days and that will be sent out to the group.

A first draft of the W-course designation process will be developed and Asao will find out how many W-courses UW Tacoma is offering on average.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:05pm